



Building partnerships between urban poor communities and local governments

The case of the National Slum
Dwellers Federation of
Uganda in Jinja

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This paper explores the key triggers of strong working relations between communities of the urban poor and local governments. It does so by examining these relations before and after the National Slum Dwellers Federation of Uganda (NSDFU) began organising communities in Jinja, and by analysing the strategies of the federation and council for working together. It explores the vision of the federation and council for the development of the municipality. Following the examination of the work to date it identifies the key triggers of the strengthening relations and makes recommendations to the future process in Jinja and for urban poor communities more generally.

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Summary

This paper is part of a collection of papers that consider how partnerships between local governments and organised urban poor groups can be used to underpin more inclusive, pro-poor, urban development. It specifically examines the work of the National Slum Dwellers Federation of Uganda (NSDFU) in Jinja Municipality, Uganda. The NSDFU is one of 33 urban poor federations in the Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI) network. The findings, it is hoped, hold lessons for the work of organised urban poor communities and urban authorities throughout the Global South

The central question this paper seeks to explore is: what are the key triggers of strong working relations between communities of the urban poor and local governments? It does so by examining these relations before and after the federation began organising communities in Jinja; and analysing the strategies that the federation employed to develop a working partnership with the local government for local development initiatives over time.

The paper explores some of the processes and strategies that local communities have developed to engage with local government, and to ensure that the urban poor could influence urban governance and development. These approaches were learnt through international exchanges that the SDI network facilitated, but were developed locally. Profiling and enumeration has been the most successful method by which the federation has engaged with local governments who often have very limited data on slums.

With this in-depth data, the federation has had the scope to demonstrate the need for interventions, and to fight evictions. From here, pilot projects have been pivotal as a method of developing projects with local governments, and these can demonstrate the capacity of communities to the local governments. Over time they can galvanise relations between communities and local governments, and in some cases this can lead to strategic, pro-poor policy reforms.

Local governments have further institutionalised their working relations with urban poor groups by facilitating the groups' participation in formal planning processes, such as budget conferences, the establishment of the Joint Working Group for planning by Jinja Municipal Council and communities to address the needs of the urban poor, opening up spaces for participation in the Municipal Development Forum, and the development of a decentralised Community Upgrading Fund, capitalised by Cities Alliance.

As a result of these processes, the urban poor and local government now pursue a more harmonised strategy for urban development in Jinja, premised on downwards accountability to the grassroots, and the participation of the urban poor in urban planning.

The developing relations in Jinja have meant that the local government has become a partner that works with the urban poor to address local development challenges. Consequently, the local government that was once beyond the reach of the urban poor is accessible. Community organisations no longer operate autonomously in focusing on self-help; they are now actors in municipal development that have a role in development planning.

The key lessons from this case study are:

- **Lesson 1:** A critical mass of slum dwellers creates a force that councils cannot ignore. An organised critical mass creates a force that can forge its own agenda and then negotiate and partner with others to implement it.
- **Lesson 2:** Programmes that legitimise the role of organised communities in urban planning at multiple levels of government, and create spaces for engagement between communities and government, create an enabling environment for a progressive urban agenda.
- **Lesson 3:** Pilot projects can demonstrate the practicability the 'community participation' concept, and highlight the capacity of the urban poor in a way that slum dwellers and local government appreciate.

Research for this paper was carried out in Jinja through a series of focus group discussions and interviews with community members and council officials, and was supplemented by a review of existing literature. Research was conducted in March and April 2013.

1

Background

1.1 Jinja municipality

Jinja municipality is located approximately 90 kilometres from the Ugandan capital, Kampala. Located just north of the equator on the eastern bank of the Nile, it covers an area of approximately 28 square kilometres. Thanks to the Owen Falls Dam, a railway to Kenya and lake access, Jinja grew into Uganda's premier industrial hub. During political instability under the presidency of Idi Amin (1971-79), however, much of its economic base collapsed and the city was left with widespread unemployment and poverty.

