

Streets as Tools for Urban Transformations in Cities in the Developing World

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This keynote presentation draws on the current policy of UN-Habitat, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, that adopts a strategy focusing on streets as tools for urban transformation in slums and informal settlements. The presentation reflects the work undertaken by Claudio Acioly for the development of this policy which resulted into the report published as '*Streets as Tools for Urban Transformation: a street-led approach to citywide slum upgrading programme*' (UN-Habitat, 2014).

At first the presentation highlights the global problem of informal urbanization, a phenomenon of a magnitude that adversely affects the future of cities in the developing world. The sustainability of cities is at stake if no action is taken by city governments to improve current conditions and prevent the pervasive persistence and multiplication of slums and informal settlements. The presentation provides the audience with a rich visualization of the problem, its scale, scope and trends. But it also reviews in a brief manner the previous policies and approaches adopted by many cities to address this challenge. Slum upgrading, as it is called, is not a new approach. More than 50 years of experience and practice in various parts of the world provides a wealth of knowledge and lessons learned which are depicted by the presentation and the policy report of UN-Habitat. What is new in UN-Habitat's approach is that it centers the strategy on streets and the public space they create. The presentation shows the rationale of a street-led approach as part of an area-based plan to gradually transform slums into formal neighborhoods. This approach fosters the physical, social, economic and juridical integration of slums and informal settlements into the urban fabric of cities. This enables them and their residents to become part and parcel of the overall urban planning and management systems that govern urban development. Streets are seen and used as means to reassure citizenship rights and obligations because streets define addresses and the public domain, set parameters for land and property rights regularization, define the physical connections to utility networks, and the location or pathway for services provision and levying of user's charges.

The backdrop of the study demonstrates that slums and informal settlements are integral parts of a city system which are often socially excluded, spatially segregated and disconnected from the rest of the city due to absence of streets, open spaces and an overall urban structure that otherwise would enable their connectivity to the rest of the city. Taking advantage of streets as the natural conduits that connect slums with the city, UN-Habitat suggests a fundamental shift towards the opening of streets as the driving force for citywide slum upgrading and urban transformation.

The presentation showcases three fundamental paradigm shifts advocated by UN-Habitat in promoting a street-led approach to citywide slum upgrading. Firstly, it encourages a shift from piecemeal project-based intervention to a program approach that brings slum upgrading to scale, thus facilitating improvements in multiple settlements that reconnects them to the overall city systems of infrastructure, mobility and economic development; secondly, it reinforces the importance of an area-based plan that produces an urban structure firmly defined from the street network and brings to the forefront the need for an unconventional urban planning approach; and finally it makes a business case for integrating slum upgrading initiatives with urban and housing policies that brings the supply of land and housing to scale, diversity, price, location and standards. This is called the twin-track approach. The availability of land and mechanisms of housing provision will provide room for relocation and demolitions that are inexorably associated to a street-led slum upgrading intervention on an existent settlement.

The final part of the presentation provides the audience with a wide range of practical experiences and examples from different cities in the world showing how the approach actually works on the ground, the potentials, results, outcomes as well as bottlenecks and shortcomings that are all part and parcel of this model of intervention that starts the urban transformation of slums and informal settlements.

This work is now part of the Global Urban Lecture Series of UN-Habitat and is available online in a form of open source lecture:

<<http://unhabitat.org/street-led-city-wide-slum-upgrading-claudio-acioly-un-habitat/>>

It is also available in UN-Habitat's You Tube page:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k12XNVzCUvY&list=PLTQZbEc6Bv5-Hja_AppdM6gkXp98C01Ca&index=15>.

The report is equally available online:

<<http://mirror.unhabitat.org/pmss/listItemDetails.aspx?publicationID=3552>>

<http://www.citiesalliance.org/sites/citiesalliance.org/files/publications/UN-Habitat_Street-led%20Citywide%20Slum%20Upgrading_2014.pdf>

ⁱ Claudio Acioly is an architect and urban planner, a development practitioner with more than 30 years of experience. During the period 2008-2012 he was chief Housing Policy of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and coordinator of the United Nations Housing Rights Programme implemented in partnership with the Office of UN High Commissioner of Human Rights. He also coordinated the work of the Advisory Group on Forced Evictions to the Executive Director of UN-Habitat-AGFE. He is currently the chief of the Training and Capacity Development Unit of UN-Habitat. He has worked in more than 25 countries as practitioner, technical and policy advisor, development consultant and training and capacity building expert in the field of housing policy and implementation, slum upgrading and urban management and development. Throughout his career Acioly has worked with governments, academic institutions, civil society and community-based institutions and private sector organizations. Acioly has been keynote speaker and moderator of various international housing conferences in the world and is the author of books and articles dealing with housing, informal settlements and slum upgrading, urban densities and participatory urban management. He has lectured extensively on these themes and worked as consultant to the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), UN-HABITAT and bilateral organizations. From 1993 to 2008 he was senior housing and land policy expert with the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies-IHS and from 2004 to date he has been a faculty fellow and visiting scholar with the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy for its Latin American training programmes targeting senior policy makers and urban practitioners working with informal land and housing markets and informal settlement regularisation.