

QUICK
GUIDES
FOR
POLICY
MAKERS



housing the **poor** in African cities

UNHABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

Cities Alliance
CITIES WITHOUT SLUMS

1

URBAN AFRICA:
BUILDING WITH UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

Quick Guide 1: Urban Africa

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All these contributions have shaped the Quick Guides series, which we hope will contribute to the daily work of policy makers in the sub-Saharan Africa region in their quest to improve housing and access to land for the urban poor.

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AN URBANIZING AFRICA IN AN URBAN WORLD

QUICK GUIDE FOR POLICY MAKERS NUMBER 1

Africa and Asia are at the epicentre of the second large-scale urban transition in the history of the world. The first transition unfolded between 1750 and 1950 in North America and Europe, which saw the urban share of their total population grow from 10% to 52%. The second urban transition has been unfolding largely in the global South since 1950; by 2030 the urban share of the population in this region will have grown from 18% to 56%.

Africa's urban population rose from 15% of its total population in 1960 to 35% in 2006, and is expected to be above 60% by 2030.¹ Thus, even though Africa is not yet 50% urbanized, it has the fastest rate of urbanization of all regions in the world at 3.3%.² Currently Africa is 38% urbanized, but this hides the fact that certain African countries and regions have already reached the 50% mark. Moreover, the largest economies on the continent are almost all above the 50% urban mark.

These numerical values hide the deep-going demographic and cultural changes that these rapid shifts imply. Urban life is profoundly different to rural life. People engage in fundamentally different livelihood activities; social networks extend well beyond familial, clan and ethnic ties; spiritual and customary norms become contested and fused with multiple outside influences and inflections; generational dynamics shift; and most importantly, people's expectations and aspirations alter profoundly. For these reasons, urban settlements are marked by intensity, change, uncertainty, surprise, risk, and paradoxically, a sense of possibility.

Because of their myopic mindsets, the leaders and policy managers of many of Africa's states, cities and towns have by and large failed to come to terms with the reality and implications of rapid urbanization. As a result, we witness across sub-Saharan Africa, poorly managed cities and towns and wasted potential. At its starkest, this failure is manifested in slum living conditions and the high rate of slum growth. The latter is virtually identical to urban growth rates in general, suggesting that the doubling of the urban population over the next 20 years will involve the creation of more and more slums.

The reasons we have not been able to reverse this trend of slum growth as a consequence of population growth are many and complex. In this Quick Guide we want to explore the most important one: the failure of imagination on the part of all those involved in urban development and management to see urbanization as a resource with great potential to solve the African development crisis, instead of as a cause of the crisis.

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT URBAN LIFE

This failure of imagination can be traced to a number of deeply held misconceptions. Firstly, urbanization is often seen as something bad because it implies a depopulation of rural areas and a weakening of rural economies and human capital. Secondly, it is thought that urban life represents a loss of "good" moral values that are associated with "innocent" rural ways of life. This is a simplification of a more complicated dynamic related to a rupture of traditional cultural values and heritage. Thirdly, urbanization, it is argued, worsens poverty because the cities and towns are already unable to cope with existing populations and this can only get worse with unchecked urbanization. Lastly, urban areas are sometimes seen as a seedbed for political opportunists who seek to undermine the established political parties and orders. These, amongst other subjective factors, lead politicians and public sector managers to view urbanization and its consequences as inherently negative and as something to stem, and possibly even reverse.

POSITIVE TRENDS ARE DRIVING AFRICAN URBANIZATION



Reflecting back on the last decade, it seems evident that Africa's time has finally dawned. Since 2000, Africa's annual private investment in infrastructure has tripled, averaging USD19 billion from 2006 to 2008. Africa's top 18 cities now have a combined spending power of USD1.3 trillion. In 2000, roughly 59 million African households broke through the USD5 000-a-year income barrier above which they start spending roughly half their earnings on non-food items. By 2014 that figure should reach 106 million. In 1998 just two million Africans had mobile phones; now the figure is 400 million. A decade ago, only 58% of African children went to primary school; today nearly 75% do. Spending on health increased in real terms in 20 of the 29 poorest countries in 2009. Where in 2002 only 50 000 Africans at the epicentre of the AIDS pandemic could get antiretrovirals, today 3.7 million people are taking them, without having to pay.³

Building on these positive trends depends on a few critical factors. Firstly, can African states consolidate these trends through properly funded, well targeted and effi-

ciently executed infrastructure investments over the next few decades? Secondly, can African states sustain these moderate-to-high rates of economic growth but radically expand the beneficiaries of such growth – i.e. achieve inclusive growth – and improve the carbon efficiency of the economy in an era of heightened climate variability? The policy visions being put forward by various United Nations agencies on the potential of the green economy and sustainable urban development offer promising ideas to achieve more inclusive and sustainable forms of growth. Addressing these factors will require African states to develop a much more refined and clear understanding of the territorial dimensions of national and local development policies. Public investments and growth measures must be based on an understanding of how both urban and rural development will be advanced through an integrated package of development measures.

By definition, this implies a mindshift on the part of governments, to embrace the potential of urbanization as a profoundly

productive dynamic that demands sober acknowledgement, as well as evidence-based understanding of what is going on in cities and thoughtful policy responses to these developments. There are four key messages that all those involved in urban planning and development need to take account of:

1. Urbanization is both understandable and manageable.
2. Sustainable urban development solutions exist, but they require trust, dialogue and new institutions that are fit-for-purpose in the informal urban context of Africa.
3. Success can only come from doggedly pursuing the iterative cycle of acting-

learning-acting-learning that drives innovative governments. Examples of such practices can be seen in areas such as land, housing and livelihoods.

4. Urban settings and institutions are filled with power dynamics that need to be acknowledged and managed, to ensure optimal democratic outcomes.

Quick Guide 1 explores each of these messages in greater detail, whilst explaining the central ideas that are considered in the other seven Quick Guides in this series.

URBANIZATION IS BOTH UNDERSTANDABLE AND MANAGEABLE

PATTERNS OF URBANIZATION

Between 2000 and 2030, Africa's urban population will increase from 294 million to 742 million.⁴ This is a daunting prospect, given that most African states are currently failing to deal with the needs of their existing urban populations. Urban growth comprises natural population growth and migration. It may come as a surprise to many that rural-to-urban migration accounts for only one-quarter of this growth.⁵ In other words, the bulk of urban growth comes from natural population growth within cities, a reality which undermines the policy obsession with stemming migration.

A common misconception is that urbanization implies an explosion of megacities (cities with more than seven million people). On the contrary, the vast majority of Afri-

can urbanites reside, and will continue to reside, in urban settlements with populations of fewer than 0.5 million people. For example, in 2005, 51% of the urban African population lived in settlements with fewer than 0.5 million people, compared to 10% in cities of between 0.5 and 1 million, 23% in cities of 1–1.5 million, 8% in cities of 5–10 million, and only 9% in cities with more than 10 million people. (See Table 1.)

The size of a city fundamentally influences its character, challenges and potentials. It is crucial that policies aiming to deal with urbanization take cognizance of each settlement's type and size.

Interestingly, in the most recent State of the World's Cities report by UN-HABITAT, strong emphasis is placed on the emergence of new urban settlement systems that intro-

TABLE 1: SIZE OF AFRICAN CITIES IN 2007 AND PROJECTION FOR 2025 ⁶

| | More than 10 million | 5–10 million | 1–5 million | 0.5–1 million | Less than 0.5 million |
|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Number of cities in 2007 | 2 | 2 | 48 | 69 | Unknown |
| Population (1000s) | 23,076 | 14,238 | 102,418 | 41,057 | 231,404 |
| % of urban population | 6.18 | 3.81 | 27.53 | 10.1 | 52.48 |
| Trends for 2025 | 3 | 8 | 73 | 84 | Unknown |

duce new economic and mobility logics into how urban settlements function within and across national territories: mega-regions, urban corridors and city-regions.⁷

- Mega-regions are natural economic units that result from the growth, convergence and spatial spread of geographically linked metropolitan areas that are relatively mature.
- Urban corridors reflect a system of urban centres that are connected through transport links. For example, the network that connects the greater Ibadan-Lagos-Accra system comprises a 600 km corridor that serves as the economic engine room for the region. Another significant example is the corridor between Johannesburg in the Gauteng city-region and Maputo in Mozambique.
- City-regions represent major cities extending beyond formal administrative boundaries to engulf smaller ones, including towns. Often this involves absorbing semi-urban and rural hinterlands or a merger with other intermediate cities, creating large conurbations that eventually form city-regions.

The nodal points of the corridors, and especially of emerging city-regions, coincide with a longstanding feature of African urban systems: the centrality of the primate city. Africa has had a history of centralized

growth in large cities. Their historical locations, especially as port cities, and their use as ancient (pre-colonial) trading areas as well as colonial centres of administration, has contributed to this. Some post-independence governments have also strengthened this trend. However, some people question the importance of primate cities in urban Africa, as a large part of the urban population on the continent lives in small urban centres rather than primate cities (as shown in Table 1).

THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL URBANIZATION POLICY AS WELL AS SPECIFIC URBAN POLICIES

The rapid pace of urbanization, considered in relation to the diversity of urban settlement types and colonial legacies, suggests that all states need to first and foremost understand their national urban system and how it fits with the overall territorial dynamic in the country. Such an understanding is typically reflected in a national urbanization policy. A policy of this kind should clearly spell out the government's definition and understanding of the shape of the national spatial system, including the network of cities, towns and rural settlements and their respective functions. Typically, this understanding informs decisions about where in

the national territory investments should be concentrated and focused. National spatial frameworks also inform how migration dynamics are understood and managed.

A good example of a national spatial typology is one recently developed for South Africa but clearly with relevance for all African contexts. This typology is set out in Table 2.

In contrast, urban policy reflects how national governments understand the role of specific cities and towns in the successful execution of national development goals. Typically, urban policies will define what needs to happen with specific cities and towns with regard to various sectoral and meso objectives, pertaining to mobility,

housing, education, health and so on. Put differently, urban policies provide a perspective on critical issues that need to happen within cities, and will support the efforts of sub-national levels of government to elaborate more detailed policies and strategies for those places. They complement and inform more detailed local-level development policy processes.⁹

Once African states and other development actors have a clear and evidence-based understanding of the national urban system, and the function of diverse settlements within that system, it is important to develop a perspective on the key drivers of urbanization.