1.2 Governance

Jinja Municipal Council is a decentralised local government, constituted as a Local Council Four (LC IV). The municipality is comprised of three divisions: Walukuba Masese, Jinja Central and Mpumudde Kimaka. These divisions comprise 11 parishes and 54 Local Council villages.¹ The divisions are constituted as Local Council Threes (LC IIIs) and headed by chairpersons. The LC III chairperson works with a team of councillors who are elected every five years, during the national election period. The most recent elections were held in February 2011. At the division level, Assistant Town Clerks lead technical teams that advise these political leaders.

The majority of councillors in Jinja come from the ruling National Resistance Movement party, and though the mayor is of a different party, the working relationship has been productive. Although party politics has stalled the functioning of many municipal councils in Uganda, Jinja has managed these politics well in the past couple of years.

The mayor heads the council, which is the supreme policy-making organ of the municipality. The municipality is divided into seven technical departments: Administration; Public Health; Engineering; Audit; Environment; Treasury; Education and the Community Based Services Department. The town clerk is the chief accounting officer and head of a team of technical officers who constitute the Municipal Technical Planning Committee. The offices of the three divisions work with the municipal council on policy and programme implementation.

¹ Jinja Central Division has 4 parishes and 20 villages; Walukuba-Masese has 3 parishes and 20 villages; Mpumudde-Kimaka has 4 parishes and 14 villages.

2

History of relations between organised communities and the state

'They [council] didn't know of this word "participation"' NSDFU member Michael Kasedde

National Slum Dwellers Federation of Uganda (NSDFU) members and municipal officials have seen relations between the local government and communities in Jinja have go through a series of changes. Edith Samia, an NSDFU leader, recalled that 'urban governance was an office affair' in the pre-federation era. Federation members explained that the council officials would keep themselves to those offices where they had minimal interaction with communities. The engagement between community groups and the local government centred on administrative matters, such as the registration of community-based organisations (CBOs).

The community development officer at the JMC noted that relations between the council and communities was 'generally weak' before the NSDFU began organising. Communities perceived the JMC as the 'White House', he recalled, and found it intimidating to engage with municipal officials, who they perceived to be the elite and powerful. 'They would ask questions like, "How do I go to the municipality where the town clerk sits? Where

the mayor sits?'" NSDFU member Sarah Nandudu supported this assertion with her remark that, '[The] council was seen as a provider, not a partner.'

A limited number of CBOs operated in Jinja in the pre-federation era. Most of them could be described as self-help groups that community members started to support each other during times of sickness, with burial and education expenses, and to support vulnerable children.² Some of these were faith-based, such as the *mpende* groups. Others collected funds to support members cover the cost of emergencies, such as burial groups, or to lend money to members on a rotational basis for individual development, such as *niginas*. The NSDFU reported that sometimes these CBOs would invite local councillors to their gatherings, but this was for the sole purpose of obtaining financial favours.

These CBOs did not focus on issues of service provision. Many of these services were not available in Jinja's informal settlements. Few had access to electricity, unless they were located next to an industry or wealthy household. As Jinja federation member Mudamba Umaru explained, 'Water was a big problem those days. We in the slums would either access water on stand pipes or go buy from a rich person near our

² The HIV/AIDS pandemic spurred the creation of many Ugandan CBOs in an effort to support orphans and child-headed families.

settlements for about UGX 300-350 per jerrycan.³ Informal waste disposal methods, such as burning, were in no way linked to the council. Residents reported that the JMC provided social services, such as schools and health centres, but informal dwellers looked to nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) rather than the council for access to services.

The NSDFU and JMC reported that in the pre-federation era the council was viewed primarily as an enforcer of laws, regulations, and critically, taxes. Most communities feared the JMC because its presence in a neighbourhood was often associated with the collection of graduated tax, which working people over 18 years of age had to pay.³ NSDFU members recalled that council officials were unforgiving in their pursuit of taxes, and that non-payment was often met with violence and loss of property. One member reported that 'council vehicles would evoke feelings of fear and suspicion among local residents and, in fact, many above the age of 18 would run whenever a council vehicle was in sight.'