TABLE 2: TYPOLOGY OF SOUTH AFRICAN SETTLEMENTS, POPULATION, ECONOMY AND POVERTY ⁸

| | Population (% of national) | Economic activity (% of national GVA)* | People living below a minimum level of living (% of national) |
|--|----------------------------------|--|---|
| Gauteng city region | 22 | 39 | 14 |
| Coastal city regions | 16 | 25 | 10 |
| Cities | 6 | 5 | 6 |
| Regional service centres | 14 | 15 | 14 |
| Service towns | 4 | 3 | 5 |
| Local and niche settlements | 9 | 5 | 12 |
| Sub-total: urban as a % of national | 72 | 92 | 61 |
| Clusters and dispersed rural settlements | 21 | 2 | 31 |
| Farms/rest of South Africa | 8 | 6 | 8 |
| Sub-total: rural as a % of national | 29 | 8 | 39 |

DRIVERS OF URBANIZATION



The primary driver of urbanization is economic development. It is reinforced by a number of push factors that cause people to migrate from rural areas, such as climate variability (e.g. low rainfall), war and conflict, and a desire for access to basic services such as education and health that can improve quality of life.

In general, the more rapid a country's economic growth, the faster it urbanizes. Urban areas account for a large percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in most countries. The industrial and service sectors of the economy are usually located in urban areas, due to the easy access these areas offer to a mixture of the following services and resources:

- **larger concentrations of inputs such as materials, labour, infrastructure, transport and services;**
- **larger concentrations of consumers (the “market”);**
- **greater opportunities for networking and rapid knowledge-sharing;**
- **proximity to administrative institutions which regulate commercial activities;**
- **access to other economies of scale and scope.**

The activities of the urban poor, as consumers and producers of the goods and services that are concentrated in cities, are essential to the growth of the national economy. Even in countries that remain lowly urbanized, such as Tanzania and Kenya, the urban areas contribute disproportionately to the national economy.

It is against this backdrop that migration needs to be seen as natural, and as a ratio-

nal part of the overall development process. In fact, rural-to-urban migration can be an economic diversification strategy for households, as agricultural income can be highly variable due to changes in climate, agricultural markets, prices, access to land, illness and war. Families may remain committed to their rural base, but still want to create another source of income by having one or more members in the city, earning a living from different urban occupations.

Other reasons why individuals move to the city include a desire to escape from family and cultural constraints, such as restricted land access or a low level of female independence, or a wish to increase their social status, which they believe will happen in the falsely perceived “exciting” world of the city. Young migrants may also look for opportunities in the city to acquire cash income to contribute to bride wealth.

Over time, cities become the nexus for economic development, human capital and exciting social-cultural experiences that transcend the parochialism of rural life. In other words, cities become the hubs of creativity, innovation and opportunity in the country. Economic opportunity, access to basic services and flight from harsh conditions in rural areas may be the drivers of the urbanization, but the cumulative achievements of urban areas become a self-reinforcing driver in their own right; according to some researchers, “urban centres contribute to national economic growth by increasing individual, business, and industry productivity through agglomeration economies; by increasing household welfare through social mobility and human development; and by promoting positive institutional change. Cities also drive rural development, serving as primary markets for rural production and generating income that flows back to rural areas.”¹⁰

CONSEQUENCES OF BADLY MANAGED URBANIZATION

It may be true that economic prosperity is associated with higher rates of urbanization, but in Africa this correlation has never really been present. It is only during the past five years or so that the link between economic performance and urbanization has started to manifest itself. Before, and for most of the 1980s and 1990s, there was little connection. This resulted in a situation where cities and towns grew in tandem with slums and mainly informal economic activity. It is therefore not surprising that sub-Saharan Africa manifests the highest level of slum living and the most extreme depths of deprivation within slums.

Between 2000 and 2005, average urban growth reached 4.5% while the rate of slum formation was also 4.5%. There are, of course, vast differences in the nature and experience of slum life in different settings. It is for this reason that UN-HABITAT’s working definition of slums is useful and instructive to bear in mind (see Box 1).

Building on the understanding that slums are identified in terms of five deficiencies, UN-HABITAT has developed a useful way to nuance our understanding of slums by tabulating whether slums are moderately deficient (1–2 deficiencies of the five listed in Box 1) or severely deficient (3–4 deficien-

cies). Based on this approach we can assume that six out of every 10 African urban residents are slum dwellers, and 27% of them live in slum conditions of severe deficiency. This is an extraordinarily high rate compared to the situation in other developing regions of the world, as shown in Table 3.¹¹

It is therefore not surprising that the basic service backlogs are as staggering as the data suggest: only 20% of the population of sub-Saharan Africa has access to an electricity network; 40% has access to potable water; 27% has access to sanitation; 4% has access to fixed or mobile telephony.¹³ These are aggregate numbers that include rural and urban deficiencies. However, it is generally accepted that the proportions of the urban population in Africa without adequate access to water and sanitation are 35–50% and 50–60% respectively.¹⁴

These low levels of access to basic services reflect widespread poverty. If we further accept the argument of UN-HABITAT that “informal activities account for 93% of all new jobs and 61% of urban employment in Africa”, we also have to accept that “this

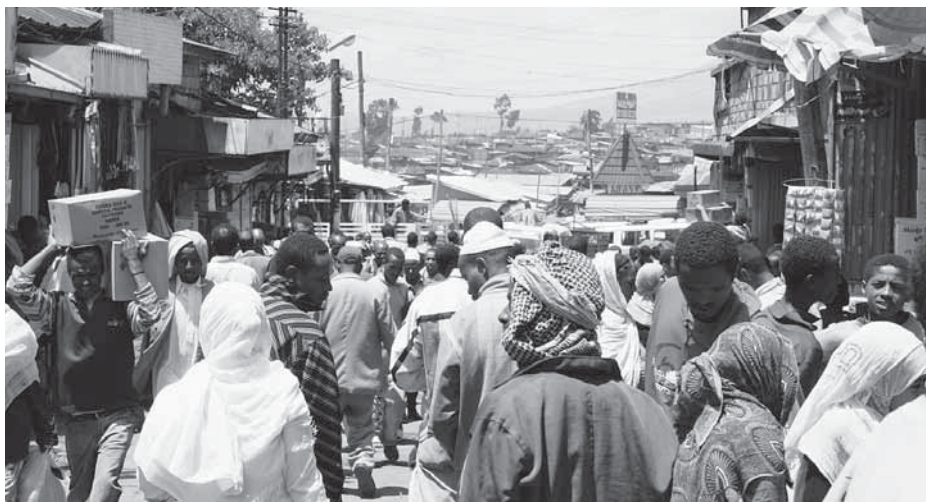
largely invisible economy is not in a position to propel the continent out of poverty.”¹⁵ So, the 68% level of income poverty (see Table 4) is not likely to shift soon.

BOX 1: WHAT IS A SLUM?

A slum household is defined as a group of individuals living under the same roof lacking one or more of the following conditions: access to improved water; access to improved sanitation facilities; sufficient living area (not more than three people sharing the same room); structural quality and durability of dwellings; and security of tenure. Four out of five of the slum definition indicators measure physical expressions of slum conditions [...] These indicators focus attention on the circumstances that surround slum life, depicting deficiencies and casting poverty as an attribute of the environments in which slum dwellers live. The fifth indicator – security of tenure – has to do with legality, which is not as easy to measure or monitor, as the tenure status of slum dwellers often depends on de facto or de jure rights – or lack of them.

TABLE 3: PERCENTAGE OF SLUM DWELLERS IN THREE DEVELOPING REGIONS, 2005 ¹²

| | % in slums | % with moderate (1–2) deficiencies | 1–5 million |
|-------------------------------|------------|------------------------------------|-------------|
| Sub-Saharan Africa | 62 | 63 | 27 |
| Latin America & the Caribbean | 27 | 82 | 18 |
| Southern Asia | 43 | 95 | 5 |



The *State of the World's Cities Report 2008/9* calculated intra-urban inequality in a number of cities for the first time. In Africa, urban inequality, measured in terms of the Gini-coefficient, is now the highest in the world – well above the international alert line of 0.4, at 0.58.¹⁷ In the larger African economies, such as South Africa, income inequality is far more severely skewed, with Gini-coefficient rates of over 0.7 for all of the largest cities.¹⁸ Based on these trends we can conclude that urban poverty is likely to continue rising, given that it is growing

four times faster than rural poverty (see Table 4).

The stubborn intensity of slum growth, lack of services, rising urban poverty and inequality are not inevitable. They can largely be attributed to poor urban management, which in turn stems from the lack of political and policy imagination about how best to harness urbanization processes. The question that arises is: how can we turn a crisis into an opportunity for sustainable urban development?

TABLE 4: RURAL AND URBAN POVERTY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA¹⁶

| | Urban | Rural | Total | Urban | Rural | Total |
|--------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1993 | 66.4 | 206.7 | 273.2 | 40.2 | 53.1 | 49.2 |
| 2002 | 98.8 | 228.8 | 327.6 | 40.4 | 50.9 | 47.2 |
| Annual increase | 4.54% | 1.13% | 2.04% | 66.9 | 85.2 | 79.8 |
| 1993 | 110.5 | 332 | 442.4 | 68.5 | 82.5 | 77.5 |
| 2002 | 167.7 | 370.8 | 538.6 | | | |
| Annual increase | 4.75% | 1.24% | 2.21% | | | |
| Living on less than US\$2.15 per day | | | | | | |

MINDSHIFTS ARE NEEDED: SEEING 'URBAN' AS 'OPPORTUNITY'

National development is fuelled by economic growth. Economic growth depends on the productivity and competitiveness of private firms, which in turn rely on the availability of reliable infrastructure, capital, a suitable labour force, strategic information and markets to perform well. As countries develop, the centre point of the economy shifts from agriculture to industrial activity and services.¹⁹ In our era of globally integrated economies and financial flows, services tend to become the dominant segment of economic activities. This is not surprising, since the scope for generating greater economic value is higher in the services sectors than in industry or agriculture (see Table 5).