Despite the thriving markets in many informal areas, and the considerable graduated tax revenue they generated, investment in services was minimal: the concept of slum upgrading was unheard of. In fact, local people and council officials reported that the term slum carried a negative connotation. According to the deputy town clerk, most officials found the topic a 'nuisance': 'Before the federation, technocrats did not want to hear of that word slum. Officials would think, "What about the slum? Who are those people? Why can't they find another place?"' It is clear that before the federation came to Jinja in 2002, this was the common sentiment in council.

³ The graduated tax was a head tax payable by all working males over 18 years of age and all formally employed females between the ages of 18 and 65. The only exceptions were police officers, army personnel and students. The tax was abolished in 2005

3

Enter the federation

The NSDFU's roots in Jinja can be traced to a meeting held in September 2002 at Kamuli Primary School. A delegation from Kampala that included the SDI president, federation members from SDI affiliates, and government officials from the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development convened the meeting. The team explained that urban poor federations in the SDI network used savings to bring communities together, build their capacity to work as a collective and learn from other slum dwellers in the network; and thereby improved the lives of the urban poor and built partnerships with government to that end. As the previous section highlights, this was a novel concept in Jinja.

Those gathered at the meeting agreed to test out this new idea. SDI organised exchanges to introduce Jinja slum dwellers to the work of their peers in Kenya. The Kenyan federation was established in 1996 and had many lessons to share with the Ugandans. During the exchange, NSDFU members visited the Korogocho and Mathare slums, as well as Toi Market, where they were exposed to an entirely new model of community organisation. They learnt federation practices (developed and honed by the 34 federations in the SDI network over the past 10 years), such as daily savings⁴, enumeration⁵ and negotiation. On their return to Uganda, they were inspired to apply the knowledge they had gained. As exchange participant Betty Kisakyé reported:

'In Kenya, I found out that savings [were] really working for them. I visited Toi Market and found out that savings were doing so good because market people were near each other and they collected money daily. When I came back to Uganda, I was on fire! I wanted to mobilise everyone in Kamuli to join the federation. I was selected treasurer of my saving group in Kawama, called Kawama Savings Group, and we would meet every Sunday under a mukongo tree in Kamuli High School.'

The federation spread to all divisions in the municipality. When savings groups begin they often focus on members' livelihood issues, such as the CBOs described earlier; but with time and greater exposure, through exchanges, to federation tools and practices, communities begin to formulate an urban agenda that looks beyond group members and towards transforming the settlements where they live.

Indeed, this was the case in Jinja. NSDFU members learnt that daily saving and becoming part of a federation helped them to accumulate savings and engage each other on more than just livelihood issues. They learnt that enumeration could help them to gather information on their settlements and generate information that was useful to the JMC. In fact, they learnt that council officials were open to participating in the enumeration process right alongside them. Of course, the process was a slow one and members recalled the opposition they faced from communities

⁴ Daily saving is the most fundamental tool in the SDI toolkit. It is a tool for bringing communities together, building trust, and forging collective capacity.

⁵ Enumerations are community-conducted slum surveys. This will be explained in more detail in the next section.

and politicians who did not understand their agenda as explained by federation member Betty Kisakye:

'I faced some problems with the community when we were doing enumerations in Kamuli. Some people made an announcement on radio and called out Mr Kasedde's [federation leader] name and mine stating that we were doing enumerations to steal people's land. It was hard to make people understand, but with time people came to understand.'

The NSDFU's early years, 2002-04 was a learning phase and the federation participated in many exchanges to build their capacity and spark new ways of thinking about urban challenges. It was during this period that the urban poor in Jinja came to recognise that as a collective they could mobilise, negotiate and lobby authorities in ways hitherto unimagined. A new model of community organisation was born that would challenge the status quo and seek inclusive urban development. Central to this model was the feeling among the urban poor that they were entitled to live in the city.

This entitlement was critical to the federation's capacity to negotiate with the local government on issues of tenure security and the NSDFU had some big wins early on. In 2009, the federation enumerated Kikaramoja Settlement, a slum where many Karamojong migrants from the north lived, whose residents were threatened with eviction by a developer planning to put up a university campus. The enumeration showed that the settlement was home to more than 2,000 people, most of whom had lived in the settlement for many years. The enumeration process supported the federation's claims that the residents had a right to be consulted on the upgrading agenda.