Both industrial and service-based economic activities are dependent on the concentrations of infrastructure, people, services and markets that are found in cities and towns. Moreover, highly productive and competitive agricultural activity relies heavily on the availability of urban markets to consume its produce, and to convey it to other, more distant markets through efficient transportation hubs. In other words, all dimensions of the economy rely heavily on well functioning cities and towns. This is why UN-HABITAT recently arrived at this assertive conclusion: "Cities have the potential to

make countries rich because they provide the economies of scale and proximity to make growth more efficient. High densities in cities reduce transaction costs, make public spending on infrastructure and services more economically viable, and facilitate the generation and diffusion of knowledge, all of which are important for growth. Regardless of whether cities fuel economic growth or are, instead, its by-product, it is indisputable that cities have become major hubs of economic activity, both within individual countries and as contributors to the global economy."²¹

ECONOMIC POLICY NEEDS TO ACCEPT AND SUPPORT URBANIZATION

Three areas of economic policy stand out as the constraints to more rapid growth of urban economies: macro-economic instability, poor investment climate and inadequate infrastructure.²² Fortunately, over the last decade or so many of the past policy failures have been addressed. The majority of African governments are now competent in maintaining macro-economic policies that promote stability. However, much remains to be done with regard to providing

TABLE 5: RURAL AND URBAN POVERTY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA²⁰

| | Agriculture | Industry | Services | Agriculture | Industry | Services | Agriculture | Industry | Services |
|-------------------------|-------------|----------|----------|-------------|----------|----------|-------------|----------|----------|
| Contribution to GDP (%) | 17 | 31 | 52 | 17 | 30 | 53 | 19 | 31 | 50 |

more stable, cost-effective and transparent investment frameworks. And even more needs to be done to address the infrastructure deficit.

Studies and reviews of the policy failures in Africa to deal with its urbanization challenges return to one conclusion: African leaders continue to see urbanization in a negative light, and tend to obsess about stemming migration instead of proactively utilizing urbanizing tendencies. One illustration of this comes from a survey conducted by the United Nations: in 2007, 74% of African governments were concerned that their countries were becoming too urban too quickly; 78% had active policies to reduce migration to urban agglomerations.²³

As long as these obsessions with stemming migration remain the predominant preoccupation of African governments, they will continue to fail to turn their cities and towns into the dynamic engine rooms of the national development project. To change this, a number of interlinked mindshifts must be effected. The first mindshift is to better understand the value and drivers of migration. The second is to understand the dynamics of informality in urban economies and living areas, so as to abandon the negative attitudes that leaders have about slums and informal work. The third mindshift is to understand that African governments cannot address these issues constructively without the involvement of all urban actors, especially the urban poor.

MINDSHIFT: FIVE GOOD REASONS TO MIGRATE

When people make the decision to migrate to the city, their decision is almost always a well informed one.

1. **The pushing and pulling forces of migration.** People migrate either because they are being pushed out of their place of origin, or because they are being pulled to their new migration destination. Or more often, people move because of a combination of overlapping pushing and pulling forces. Some are pushed out of their native places because they can't earn sufficient income to sustain themselves or their households. Others may be pushed out of their home base, either temporarily or permanently, by natural disasters such as floods or droughts, or because of sustained ecological changes such as desertification or soil erosion, all mani-

festations of climate change. In many parts of Africa human security issues, post-disaster and post-conflict dynamics also push people to urban settlements. At the same time, people are pulled to their migration destination by better job prospects, better education and health facilities, or more freedom from restrictive social and cultural realities, for themselves and for their children.

2. **Most have little chance of making a decent living in agriculture.** Most people in the rural areas work in the agricultural sector, but agriculture is highly dependent on weather conditions, rural land is limited and its fertility is sometimes low or declining, land holdings are small, farm debts are high, and many households have always been or have

become landless. As a result, overall rural incomes tend to be low. In order to increase income, small farmers need to increase their productivity, but they are often too poor to pay for the necessary technology, whether it is equipment, high-yield seeds or expensive chemical fertilizers. Increasingly, farmers and others in rural areas supplement their income from agriculture with non-farm income, in the rural areas if possible, or in urban areas through temporary migration to work on construction sites, in domestic work, as self-employed street vendors or in other kinds of urban jobs.

3. **Migration to cities improves the prospect of finding better jobs.** Even when a rural household can live off its land, the future for rural children is seen to be in non-farm and more in non-rural employment. For these children, migration to urban areas improves their prospects of finding such employment. Besides dramatically increased job op-

portunities, urban areas offer them better education and health care opportunities – and sometimes greater social freedom. Because urban cultures tend to be less constrained by traditional customs and hierarchical structures than village cultures, cities also offer young migrants and their children greater prospects of upward social mobility.

4. **People know what cities have to offer them.** Although some rural households have no choice but to leave the rural areas in order to survive, most migrants make a deliberate choice to stay or to leave. Improvements in transport, the availability of mobile phones, improved communications and increasing links with earlier generations of urban migrants in the city have all made the rural population much more aware of both the advantages and the drawbacks urban areas offer, in particular what kinds of employment opportunities are available and what kinds of housing conditions exist.

TABLE 6: **EMPLOYMENT IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR IN SOME AFRICAN COUNTRIES** ²⁴

| Country | Coverage | Number of people employed in the informal economy (millions) | Informal economy employment as a percentage of total employment |
|---------------------|----------|--|---|
| Benin (2002) | National | 2.4 | 94.50% |
| Cameroon (1993) | Urban | 0.1 | 57.30% |
| Ethiopia (2004) | Urban | 1.1 | 38.10% |
| Madagascar (1995) | Urban | 0.2 | 57.50% |
| Mali (2004) | National | 1 | 41.30% |
| South Africa (2004) | National | 1.7 | 13.80% |
| Tanzania (1995) | Urban | 0.4 | 67.00% |
| Uganda (2003) | National | 2.6 | 26.50% |

5. **Urban migration is often a survival strategy for rural households.** In order to spread economic risks, households may split into several groups that locate themselves in different places – rural areas, small towns and big cities – while some household members may even move abroad. In this way, the household’s sources of income are

diversified and are not so vulnerable to economic downturns in a particular place. This arrangement also allows children and the elderly to remain in the villages, where living costs are low, while income-earners and school-age children move to the most suitable (usually urban) places.

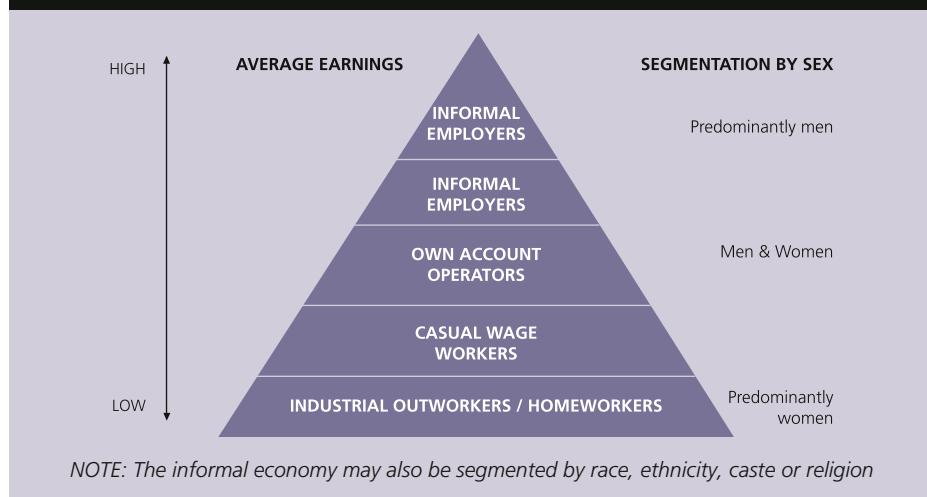
MINDSHIFT: INFORMALITY IS THE NORM

Most of Africa’s urban poor work in the informal sector, one way or another. Good jobs in government offices, factories and private sector businesses may be desirable, but are usually in short supply. Such jobs require education and skills that many poor people lack the resources to acquire, as well as networks of people who can advise and steer job-seekers towards job opportunities, and these networks seldom reach the informal settlements where most poor

people live. Table 6 illustrates the reality that informal work in largely informal economic activities is in fact the norm in African countries.

The presence of a large and growing informal sector in most African cities is often used to explain the persistent migration into urban areas, despite the limited employment opportunities in the formal economy. The informal sector provides a safety net in

FIGURE 1²⁶: SEGMENTATION OF INFORMAL EMPLOYMENT BY AVERAGE EARNINGS AND SEX



the face of high unemployment and poverty. These businesses are also often the main supply system for the city's poor. However, this informalization of urban livelihoods has also led to falls in urbanization rates in many African countries as the prospects of well paid formal sector jobs have dimmed. For poor women especially, who often have households to look after and manage, self-employment through small informal sector enterprises provides a flexible option for bringing in income while staying at home or nearby. For many women it is also the only option, because of discrimination and lack of education.

But the informal sector in its current form in African cities should not be made to seem too glamorous and successful. The majority of participants in this sector live below the poverty line. And the worst effects of informality are also felt more by women, who are "at the bottom of the hawking hierarchy".²⁵ Marty Chen, who works closely with the organization Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), illustrates the internal class dynamics of the informal sector through a powerful graphic (Figure 1).

MINDSHIFT: WORKING TOGETHER TO FIND SOLUTIONS

The enormous changes happening in most African cities today are no longer governed by any formal, agreed-upon development plans, but rather by an ad hoc interplay of land politics, private sector investment and foreign-funded mega-projects. In this context, forums and approaches that promote dialogue and build consensus among the various stakeholders have become crucial. Such approaches include city development strategies, urban forums and city consultations. The key common features of these approaches are that they are based on an extensive and multi-stakeholder process of

From this diagram it is clear that the catch-all phrase "informal sector" is simply too broad and generalized to account for the rich and contested diversity that resides in the informal economy. As well as remaining aware of the internal hierarchies and inequalities of power between, for example, informal employers and informal employees, it is important to also recognize how much the informal economy contributes to national and urban economies.