Table 1. Kikaramoja enumeration (2009)

Population	2164
Households	505
Disabled/physically challenged	14%
Structure owners	8%
Tenants	92%
Permanent structures	0%
Semi-permanent structures	99%
Child-headed families	9%
Shared toilet	80%
No toilet	13%
Households buying water	99%

The NSDFU realised that sometimes eviction would be necessary, so it needed to think of a resettlement

strategy. In 2005, the federation was granted 7.6 acres of land in Mpumudde Division for a low-cost housing project to serve Jinja's slum dwellers. This achievement was a result of persistent negotiations and discussions between the federation and the council.

It has served as a catalyst for land tenure security negotiations in other Ugandan municipalities, where the NSDFU has secured land for upgrading projects and resisted eviction threats. When the federation secures land from councils to build sanitation units – such as those in Nakawa, Kawembe, Mbale, Arua, and Mbarara – it demonstrates council recognition for the right of slum dwellers to reside in and improve their settlements. This is even more apparent when slum dwellers successfully resist eviction, as they have in Nakawa, Jinja, and Kisenyi. It also serves to bring many new members into the federation.

According to Samia Edith, a federation leader in Jinja, the willingness of the organised community to purchase land for itself convinced the JMC of the slum dwellers' commitment. The federation began identifying land outside of Jinja, which was cheaper. But because of the council's desire to achieve city status – determined by population – it was not keen to see residents move outside of the municipal boundaries. Jinja federation chairman, Michael Kasede added:

'Previously, [the] council did not take slum upgrading as a priority, but when the federation came up, they saw organised people and that made them respond positively. When [SDI President Jockin Arputham] came to Jinja with the Ministry of Lands officials, the council had to be supportive because it saw pressure from the top and the bottom.'

In 2005-09, the NSDFU expanded its membership and the scope of its activity from a handful of loosely networked savings groups to 34 groups by June 2010. Networks were formed, the leadership groomed, thematic committees became active, and construction on the Kawama Housing Project began. The growth of the federation and its governance structures was principally achieved through learning-by-doing exchanges with other federation members, and the strong facilitation of community support officers at NGO ACTogether.

In the beginning, it was often staff (of the support NGO) who identified members for leadership training, but with time the federation (which consists solely of slum dwellers) leaders themselves took over this role. Members who display commitment to the work of the federation and an eagerness to learn and teach, and who have gained the trust of their savings group members are brought under the wing of federation leaders and staff for mentoring in SDI practices and

strategies. As the leaders grow in experience, they begin to see the importance of joining the savings groups into networks – or federating – and forming thematic committees to look at issues that the urban poor face more generally, not just the issues of members in their group.

The NSDFU in Jinja received many visitors and its members continued to exchange strategies with their peers throughout the SDI network. This exposure and the organisational capacity on display made Jinja a prime candidate for a new programme that would open up even greater opportunities for the federation and the partnership that was developing with council.

The Transforming Settlements of the Urban Poor in Uganda (TSUPU) programme was an initiative of global coalition Cities Alliance, the government of Uganda and SDI. Launched in 2009, the programme is the first of its kind in Uganda. It recognises the central role of slum dwellers in the urban development agenda, and institutionalises spaces for engagement between communities and local governments. Cities Alliance piloted the Lands, Services, and Citizenship programme (under which TSUPU falls).

The coalition was attracted to Uganda by the government's commitment to work with the urban poor, and the opportunity for the NSDFU to expand the use of SDI tools to deepen its impact. The programme targeted five municipalities (Jinja, Mbale, Mbarara, Arua and Kabale) and invested more than USD 4 million in three years. The elements of this programme are discussed in greater depth later in this paper, but it is worth highlighting its specific objectives:

- Develop a national urban policy that will guide sustainable urban development in Uganda, ensure the empowerment of local governments, and reinforce the importance of active community participation.
- Build the capacity of local governments to strategically manage urbanisation.
- Empower organisations of the urban poor to actively engage in local development.