Given the pervasiveness of informal jobs and incomes, and the substantial contribution that informal businesses make to the urban economy, it is clear that this latent resource can be harnessed to great effect if policy managers simply stop prejudicing the sector, and find ways of building on it with an eye on eventually growing both informal and formal economic activity. This implies including both of these sectors in urban planning, especially when it comes to the planning of economic infrastructure and facilities.

research, discussion, planning and implementation. Such dialogues can be initiated by national or local governments, as is often the case with city development strategies and city consultations, or by civil society organizations concerned with urban development.

Partnerships are essential to ensure a good supply of land, low-income housing and associated infrastructures in the quantity and the variety that are needed. This task is way too big for any single group to handle alone – neither the urban poor themselves, nor the government, nor the private sector can do it.



But if such partnerships are to be effective, the organizations of the urban poor must be central partners. And as in all partnerships, it is important to work out who does what, according to what each group does best:

- **Governments** at all levels can help poor communities (who remain the weakest players in the urban land market) to access much needed land in several ways. They can set aside land for low-income housing within their urban plans, and they can help mediate between land-owning agencies and individuals and poor squatters, to develop compromise solutions such as land sharing, land pooling and land readjustment. (See Quick Guide 3: Land.) Governments should regulate the poor's own housing process with as little intervention as possible, without hindering community initiatives. In order to prevent the urban middle class from gaining control of such land, the government can also develop innovative forms of urban land tenure, such as collective land title or collective land leases.
- **Poor communities** can save collectively, can develop their own plans for housing and settlement improvement, and can implement those plans, maintaining control over the construction and upgrading process. They can also develop strong community organizations capable of managing the future needs of their members, in a longer-term poverty alleviation process. (See *Quick Guide 6: Community-based Organizations.*)
- **NGOs** can assist poor communities to organize themselves into strong collective organizations, and to develop the kind of leadership and collective decision-making and financial management skills they will need to undertake significant housing and settlement improvements as a group – work that cannot be done by individual households.
- **The private sector** can negotiate on-site land-sharing agreements or subsidize people's relocation as compromise solutions, instead of evicting squatters occupying their land. It is possible for landowners to make a good profit on redevelopment projects while helping those already living in informal settlements on the land to attain decent, secure housing. (See *Quick Guide 4: Eviction.*)

GEARSHIFT: FROM PREVENTION TO FACILITATION



HOUSING

In the earlier sections of this guide we have seen that the urban poor are the most important actors involved in providing shelter in African cities and towns. Despite the absence of government support and investment, they proceed to provide for themselves. Of course, because their houses are constructed without the supporting infrastructures to gain access to water, sanitation and energy, they are insufficient and inadequate to represent anything resembling the kind of housing that is implied by the universal right to adequate housing, as set out in Article 25(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.²⁷

The central challenge facing African governments and urban managers is to learn how best to recognize and appreciate the efforts of the urban poor, and build on their investments to progressively solve the shelter crisis in African cities. There is now enough precedent and evidence from across the continent and other comparable contexts to draw some conclusions about how best the urban housing challenge can be met.

As a fundamental prerequisite for understanding how to deal with the prevalence of slum living conditions, policy makers have to appreciate the rich diversity within and between settlements. Informal settlements contain within themselves entire vibrant local economies, with their own informal housing and land markets and their own diverse social and cultural groupings. While conditions in some settlements may indeed be squalid, unhealthy, impoverished and socially excluding, these conditions only come about because of the absence of alternatives and opportunities for their residents. Crucially, the residents of each settlement have the best knowledge of how their settlement works, the characteristics of their community and the nature of their needs and priorities. Governments, and in particular national statistical services, need to draw on this knowledge to establish the numbers of people living in the settlement, their living conditions, their needs and aspirations – all vital information which must shape any policies and plans that will affect the settlement.

Once this understanding has been reached, it must be related to four key aspects of informal settlement development:

1. **Housing variety:** Informal settlements are filled with a wide variety of housing and building qualities, ranging from extremely solid concrete-frame constructions with all services, to precarious shacks made of mud, timber scrap or corrugated iron sheets.
 2. **Infrastructure profile:** In many cities, governments have taken steps to provide at least some basic infrastructure in informal settlements, but these programmes are often piecemeal, poorly planned and implemented, and many settlements end up being left out. On the ground, infrastructure provision is typically fragmented, uneven and erratic. It is important that as accurate a picture as possible is constructed of what infrastructures are in place and what level and quality of service is enabled.
 3. **Location dynamics:** Poor people almost always try to locate themselves in areas of the city that are as close as possible to income-earning opportunities, even if such sites are on environmentally precarious terrain or vulnerable to all manner of risk. It is vital that urban managers establish a proper understanding of why and how people have settled on a particular site that may seem unsuitable or unviable.
 4. **Land tenure:** The most serious problem being faced by the millions who live in Africa's informal urban settlements is insecure tenure. It puts a brake on investment by both residents and utility companies, and induces a constant state of fear of eviction. Given the range of different tenure systems in most countries, it is vital to establish a clear picture of the land tenure situation for each slum settlement that will be upgraded and developed, to understand the potential and parameters of the intervention.
- Once governments have come to grips with this baseline information, they can move to the phase of addressing low-cost housing in a sustainable fashion. In Quick Guide 2: Low-income Housing we discuss five op-

BOX 2: EVICTIONS IN AFRICA

Across Africa hundreds of thousands of people are forcibly evicted each year, in many cases being left homeless, losing their possessions without compensation and/or being forcibly displaced far from sources of employment, livelihood or education, all in violation of international law, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The vast majority of these evictions are unnecessary. It is important to understand the various causes of evictions, and their effects on the lives, livelihoods and housing choices of the urban poor. Quick Guide 4: Evictions discusses distinctions between different types of evictions and examines the legal context of eviction within the key international human and housing rights covenants.

Another critical dimension is how communities facing eviction have organized themselves, and drawn on the support of community-based networks and institutions in Africa and globally to find alternatives to the destruction of their settlements. Through case studies in Quick Guide 4, it is shown how poor communities are central, creative partners in the search for lasting solutions to their city's problems of affordable land and housing – solutions which do not require that they be pushed out. Building on these experiences and on legal precedent, concrete guidelines are offered to help governments and policy makers develop better formal procedures to minimize evictions. It is indeed possible to address the land scarcity challenge in African cities without resorting to unlawful evictions.

tions for low-cost housing. These options are potentially complementary, and the local conditions should determine how an overall policy approach will be balanced among them. The five options are discussed below.

Option 1: On-site upgrading

On-site upgrading means improving the physical, social and economic environment of an existing informal settlement, without displacing the people who live there. When cities and governments support the process of upgrading informal communities, it is the least expensive, most humane way of enhancing a city's much-needed stock of affordable housing, instead of destroying it. On-site upgrading is not simply about technical programmes to install some physical infrastructure. It is more expansive. It includes the consideration of houses, land, incomes, common public facilities, access to public services more broadly and local welfare systems (see *Quick Guide 2*).

There are a host of compelling reasons why on-site upgrading is often the best option, but most salient is the fact that it fosters more resilient livelihoods because people invest in the improvement of their dwellings and so enhance their asset base, which is good for local economic development and the larger urban economy.

However, it is easy to do on-site upgrading badly, which brings the approach into disrepute and further undermines the livelihoods of the urban poor. Successful experiences suggest that eight principles underpin effective upgrading:

- Being participatory.
- Being sustainable and green as well as being culturally appropriate.
- Being done in partnership with the local government, community organizations

and relevant NGOs where these exist.

- Being inclusive of tenure security.
- Involving a measure of contribution to the cost from the beneficiary community.
- Being affordable so that the ongoing maintenance costs are within the means of the beneficiary community.
- Having a sustainable financing model.
- Forming part of a larger urban development strategy for the city or town as a whole.

In *Quick Guide 2* we also provide a clear operational framework for the stages involved in embarking on a successful on-site upgrading programme, which translates these principles into operational guidelines. The international evidence is clear that this is do-able, if the political and fiscal commitment exists to undertake on-site upgrading seriously. It demonstrates that the frequency with which governments resort to evictions is completely unnecessary (see *Box 2*).

Option 2: Resettlement on suitable land

Resettlement should never be the first policy choice for removing people from their homes in informal settlements, as re-housing them on alternative sites always destroys social networks, breaks up communities, dramatically reduces people's earning capacities, increases their transport costs, interrupts their children's schooling and generally increases their poverty. Because low-income housing is so scarce, demolishing slums and informal settlements and relocating their inhabitants causes a net loss of housing units which nobody can afford to replace, and compounds the problems of housing shortages.

However, there are certain circumstances



that require resettlement. If these come into play, then it is vital to conduct resettlement in a sensitive and responsible manner. This involves first and foremost putting people at the centre of the resettlement process. In other words, residents should be involved in all aspects of planning for their resettlement, including setting dates for moving, organizing transport, choosing the relocation site, designing the community layout, housing units and infrastructure systems, and managing the allotment process.

They should also be supported to organize their own small area-based groups which can manage the move, help dismantle the old houses and carry with them any building materials which might be usable in the new houses.

A second important aspect in the resettlement process is choosing the land for the new location. Ideally, the land should be serviced and ensure access to basic infrastructure. The land should also be located in a place that allows people to maintain or rebuild their livelihoods, social networks and survival strategies with minimal disruption.

In other words, the site should be close to job opportunities, with easy access to public services such as schools, clinics, banks and transport links. These considerations may seem onerous, but they are actually cost-effective because taking account of them minimizes the risk that people will abandon resettlement sites and simply move back to where they came from, forcing authorities to restart the whole process.

Option 3: Government-led new public housing

Based on the broadly held view that governments are responsible for the provision of universal access to urban infrastructures and housing, there remains a widespread belief that governments should take responsibility for constructing housing for urban poor households. This is particularly so in countries where GDP per capita is around USD2 100 per annum ²⁸ (as opposed to USD26 000 in an OECD country), and the costs of constructing and managing public housing must be heavily subsidized by central or local government.