Today the federation in Jinja has more than 4000 members and 48 savings groups. The table below shows the most recent data.

Table 2 Jinja federation data

Number of federation members (savers)	4084
Females	2732
Males	1352
Total savings groups	48
Total networks	6
Daily savings	UGX 440,874,000 (USD 161,949)
SUUBI (Urban Poor Fund) savings	UGX 164,520,000 (USD 65,808)
Example slum upgrading projects	Kawama Housing Project
	Rubaga Sanitation Unit
	Masese Sanitation Unit
	Materials Training Centre
	Rippon Sanitation Unit
Example livelihood projects	Craft making
	Fruit and vegetable sales
	Small-scale farming
	Dance and drama groups
	Tent and chair rentals

4

Processes through which the community and council engage

As the previous section shows, the NSDFU engages local governments in a variety of ways aimed at bringing the urban poor to the centre of urban governance. These strategies have evolved with the growth of the SDI movement, and continue to evolve with the experience and peer-to-peer exchange within and between member federations.

In this section, a selection of federation-initiated processes for engaging councils will be explored in more detail to evaluate their effectiveness. Council initiatives for engaging communities will also be explored and assessed. Finally, joint initiatives of the federation and council will be highlighted, which show their commitment to work together and the emerging institutionalisation of this partnership

4.1 Federation initiative

4.1.1 Profiling and enumeration

Unquestionably, one of the most successful ways that the federation has engaged councils is through the process of profiling and enumeration. Profiling and enumeration are SDI practices that enable communities of the urban poor to gather information on the informal settlements within their municipality and use that information to plan, negotiate and advocate. NSDFU conducted profiling of all Jinja's slum settlements in 2010 and a city-wide enumeration in 2011.

Profiling involves organised slum dwellers gathering qualitative data on slum settlements. The federation invited council officials from the political and technical wing to participate in Jinja slum profiling to strengthen the partnership and expose the council to the realities of life in the municipality's slums. The profiles gathered information on land tenure, population, housing, access to services, economic activities, governance and community priorities. Information was gathered through focus group discussions and observation.

Enumeration involves the gathering of quantitative data through household surveys. The federation went from house to house in the slums, instead of relying on a sample survey – experience suggests that sample surveys frequently miss the critical differences between slum settlements within the same municipality. In 2011, the federation conducted a city-wide enumeration, again in partnership with the municipality and academic institutions. The final reports were published in 2012, and launched and endorsed by the municipal council.

The NSDFU in Jinja has used the data gathered to plan pilot projects, such as sanitation units and drainage improvements. The reports have helped the federation to negotiate with the council and donors, demonstrating the need for certain interventions, projects and their expected impact. It has also helped communities, such as the one in Kiraramoja, to fight eviction.

The physical planner of Jinja Municipality noted:

'Something that struck me was the enumerations reports. I was very surprised when I saw all the information they had gathered. In our government systems, we haven't got data from slums... this information has helped us to know the real issues on the ground, slum by slum, not just general information. We now have deeper information and we have internalised this.'

The information the community has gathered becomes a resource for the municipal council which helps to level the playing field when it comes to power relations in the planning process. Urban poor communities bring a tangible product to the negotiating table and make their case from an informed perspective.

4.1.2 Pilot projects

As mentioned above, enumeration and profiling data are used to plan pilot projects. The NSDFU also uses pilot projects to engage municipal councils. They have proved to be a highly effective tool for building working relations, demonstrating the federation's capacity, and highlighting changes to practice and policy that could support the work of the urban poor to upgrade their settlements in Jinja and beyond.

A pilot project that has had considerable impact is the Sanitation Unit in Rubaga Market. The project was founded in 2011 after enumeration data revealed that more than 82.5 percent of slum residents in Jinja did not have access to a toilet in their compound. Rubaga settlement was revealed to have a population of more than 1000 people and the one accessible pit latrine was not maintained. One resident explained:

'There wasn't any toilet in our area and the market was littered all over [with human waste]. We discussed as the community and the community came up with the idea. We decided to initiate the project. We proceeded to contact the council for land. Council provided the land that at the time was occupied by a filthy pit latrine, which was not being used because of the situation it was in.'