When governments design, build and deliver low-income housing (for sale or rent), it is also seen as a way of ensuring that the housing is of good quality and developed in an “orderly” manner.

However, in countries where average incomes are as low as they are in much of sub-Saharan Africa, very few city or national governments have the political will or the financial resources to pay for this subsidy, or to build enough housing to meet even a fraction of the housing needs of the city's poor. As a result, it is clear that where public housing programmes have been attempted in Africa, the impact of these conventional programmes has been minimal, their ambitious targets have not been met and their costs have been too high. Since subsidies are unaffordable, often the new housing becomes too expensive and can only be afforded by relatively well-off households. The Catch-22 is that if a larger per-unit subsidy were given, which would allow poorer groups to afford them, this would mean that relatively few housing units could be built.

In light of this realistic assessment of economic conditions that are necessary for government-led housing to be supplied, we conclude that large-scale programmes to construct subsidized, standardized, fully complete housing units for existing and future poor households are too costly for the governments in most developing countries. For now, public resources are better spent on improving the existing stock of affordable housing (no matter how sub-standard) and implementing a range of innovative and flexible approaches to creating new stock. In middle-income African countries such as South Africa, there is certainly scope to explore appropriate subsidy-based interventions alongside the other options considered in this section (see *Quick Guide 2*).

Option 4: Sites-and-services schemes and incremental land development

In light of the affordability problems associated with the provision of subsidized public housing, there has been a shift in thinking around the world, from seeing the state as a provider of housing to seeing it as a facilitator of the self-help housing efforts of the poor themselves. One form this facilitation takes is when governments provide plots and basic services in a planned manner, but let people build their own houses on that land. These are called sites-and-services schemes.

The strategy in sites-and-services schemes is to share the responsibility for providing decent, affordable housing in the city between the state and the people. The government agencies take responsibility only for preparing the plots and bringing in certain basic infrastructure. The individual plots are then sold, leased or allotted to the beneficiary households, whose responsibility it is to build their own houses – sometimes with soft loans, basic building materials and technical support provided by the project, and sometimes using only their own resources.

The value of this approach is that it creates an intervention model in contexts with limited resources, limited capacity in the state and vast need. If these schemes are planned well, they can make the provision of infrastructure and services cheaper to build and maintain. This approach also works with the grain of poor people's resources and capabilities, because it unfolds on the basis of their pace of investment. Most importantly, it allows the government to reach many more people more quickly than through the provision of subsidized public housing.

Yet the approach comes with numerous health warnings, because of the inherent problems that have emerged in practice.

Even though it is meant to target the poorest segments of the city, it often ends up serving relatively well-off groups, because the sites-and-services it offers remain unaffordable to those most in need. The cost recovery track-record of these schemes is also weak.

These pitfalls can be avoided if the following five guidelines are adhered to:

1. **Provide land in a good location**, i.e. close to employment centres and existing infrastructure trunk grids, to reduce the costs of extending these grids to the project.
2. **Recognize that sites don't have to be huge or at the city edge**; wherever possible, prioritize smaller available sites right inside the city, with easier access to existing infrastructure and services.
3. **Keep plot sizes small in order to accommodate more people** at the lowest possible cost. Existing standards and by-laws are often inappropriate and have to be challenged in order to make projects affordable to the poor and prevent them from being gentrified in the future.
4. **Reduce services costs through good planning**. As in all low-income housing, the key to making this happen is the full participation of beneficiaries in planning, implementation and maintenance.
5. **Develop incrementally to reduce people's costs**. One way to make sites-and-services projects more affordable and more flexible is to develop them in phases, starting with basic infrastructure that can be improved over time. (See *Quick Guide 2*) for more detail.)

Option 5: City-wide housing strategies

Current needs for affordable housing alone are so overwhelming for most cities that the challenge of meeting future housing needs can seem an impossible task. But in fact, solving all the housing problems in a city is something that is possible. However, if you want to do this – in a systematic and city-wide way – several ingredients are needed.

- **Firstly, establish more horizontal links between poor communities**. International evidence suggests that some of the most innovative housing initiatives now in cities worldwide are not coming from engineers, architects, politicians or bureaucrats – but from poor communities. When they develop organizing and delivery models that work, it is vital to support links and mechanisms that allow for mutual learning and organization.
- **Secondly, establish more room for innovation in the policy environment**. Local and national policies on land and housing need to be loosened and adjusted, to make room for innovation in how the poor can access land and housing, and how the low-income settlements which already exist can be improved in practical and sustainable ways. This Quick Guide series offers a wealth of ideas and techniques for doing this.
- **Thirdly, put more public investment into infrastructure**. It is important to remember that such investments can also be stimulated by adjustments to urban and national policies and regulations.
- **Fourthly, make sure that explicit effort goes into the enhancement of the capacities** of communities, architects, NGOs, governments and all the



other stakeholders to implement large-scale housing initiatives. This requires explicit investment because most organizations are only used to working at the micro or project level.

Option 5 is clearly a complement to the other four options discussed above. It is important to appreciate that city-wide strategies will not germinate or grow if there is not the political will to make this happen. Such strategies also depend on an enabling national policy framework that sets the tone and minimum requirements for urban stakeholders to work in a more coordinated and integrated fashion. We will return to these considerations in the later discussion on governance.

LAND

Without land, there can be no housing. And without looking at the issue of land, there can be no meaningful discussion about how to solve the problems of housing for the poor in our cities. The inaccessibility of decent, secure, affordable land is the major reason why there are so many informal settlements in African cities, and is a contributing factor to urban poverty.

It is important to come to grips with the different forms of land tenure which operate in African cities in order to better understand the problems and benefits of these different land tenure systems. This contextual grounding makes it possible to understand, in relation to the specific conditions in each country and city, how land is supplied, valued, financed and sold in the formal market; how this formal market is failing to make secure, appropriate land available to the cities' low-income populations; and why

the majority of Africa's urban poor are being forced to obtain land for their housing through informal land markets. These issues are explored in much greater depth in Quick Guide 3: Land.

In this introductory exploration we will briefly discuss why urban land is so scarce, and the scope for action required to secure suitable land to underpin the low-cost housing interventions discussed above. We begin by considering what tenure security means in general, before identifying its salient aspects in the African context.

Tenure security?

For all forms of tenure, the two major components of security of tenure are:

- **reasonable duration of rights** appropriate to the use to which the land is put and to the social needs of the land user;
- **effective legal protection against eviction or arbitrary curtailment of land rights**, with enforceable guarantees and legal or social remedies against the loss of these rights, and accessible and effective dispute resolution mechanisms.

Other important aspects of security of tenure can include plot users' freedom to bequeath land to heirs, and to lease, lend or grant land to others on a temporary or long-term basis with reasonable guarantees of being able to recover the land.

Security of tenure can be achieved in many different ways, for example through clear, long-term rental contracts, or formal recognition of customary land rights, with accessible and effective dispute resolution mechanisms. Experiences from around the world show that enhanced tenure security generates many household and community

benefits through encouraging investment in housing and neighbourhoods.²⁹

Land administration systems in Africa

It is important to note that land administration systems differ considerably across Africa. In most countries, there is co-existence of formal/legal, customary and extra-legal/informal systems. The relative importance of these systems can vary across countries – for example, in some countries there is a large formal/legal land system with a flourishing formal land market, whereas in other countries the customary land system dominates and there is little or no formal land market activity.

The proportion of state ownership versus individual or communal ownership can also vary. For example, in countries with a legacy of Marxism, such as Mozambique, all land is owned by the state. Most land administration systems are based either on customary practices or on inherited colonial practices, but in some countries an Islamic approach to land administration is applied.

Land tenure typology

Land tenure is complicated. For instance, sometimes within the same poor settlement, neighbouring households may live under different tenure terms and degrees of security. Some may have rental contracts, some may own their parcels of land, others may have user rights, still others may be squatters – or tenants of squatters – with no legal tenure rights at all to the land. To fully appreciate the diversity that marks most African cities,³⁰ it is useful to lay out the spectrum of tenure systems as a typology (see Table 7).

TABLE 7: TENURE SYSTEMS AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

| Tenure system | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Freehold (private ownership) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ownership in perpetuity |
| Registered leasehold | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ownership of a leasehold estate for a specified period (sometimes up to 99 years) • The landowner has to create the leasehold estate and transfer it to the leaseholder. |
| Rental (public or private) | <p>Two options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • public: occupation of state-owned land or housing • private: rental by a landowner to tenants |
| Cooperatives and condominiums | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ownership vested in a cooperative or corporate body of which residents are co-owners |
| Customary tenure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ownership vested in family, community, group or tribe • Land is managed by leaders on behalf of the community • A variation is religious tenure • A variation is religious tenure |
| Intermediate forms of tenure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pragmatic arrangements, often of a short-term nature (e.g. certificates, occupation permits, etc.) |
| Informal tenure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Squatting, unauthorized sub-divisions, unofficial rental, etc. |

There are advantages and disadvantages to each of these tenure systems, as we discuss in more detail in *Quick Guide 3: Land and Quick Guide 4: Evictions*. For now, we turn to the market context within which these tenure systems function.

Land market dynamics

Land is increasingly being seen as a commodity, and not as a common good whose use must be carefully regulated for the benefit of all citizens. This shift has huge implications for how public and private land is used, and how its use is being regulated by governments.

Any land that is suitable for housing has a

value and can be bought or sold, whether it is publicly or privately owned, and whether it exists within the formal or informal market systems. Market forces ultimately determine who uses any parcel of land and how much that land costs, except when governments deliver public land directly to people, in the form of subsidized housing projects. Yet even public land, after it has been allocated and built up with low-income housing, enters the market, and units are bought or sold either formally or informally. Prices are determined by the demand for housing in that particular location, with certain qualities and amenities.

Market forces, demographic pressures and urban growth keep driving up the demand for land, but the supply in most cities con-

tinues to fall very far short of this demand. Some governments have made efforts to increase the supply of serviced land by regulating urban land markets, while at the same time a variety of informal land supply systems have appeared to meet the needs the formal land market can't meet. Any attempts by poor people or by governments to get land for affordable housing have to acknowledge these forces. So it makes sense to understand the basic principles of markets which affect access to urban land for housing.

Unlike other things that you can buy or sell, each piece of land is unique. Each piece is fixed in a specific location and it comes with certain advantages and disadvantages of access, terrain and proximity to transport and amenities. Its location and other attributes are what determine its value, its use and its selling price. All these attributes are affected by changing demands in a city. When the land supply diminishes and demand escalates, land prices go up – and they go up fast. Consequently, those with the most money to spend will get access to the best land in cities, not those who most need it.

A growing population automatically increases demand for land – pieces of land of all sizes and locations, for all income groups and under the whole spectrum of tenure forms (both formal and informal), and for all kinds of uses: commercial, industrial, recreational and public. When a city's population grows rapidly, and governments and land markets can't provide land fast enough to meet these growing demands, land prices skyrocket.

Most African cities have seen a simultaneous demand for land and a diminishing of land supply, which has put a huge premium on land. When a city's formal land market can't make enough land available to meet the city's needs, land prices will rise and growing numbers of people will find themselves priced out of any affordable land or housing

options. And when poor people can't afford land on the formal markets, they go to informal markets. As demonstrated in *Quick Guide 3: Land*, *Quick Guide 4: Evictions and Quick Guide 7: Rental Housing*, most African cities have vibrant informal land markets which are meeting the land and housing needs of poorer citizens, including squatters and migrants. These informal markets are so effective that a majority of land transactions taking place in many African cities are now informal.

This is an important variable in the political economy of housing supply for the urban poor. Government leaders and managers with a commitment to addressing the housing crisis in African cities will have to be savvy about these dynamics, and calibrate their interventions accordingly. To aid in this process, we describe here ten strategies to make land more accessible for the urban poor, always bearing in mind the dominance of informal land markets alongside exclusionary formal ones.

10 STRATEGIES TO MAKE LAND MORE ACCESSIBLE TO THE POOR

The best way to solve problems of land and housing is to support a broad range of groups of people and approaches to housing provision on many fronts. Governments and development agencies often fall into the trap of believing that there is a single solution to the problems of land, for example extending land title to everyone. The “single solution” is a myth. Land and all its potentials need to be seen as part of a broader approach to ensuring housing for the urban poor. Issues around land need to be looked at in the context of urban governance, urban planning and infrastructure provision, as well as economic and social empowerment of the poor.

The 10 strategies described next (and in much greater detail in Quick Guide 3: Land) should be considered together with those described in the other Quick Guides in this series, including sites-and-services schemes and other alternatives to eviction (*Quick Guides 2 and 4*), housing finance (*Quick Guide 5*), rental housing (*Quick Guide 7*) and the central role of community-based organizations (CBOs) (*Quick Guide 6*). Policy makers should note that providing land for low-income housing is ultimately a political issue. Each of the 10 strategies discussed below can either increase or reduce the access of the poor to land, depending on political will and intentions.

Strategy 1: Planning more efficiently

As development, growth and competition and speculation drive land prices in African cities higher and higher, land for everybody's housing – but especially for the poor – becomes less and less affordable.

One way to bring land costs down in low-income housing projects is to minimize the amount of land used for each unit through more efficient planning. When laying out a new housing or community redevelopment project, good planning can help reduce per-unit land costs, allow for more efficient and more affordable basic services, and create better living environments which allow the residents to enjoy a better quality of life.

There are a number of progressive planning approaches to achieve this (discussed more fully in Quick Guide 3: Land): planning with people; planning for pedestrians as opposed to cars; planning for higher density; planning efficiently; and using land-use regulations more astutely. It is particularly the last of these approaches that can prove a powerful tool to help the poor access land for housing. Land use and building regulations can be adjusted to make them more in tune with the real needs of the poor. They can significantly increase the amount of affordable housing available in the formal market. Also, the existence of land use regulations which set aside land for low-income housing can also be a powerful tool for organized communities to use in their search for land, and in their negotiations to use that land for genuine low-income housing initiatives.

Strategy 2: Better land information

Having a well functioning land information system is one of the most important precondition to providing land for housing the poor. If land records in a city are unclear, this leaves room for land use to be manipulated in different ways by powerful interests, and in these manipulations the poor are almost

always the losers. Also, you can't legally give or lease land to the poor (either individually or collectively) if the rights are uncertain, so the threat of eviction remains.

The lack of reliable, updated public records of land rights and land transactions can also be a barrier to developing an effective, transparent land market. Poor land records stimulate the growth of informal land markets, with large numbers of land transactions and allocations going unrecorded, so cities lose out on revenues from property taxes. Land information systems are essential for natural resource management, service delivery, valuations, the rating of properties, cost recovery on services, land tax, raising financial capital, dispute resolution and conflict management.

Land information can strengthen the hand of the urban poor in the contestation over scarce resources. When poor communities have access to good information about what land in their city is available, who owns it, how much it has sold for and how much similar land is worth, it can help them to find possible land for housing and strengthen their negotiations for a lower price.

The ideal land information system is a cadastre, which provides information about rights, use or values of all land parcels. Full cadastral systems are complex and expensive, however, and only a small proportion of Africa is covered by a cadastre. There is thus often a need to develop more appropriate land information systems. In order to be effective for all types of households, it is important for land information systems to be able to capture the whole range of tenure options reflected in Table 7 above.

Strategy 3: Better land taxation systems

Taxing land is one of the main ways in which cities around the world generate public revenue for various public purposes. But charging taxes on land – especially on land left vacant – is also an important fiscal tool that city governments can use to discourage land speculation and ensure a steady supply of land for various purposes. A steady supply of land in a city has the effect of keeping overall land prices down, which in turn makes it easier for the poor to access land for housing.

Taxes on land are charged in different ways, according to a variety of tax systems. Three main categories of tax are:

1. **Capital gains taxes**, which are charged on land only when it is sold, according to the principle that the profit a person earns by selling a piece of land should be taxed, like any other income.
2. **Vacant land taxes**, charged to owners of vacant land that is left unused. The object of these taxes is to make owning vacant land unprofitable, discourage land speculation and encourage capital investment on land to utilize it to its full potential.
3. **Land use taxes**, which are separate taxes charged in some countries on land and on whatever building stands on that land. In terms of these taxes, a person may pay two different rates, or different people may pay tax on the same place: the one who owns the land and the one who owns the building.

There are many pitfalls to avoid in establishing a suitable and effective land taxation system. We identify these in greater detail in *Quick Guide 3 : Land*.

Strategy 4: Land sharing

Land sharing is an approach developed in Asian countries to resolve urban land conflicts between poor communities (who need the land they occupy for their housing) and private or government landowners (who want the land back to develop it). It is a strategy that can also be applied in African cities, which face many similar land pressures and housing needs.

Practically, after a period of planning and negotiation, an agreement is reached to “share” the land. The community is given, sold or leased one part of the land for reconstructing their housing (usually the least commercially viable part of the land), and the rest of the land is returned to the landowner to develop. How much land the people get and how much land goes back to the owner is decided during the negotiations. And finally, everybody benefits. However, it is usually a long and complicated process and doesn't work in all situations.

Land sharing divides the benefits of urban prosperity a little more equitably:

- Landowners can clear some land for immediate development and save time and the costs of long eviction litigation.
- Informal settlement residents stay where they have been living and working, get secure land tenure and keep their communities intact.
- Governments get much needed land and housing delivered to the city's poor communities, without having to pay for it.

There is considerable potential and scope to experiment with this strategy in the African context.

Strategy 5: Land pooling

Land pooling (or land readjustment, as it is also called) is a way of joining several adjacent pieces of land (held by different landowners) and eliminating the property boundaries to create a large site on which to make a new, planned redevelopment project. If the project is large enough, there may also be parks, playgrounds, schools and shops in the master plan.

In exchange for agreeing to join the scheme and giving up their land, landowners usually get one or two plots in the new subdivision, to sell or build a house on, usually with the expectation that the smaller plots in the new project will fetch a high market price.

Strategy 6: Cross-subsidy schemes

Some governments have policies which require that private sector developers reserve a portion of their formal, market-rate housing projects for low-income housing (this is also known as “inclusionary zoning” or “inclusionary housing”). The idea is simple: if a developer is going to make huge profits constructing high-income housing for wealthy clients, why shouldn't a small portion of those profits (or the sale price of the units) be devoted to subsidizing the housing of the less fortunate households who can't afford market-rate housing? It's a kind of progressive tax on high-end development. These policies can work in different ways, but most of them stipulate that a certain percentage of the total number of units a developer builds, or a certain percentage of the total land the new development is being built on, must be low-income housing.

A related mechanism is the “transfer of development rights” (TDR). It is a land management tool that enables governments to generate financial resources by allowing

landowners or developers to build more than they are allowed to by the land use plan (for example, more levels, making the building taller). With the land use taxes generated by this development, governments can finance upgrading or other housing for the urban poor. The TDR strategy only works in situations where land is particularly valuable, and the taxes paid by the developer are therefore high enough to fund significant low-cost housing by government.

Strategy 7: Regularizing existing slums

Recognizing and granting legal tenure to informal settlement residents is the best way of ensuring poor urban-dwellers' sustained access to land and housing. (See Quick Guide 2: Low-income Housing.)

Regularizing informal settlements on private land usually involves negotiating with landowners to sell or lease the land (or part of it) to community members, community cooperatives or some intermediary government organization, which then manages the repayment by individual households for their land plots. Informal settlements on government land are usually regularized by granting long-term lease contracts or user rights to individual households or community cooperatives – for free, for a nominal fee or sometimes for full cost recovery. This is clearly one of the most important and relevant strategies available to African city managers.

Strategy 8: Using public land for housing

One of the best ways to reduce land costs for low-income housing is to use public land. Houses can be planned and built on this land using a variety of strategies and

through a variety of partnerships. In theory, public land is an asset which belongs to a city's population and which is to be used for the common good of that population. There is an unfortunate trend these days, however, to see publicly owned land as a marketable commodity rather than as a public good, and to sell it or rent it out to the highest bidder. But in some African cities pockets of public land are being made available here and there to use for providing low-income housing, and in most cases it is easier for the communities living on that land to negotiate affordable lease rates and secure tenure terms than it would be on private land.