The contribution/provision of land by council is an important indicator of the strengthening partnership, and in the cash-strapped municipality it is an effective way for the local government partner with the urban poor to upgrade slums and provide services. The NSDFU constructed and managed a two-storey unit. On the ground floor were toilet stances/stalls and showers for ladies and men, as well as disabled toilet and shower facilities. On the top floor, a community hall was used to

host meetings of regional federation representatives and various income-generating projects – such as table and chair renting and a tailoring project.

NSDFU members built the unit local contractors' support and under the supervision of a council engineer and NGO engineer. The entire unit cost UGX 47,750,000 (USD 18,365) and took two months to complete.

This pilot project strengthened relations with the JMC considerably by drawing attention to construction techniques, such as making *laadis* (prefabricated concrete mini slabs) and t-beams, which can reduce construction costs while retaining strength and simplicity of construction. The project also convinced the council of the quality of federation project management, as evidenced by the subsequent handover of other facilities to federation management and adoption of federation Project Management Committee (PMC) strategies for JMC-initiated projects.

Critically, the project highlighted the savings that could be made by using community contractors. The federation unit was constructed for the same price as a simple 4-stanced/stalled, single-storey toilet built by a JMC-approved contractor in the same year. The JMC had considered this to be the standard unit price because the municipal engineer had determined it. This comparison led to a discussion between the World Bank, JMC, Cities Alliance and others about municipal procurement policies that resulted in a push to raise the threshold for contracts that could be awarded to communities.

4.2 Council initiative

4.2.1 Budget conferences

The government of Uganda ranks highly in terms of budget openness, with the International Budget Partnership (IBP) ranking Uganda highest in East Africa in terms of budget transparency and accountability (2012) and 17th out of 100 countries surveyed worldwide. Locally, opinion is more tempered, with many insisting transparency is on paper only.

Nonetheless, the institutions for participatory budgeting are in place. The JMC hosts budget conferences and communities are encouraged to attend. Priorities, reallocations and budget estimates are discussed for incorporation into the draft budget that the Budget Desk prepares.

This space has not been exploited to its fullest in Jinja. It appears that information flow is a principal concern. Communities insist they are often not told about the conferences, which the council acknowledges is a problem. On the other hand, the federation admits that it has not followed up sufficiently to find out the

conference schedule or informed members about the strategic importance of taking part in such fora. The JMC and the NSDFU agree that community frustration with the budget conferences stems from the fact that finances are limited and thus few of their proposals can be implemented.

The federation leadership is aware that as communities engage with decisions on resource allocation they engage with – and challenge where necessary – the policies and practices that most affect their lives. The budget is the central tool for influencing economic and social policy; thus, communities need to move towards better understanding the budget process and forge partnerships with those who influence financial decisions.

4.3 Joint initiative

4.3.1 Joint Working Group

The Joint Working Group, as the name suggests, was a joint JMC-NSDFU initiative established in 2012. The objectives for the group, which meets monthly, are:

- To accelerate the work of all parties to enhance living conditions in settlements of the urban poor.
- To address bottlenecks that slow down or stall projects that lie outside of NSDFU control.
- To ensure joint accountability and increased transparency of the activities of all parties.
- To ensure greater collaboration between the partners, specifically around project implementation, so that successful interventions can be made more efficient, leverage greater support, and ultimately scale their impact municipality-wide.

The permanent members of the Joint Working Group are: the Jinja mayor; the town clerk; the physical planner; 10 federation members, and an ACTogether community support officer. The town clerk is the chair. The NSDFU is the key determiner of the Joint Working Group agenda and believes that this initiative holds great promise for deepening the action-oriented partnership between the urban poor and council. It is an initiative that recognises the practicality of the partnership for output and efficiency.

4.3.2 Municipal Development Forum (MDF)

Unlike the Joint Working Group, which is composed solely of federation and municipal representatives, the Municipal Development Forum encompasses the entire spectrum of actors in Jinja. In the formulation of the TSUPU programme, the federation worked in partnership with the national and municipal governments to formulate the guiding documents and implementation strategies for these vital spaces for engagement between the council and communities.

The Jinja MDF was launched in 2010. The forum meets quarterly and has an executive membership of 25 people. The executive comprises representatives from government, the urban poor, private sector, media, religious organisations, and CBOs and NGOs.

Although challenges remain with the implementation of the forum – ensuring that it is convened regularly, that politics does not disrupt business, and that resources are available to host meetings and implement resolutions – the consensus locally is that it is useful for participatory planning. The mayor, acknowledging the principal challenge of implementation of plans and policies, noted that the forum is a vehicle that must be exploited fully: ‘We need to move hand-in-hand at the time of planning then the communities will implement, but if you come to them with your plans after you made them they will not.’

Jinja residents increasingly appreciate the value of the forum as a space for resolving their issues. In 2013, taxi drivers were accused of blocking traffic on the main road and were asked to cease pick-ups in the area. They brought the issue before the Municipal Development Forum, and explained that the unlit taxi park was not suitable for night-time pickups and that drivers had therefore taken to using the main road, where there were working streetlights. The council agreed to light the taxi park to accommodate the needs of the taxi drivers and the council. The forum was also instrumental in preparing people for community-upgrading fund opportunities.

The municipal planner sums up the NSDFU contribution to the forum: ‘The federation engages us, challenges us, and they make proposals. Sometimes they bring in good new ideas that have come from their partnerships.’ The forum has the potential to harmonise the efforts of different players in the municipality and different departments within council. It also has the potential to improve information flow and build greater trust.

The community development officer (CDO) remarked that, 'In the [forum], trust is created because issues are made clear and suspicions and rumours are kept at bay. Issues are clarified at the forum, which is a platform for dissatisfaction to be addressed.' The importance of trust to the council's planning and upgrading work cannot be overstated. Given a history of eviction, land-grabbing and corrupt governance, the urban poor in Uganda have become very suspicious of development initiatives.

4.3.3 Community Upgrading Fund (CUF)

As part of the TSUPU programme, Jinja's Community Upgrading Fund (CUF) was established. The fund was capitalised with approximately USD 700,000, which Cities Alliance provided, in an effort to demonstrate the efficiency of the SDI model when it comes to community-conceived and -implemented slum upgrading.

The CUF is jointly managed by the urban poor and the JMC. The aim of the fund is to promote rapid and visible progress, and enable slum dwellers and their organisations to access grants to finance initiatives that meet community needs. The fund also aims to raise the profile of settlement-level urban poor organisations, and give organised communities of the urban poor access to the funds that they require to implement projects that will benefit their settlements.

In Jinja, the MDF advised the federation to draft proposals for its projects. NSDFU leaders convened settlement-level urban poor forums for the federation and its partners at the settlement level to discuss priorities. Enumeration reports allowed the communities to identify urgent needs in underserved communities.

Federation leaders in Jinja supported the local communities in drafting proposals and submitting these to the council's TSUPU coordinator. The NSDFU forwarded 19 proposals to the council in first phase the CUF: the bulk of proposals were for toilet blocks, a few were for security lights, and one was for drainage. Of the 19 proposals, only one was submitted by a group outside the federation.

The TSUPU coordinator then presented the proposals to the MDF executive for consideration. The MDF executive used the CUF guidelines to evaluate the proposals and authorised six projects: electricity extension to Kawama; stone pitch drainage in Rubaga; a public toilet in Rippon; a public toilet in Masese; and street lighting in Masese and Mpumudde.

The executive sent the project recommendations to the evaluation committee (composed of federation members and council representatives), which in turn sent them to the Municipal Contracts Committee (composed of federation members and municipal council officials). This committee proposed qualified contractors to the CUF Advisory Board (composed of federation members and one municipal council official), which was responsible for approving the contracts committee's decisions. A Project Management Committee, which was formed by the settlement level urban poor forum and entirely composed of federation members, monitored the contractors' work. The total budget for the six projects was: UGX 161.5 million (USD 61,923).