Strategy 9: Learning from informal land developers

It is possible and essential to adapt informal strategies for making land available to urban residents to the formal land market, if governments are willing to depart from the conventional administrative and regulatory frameworks they use for land distribution. An approach to this could involve the following steps:

- Officials go to the people and set up reception camps on available land. All allotment is done on the spot, with the help of community members. Providing adequate security of tenure (e.g. an occupation permit) is important.
- Application, leasing and allotment steps are reduced to a minimum, to keep procedures simple.
- Those who are allotted land must start building houses as soon as they take possession, to keep out speculators. Ideally, occupation rights should lapse if an allottee does not occupy the plot they have been allotted.
- Only the layout of plots is fixed. All the house building is left to the people re-



ceiving the plots (although appropriate support such as advice and access to materials should ideally be provided).

- Initially only basic services (e.g. water and sanitation) are provided. The upgrading of services and facilities will then occur over time.

This unconventional approach is clearly premised on the existence of partnerships and a willingness to take risks and reform overly bureaucratic administrative procedures. In the end it can greatly enhance the availability of land for low-income housing in most African cities.

Strategy 10: Support community initiatives

One of the best ways to enhance the supply of affordable land and housing in African cities is to find ways to support the poor themselves. While the housing they produce may not be ideal, the informal systems they have developed to produce and deliver it are still the most effective, large-scale and far-reaching housing delivery systems we have in African cities. These systems – often incremental – are tailor-made to the harsh re-

alities of the poor urban-dwellers' lives and conditions, and the even harsher economic realities and land markets of the cities they live in.

Poor communities can be much more resourceful than governments or developers when it comes to finding land for housing. When well organized communities have access to cheap, flexible loans, they can search for and negotiate to buy suitable land on their own.

There are many ways in which governments, NGOs and support institutions can support what poor communities and their networks and federations are already doing from the bottom up. In places where more progressive government agencies and support institutions have been able to look at, listen to and learn from the poor, they have been able to find creative ways to support and add value to what poor people are already doing to house themselves, instead of undermining those efforts. Some strategies developed in partnership with poor communities have produced some of Africa's most exciting breakthroughs in land and housing for the poor. (See *Quick Guide 6: Community-Based Organizations* for more ways of partnering with and supporting communities.)

GOVERNANCE

Up to this point we have explored the unique features and drivers of urbanization in Africa. Through that exploration we demonstrated that most African cities face a crisis of formal work, shelter and secure access to land tenure. This multidimensional crisis manifests in pervasive informal urbanism in the domains of the economy, neighbourhoods and often politics. Despite the scale and complexity of these challenges, it is possible to understand what is going on and how best to intervene. In fact, by looking at African urbanization through the dual lenses of housing and land, we have identified an expansive agenda for proactive intervention to make these cities more inclusive and livable for all their citizens.

However, given the peculiar colonial history of African urban institutions, especially local government and various national agencies that operate at the urban scale, it would be a grave error to assume that urbanization challenges can be solved without a fundamental transformation of governance norms, institutions, practices and expectations.

At the heart of this transformation agenda is the empowerment of the majority of urban residents, who find themselves in informal settlements and with very few prospects of a formal job or access to other urban opportunities. At a very pragmatic level it is clear that given the scale of the urban development challenges, the limited financial resources available to the government and the limitations of capacity, the urban poor must be enrolled as central actors in all of the interventions discussed above. This, in turn, will force a rethink and a remaking of local government systems and organizations to foster a partnership-based approach to urban development.

In Quick Guide 6: Community-based Orga-

nizations and Quick Guide 8: Local Government we explore in considerable detail how to empower these institutions to formulate and implement the urban development agenda. In this introductory guide we will briefly present the core arguments of both Guides 6 and 8, in the context of a position on the national system of policy reform that is a precondition for local success.

Partnerships are indispensable

Partnerships between local government and other stakeholders are important, because the problems of land, housing and services in African cities are too big and too complex for either local governments, central governments, communities or development agencies to solve alone. Good solutions to these problems that reach the scale of need in the city require partnership, but partnership isn't easy – especially between the poor and the state, who have a long history of mutual distrust to get over.

The nature of engagement between CBOs and the state can vary from resistance/contestation to collaboration/partnership, depending on the prevailing conditions. In many instances these relationships evolve from initial conflict, as CBOs struggle to draw the attention of the local state to their plight, to eventual collaboration, partnership, and in some cases, complete cooperation.

It should be noted, however, that collaboration and contestation are not mutually exclusive. Development processes can simultaneously involve collaboration and contestation between a community-based organization and the state, as development processes inevitably create conflict. It is therefore essential that some broad principles and agreements are established about the respective roles of CBOs, local governments and other urban actors in the larger urban develop-

ment process. Ideally, such agreements would be codified in legislation and policies that institutionalize the co-production of plans, interventions and assessments to give substantive content to the norms of participatory governance. There are a number of concrete policy steps that can be taken to achieve this institutional condition.

One of the principles of any good partnership is finding a way for each partner to do what it does best, and letting the others do what they do best, so the parts all add up to a workable whole. This kind of problem-solving is many-sided, and makes for some of the best solutions. But partnership takes time, and can only be developed through practice and patience.

Partnership between governments and poor communities is relatively new. For government bodies to enter into partnership with communities requires adjustments in attitudes and mindsets on both sides. But this kind of partnership, and the devolution of control that it involves, represents a strategy for governments to achieve genuine decentralization and the full participation of poor people in the programmes which affect their lives.

There are a number of examples of successful partnerships between local governments and CBOs to address urban development issues in Africa (for example access to housing and infrastructure, urban regeneration and waste management), and some of these examples are discussed at greater length in Quick Guide 6: Community-based Organizations. However, a precondition for sound partnerships is, of course, the existence of capable and purpose-driven CBOs on the one hand, and effective democratic local government on the other.

Ways for local government to support community-based organizations

There are a number of ways in which local governments can support CBOs. In some cases the support merely involves creating the space for CBOs to act, while in other cases it may require working together actively with CBOs. We touch on six actions that local government can take.

1. **Recognize and work with CBOs**, since they offer a practical way for the intended beneficiaries of urban devel-



opment programmes to play a central role in initiatives that will impact on them.

2. **Support community mapping and enumeration initiatives** as a way for local governments to help build the capacity of community organizations, while simultaneously gaining valuable information that is essential for urban planning and urban management purposes.
3. **Support community-based savings and credit initiatives** in order to assist residents to access more finance from other sources to improve their living conditions. (See Quick Guide 5: Housing Finance for more details on community savings and credit, and how local governments can support this.)
4. **Facilitate local development partnerships with CBOs** that go beyond local government, for example collaborative initiatives between community organizations and other key urban actors like NGOs, universities, technical institutions, architects, civil society groups and private sector operators which respond to the needs of poor communities.
5. **Participate in the establishment of Community Development Funds** that are light, flexible and jointly managed by communities, local authorities and other stakeholders, and that provide much needed loans to community organizations for housing, infrastructure and income generation. Through facilitating access to finance, community development projects can be initiated, grown and replicated.

6. **Support the creation and participation of CBO networks** at higher levels, because such networks provide horizontal support to individual communities, and opportunities for exchange of experience and learning from each other. They also create possibilities for pooling resources. This kind of collaboration provides groups with access to greater financial resources, a greater sense of solidarity, and enhanced influence when it comes to negotiating with the state and with other actors on the urban scene for entitlements and resources. Most importantly, these networks make it easier for governments to engage with community organizations, as they are potentially able to deal with a few organizations (or sometimes even one organization) rather than an array of fragmented groups.

BUILDING EFFECTIVE LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN AFRICA

It is important to bear in mind that the entire urban development agenda rests on African governments taking the political decision to get serious about democratic decentralization. Local governments in Africa generally have severe capacity and resources constraints, for example in terms of staff and finances. Many local government bodies in Africa have, however, managed to tackle their urban challenges through being innovative and willing to engage with other key stakeholders such as civil society. It is these trends that give us hope that the under-investment by central governments in strong sub-national government will soon come to an end.

The most urgent challenge is to sharpen and strengthen national decentralization policy frameworks. Such frameworks must indicate how the following policy dimensions, identified in the *2008 State of African Cities Report*, will be addressed: "(a) local autonomy from central government; (b) institutionalization of real citizen participation; (c) capacity building among councillors and chief officers; and (d) direct election of Mayors by residents to make the function less vulnerable to political manipulation."³¹ In addition, local governments need to have sufficient financial resources from a range of sources; local property taxation can be particularly important, as in addition to potentially providing access to a reliable source of revenue, it can help ensure greater autonomy from central government and can be a development tool in terms of guiding urban development.

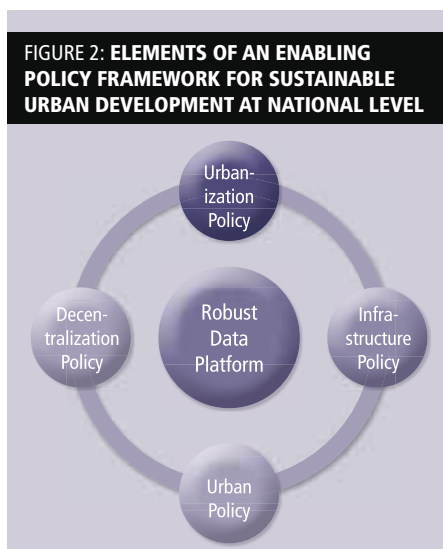
At the heart of this decentralization agenda is the capacity of local government to function in a partnership mode, underpinned by sufficient fiscal resources, and focused on the developmental priorities of housing,

land and access to livelihood opportunities for the urban poor. This implies a capacity to drive an integrated approach to development.

Integration

Success with regard to housing and land depends on integrated urban development policy frameworks at national and city level. Ideally, national governments will put forward a suite of interrelated policy frameworks that seek to link economic growth ambitions with inclusive social development strategies (education, health and housing), infrastructure investment plans and long-term sustainability targets. Figure 2 illustrates the elements of a national suite of urban development policies.

An **urbanization policy** refers to explicit government policies that seek to define, understand and shape the national spatial sys-



tem, including the network of cities, towns and rural settlements. Typically, this understanding informs decisions about where in the national territory investments should be concentrated and focused. National spatial frameworks, which are subsets of an urban policy, also inform how migration dynamics are understood and managed.

In contrast, an **urban policy** reflects how national governments understand the role of specific cities and towns in the successful execution of national development goals. Typically, urban policies will define what needs to happen in specific cities and towns with regard to various sectoral and meso objectives pertaining to mobility, housing, education, health and so on. Put differently, urban policies provide perspective on critical issues that need to be addressed within cities, and will support the efforts of sub-national levels of government to elaborate more detailed policies and strategies for those places. This type of policy is informative and complementary to more detailed local-level development policy processes.³²

It is virtually impossible to populate an urban policy with strategic content in the absence of a **national infrastructure policy**. This type of policy framework defines distinctions between infrastructure for meeting basic services of households, and connectivity infrastructure to enhance the productivity and competitiveness of economic activity. Good policies also define infrastructure to secure a more resilient and renewable environment. National infrastructure policies spell out a satisfactory balance between these categories of infrastructure development. This balancing act is, of course, particularly difficult in low-income countries across Africa, which are faced with the real dilemma that most potential beneficiaries of basic services cannot afford to pay for these services because they simply do not have the requisite income or securities. If there is no policy on how these tensions will be addressed, then the

de facto situation will favour skewed investments to service the middle classes that can afford to pay for services, thereby reinforcing urban inequalities and exclusions. Since this was a tendency promoted during the structural adjustment decades (1980s–2000s), it is particularly important to define how a more balanced and inclusive approach will be implemented.

National decentralization policies set out how sub-national governments will be structured, financed and empowered to be the lead agents in driving local development processes. The international evidence is emphatic that unless key development functions are devolved to sub-national tiers of government under the principle of subsidiarity (performing a function at the lowest level of government that circumstances allow), it is impossible to foster effective urban management capacity to address the complex problems of land, housing, services, inward investment, sustainability and chronic poverty. Decentralization policies also serve to diffuse competitive dynamics between sectoral departments and tiers of government, through a sensible division of powers – informed by the various territorial policies and the infrastructure agenda – and a sustainable fiscal system that does not starve sub-national governments but makes them viable and accountable. (The elements of effective local government are explored in much greater detail in *Quick Guide 8: Local Government*.)

Finally, it is essential that national government and other actors at the local level collect and analyze a range of critical sets of information. Nationally, the government needs to analyze, as accurately as possible, demographic dynamics, correlated with economic dynamics in space, linked in turn to data about land-use patterns and infrastructural systems. Similar information must be collected, but at a finer grain, at the local level. The model that has emerged in vari-

ous cities around the world is that of Urban Observatories. Good data are important for accurate planning, continuous monitoring and, most importantly, informed democratic debate and decision-making. Good data reinforce accountability, which in turn is the bedrock of legitimacy – a vital asset for democratically elected politicians.

At the city scale, it is vital that local governments build up an integrated system of policies and mutually reinforcing decision-making systems, to link the vision for the city with the operational practices of local government and other actors who participate in urban politics. Figure 3 provides a summary of the elements of a coherent and comprehensive urban governance and management system that can pursue sustainable urban development with a bias towards the urban poor.

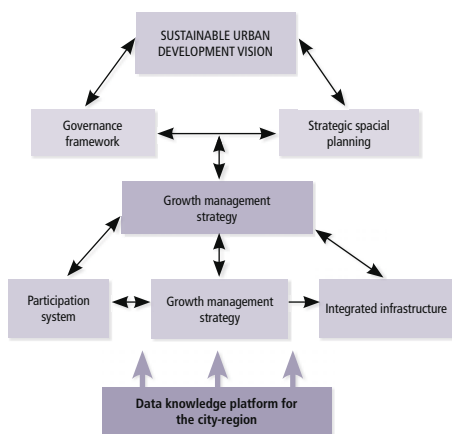
It is beyond the scope of this Quick Guide to explore all these elements in any detail. As is clear, they mimic to some extent the aspects of the national urban policy system that is required, but they are centred on the growth management strategy (GMS) for the city. The GMS provides the baseline informa-

tion about what the “state of the city” is, in terms of a range of development indicators, and indicates in what ways it falls short of the normative ideal of a sustainable city that can address the housing and land needs of all its citizens. It then proposes specific ways and targets for addressing the gap between the actual state of the city and the ideal. This will provide the starting point for sectoral and multi-sectoral plans (for example human settlement plans, integrated infrastructure investment frameworks, Local Agenda 21, local economic development strategies, or safety and security plans) that guide the detailed medium-term plans and expenditure projections of the large infrastructure sectors. In other words, an infrastructure plan cannot simply define its function in terms of its own sectoral logic, but needs to demonstrate how it contributes to closing the gap between the ideal and the current unequal and exclusionary city. Ideally, the budgetary and human resource management systems will reinforce this process, and it will all be captured in the strategic planning framework.

Solving the housing and land imperatives in African cities requires both focus and consistency, as we demonstrate throughout these Quick Guides, but it must also be embedded in a broader institutional system at national and local level that allows for more effective urban management over the long haul.

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FIGURE 3: POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL DIMENSIONS OF THE SUSTAINABLE CITY



all its citizens. It then proposes specific ways and targets for addressing the gap between the actual state of the city and the ideal. This will provide the starting point for sectoral and multi-sectoral plans (for example human settlement plans, integrated infrastructure investment frameworks, Local Agenda 21, local economic development strategies, or safety and security plans) that guide the detailed medium-term plans and expenditure projections of the large infrastructure sectors. In other words, an infrastructure plan cannot simply define its function in terms of its own sectoral logic, but needs to demonstrate how it contributes to closing the gap between the ideal and the current unequal

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ACT-LEARN-ACT-REFINE-ACT...

This Guide began by suggesting that poorly managed urbanization in Africa has produced a housing crisis which is exacerbated by skewed land markets and the existence of very few formal economic opportunities. As a consequence, we are left with a situation dominated by informal dynamics that are difficult to disentangle and regularize. If urban management structures and political leaders want to eliminate the chronic urban poverty that bedevils African cities, they must put in place a series of measures to work with the urban poor to solve their cities' problems.

Most fundamentally, this requires a radical mindset change. Instead of seeing slums as sources of dysfunction, corruption, vice and other negative stereotypes, these settlements, and especially the people who inhabit them, should be seen as *resilient innovators*. Residents are forced to provide their own shelter with very little income, and without access to a number of public good resources coming from the state. And somehow it works, even if imperfectly. Thus, for governments serious about tackling urban poverty and slum conditions, their first port of call must be the people who live in these areas, and the organizations that they have formed to advance their collective interests.

However, it would be naïve to assume that somehow urban managers will see the light

and engage poor communities, find commonality and work together respectfully. This may happen, but it is an improbable scenario. Instead, it is important to understand the necessity and importance of putting in place specific mechanisms to force all the stakeholders involved in the urban development process to continuously assess whether policies and decisions are being implemented and achieving the desired results. The Quick Guide series provides numerous ideas for how this can be done, from the moment of engaging communities to establishing partnerships and undertaking planning, and then proceeding to the implementation phase of specific slum upgrading and public housing programmes.

The point is not so much which tools and instruments are chosen, but that there is a formal commitment and set of processes to collaboratively set targets, monitor performance, and remedy the situation when delivery does not match intent. This democratic underpinning, executed by effective CBOs in collaboration with local government and various state agencies, is an essential foundation for success in delivering both housing and land that can address the basic and livelihood needs of the urban majority in Africa cities.

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WEBSITES

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Environment and Urbanization, the Journal of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), London, UK. All issues of this journal can be downloaded from the Sage Publications website, <http://sagepub.com>

Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI), www.sdinet.org

United Nations Human Settlements Programme, www.unhabitat.org

For an annotated list of websites that offer more information about the key issues discussed in this Quick Guides series, please visit the Housing the Urban Poor website www.housing-the-urban-poor.net and follow the links to "Organizations database".



The pressures of rapid urbanization and economic growth in Africa have resulted in growing numbers of evictions of urban poor from their neighbourhoods. In most cases they are relocated to peripheral areas far from centres of employment and economic opportunities. At the same time over 500 million people now live in slums and squatter settlements in Africa and this figure is rising.

Local governments need policy instruments to protect the housing rights of the urban poor as a critical first step towards attaining the Millennium Development Goal on significant improvement in the lives of slum-dwellers by 2020. The objective of these Quick Guides is to improve the understanding by policy makers at national and local levels on pro-poor housing and urban development within the framework of urban poverty reduction.

The Quick Guides are presented in an easy-to-read format structured to include an overview of trends and conditions, concepts, policies, tools and recommendations in dealing with the following housing-related issues:

(1) **Urban Africa:** Building with untapped potential (2) **Low-income housing:** Approaches to helping the urban poor find adequate housing in African cities (3) **Land:** A crucial element in housing the urban poor (4) **Eviction:** Alternatives to the destruction of urban poor communities (5) **Housing finance:** Ways to help the poor pay for housing (6) **Community-based organizations:** The poor as agents of development (7) **Rental housing:** A much neglected housing option for the poor (8) **Local government:** Addressing urban challenges in a participatory and integrated way.

Leaders and policy managers of many of Africa's states, cities and towns have by and large failed to come to terms with the reality and implications of rapid urbanization. As a result, we witness across sub-Saharan Africa poorly managed cities and towns and wasted potential. At its starkest, this failure is manifested in slum living conditions and the high rate of slum growth. The reasons we have not been able to reverse this trend are many and complex. This Quick Guide 1 explores the failure of imagination on the part of all those involved in urban development and management to see urbanization as a resource with great potential to solve the African development crisis, instead of as a cause of the crisis. It proposes a range of policy and action frameworks that can steer urban development in positive directions, using the considerable resources of knowledge, experience and skill that exist within urban poor communities across the continent. In doing so, it introduces themes and strategies that are explored more fully in the other Quick Guides for Africa in this series.

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More information can be found on the website www.housing-the-urban-poor.net

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