5

Urban development vision

In this section we explore the stated vision for urban development of both the council and the federation. This will enable us to assess the starting point for cooperation between the two parties.

5.1 Jinja Municipal Council (JMC)'s vision

The council's vision is the 'attainment of a prosperous urban community with excellence in tourism, commerce and industry' by 2020.⁶ Its broad goal is to be 'committed to re-instating the functional capacity of infrastructure in all sectors of council jurisdiction with the view of promoting equitable fast growing and expanding private and government stakeholders' development initiatives within the five years (2010/2014).'

We have summarised the broad sector objectives below.

Management and support services sector

This sector plans to improve the functioning of council offices and ensure the delivery of a decentralised programme of planning and administration that encourages the full involvement of local communities and alleviates poverty. It seeks to encourage public participation during the planning and budgeting process, and to ensure that planning proposals and policies address the full range of socio-economic groups that currently reside in Jinja Municipality,

particularly lower-income residents, women and members of the informal sector.

Finance and planning sector

This sector plans to strengthen the council's financial institutions and structures by building the capacity of revenue stakeholders at all levels in key aspects of resource management and administration, as well as create an enabling regulatory framework at the municipality level.

Works and technical services sector

This sector plans to upgrade and improve existing infrastructure to accommodate a full range of users, as well as facilitate proper physical planning in the municipality. It seeks to improve the security of the council property and access to affordable water and sanitation services. It seeks to explore the potential for greater local, municipal and community involvement in the planning and maintenance of urban infrastructures, and encourage a full range of mixed land use zones and promote employment. It aims to provide land use regulations that residents can easily understand, and the council can easily administer, and a full range of housing types, which includes lower-income housing, in particular.

Education and sports sector

This sector plans to provide quality and affordable formal basic education to all school-age children, and make the learning environment better by improving teacher and school inspections, teacher:pupil and pupil:desk ratios, and sanitation.

⁶ <http://jmc.go.ug/government/five-year-dev-plan>

Community-based services sector

This sector plans to manage growth and change to enhance the social, economic and cultural viability of Jinja. It aims to provide access to appropriate social facilities and programmes in the municipality, as well as encourage and support the efforts of local non-government agencies that are involved in urban related issues. In addition, it aims to promote and activate women in development programmes.

Health and environment sector

This sector plans to improve Jinja aesthetically, including the municipality's green areas, road verges and compounds, as well as protect and enhance the natural environment. It seeks to pursue energy and water conservation policies, and waste reduction, reuse and recycling; and provide a minimum health care package at the community level that is based on primary healthcare principles. It also seeks to improve solid waste management in the municipality.

5.2 The NSDFU vision

'I want Jinja to be a city that does not make our children cry.' Federation member from Jinja

On paper, at least, the vision for Jinja from the federation and council standpoints are very similar. Both parties want a vibrant city with a strong economy, good services and quality infrastructure. It would be hard to find a city or community that did not want these things. The encouraging shift taking place in Jinja is in the strategies to implement these visions. Evidence from Jinja suggests that the council vision is becoming more inclusive of and accountable to the poor, and recognises the need for negotiation in planning; and that policy and practice are showing signs of greater responsiveness to the urban majority.

At an NSDFU meeting in February 2013, leaders from all the federation networks in Jinja came together to discuss their vision for Jinja. Participants drew the city they wished to see and wrote five things to describe it. They were free to write in whichever language they felt comfortable or have someone transcribe their words so everyone could express their ideas comfortably.

It was clear that in Jinja, what most federation members wanted was in harmony with the vision of the JMC outlined above. The NSDFU vision touches on all the council's broad sector objectives. The majority of federation members depicted a developed Jinja as having multi-storey buildings, working streetlights, a public transport system, and well-planned markets. They emphasised the need to have a city with effective waste management systems. Members also placed a high priority on economically empowering slum communities.

The top six priorities of federation members were:

1. Improved roads
2. Improved hospitals
3. Improved access to clear water
4. Improved education and vocational training facilities
5. Improved sewerage and drainage systems
6. Improved community participation in local governance

Harmonisation of the two visions is an important step towards improved urban governance, and the NSDFU is pleased that informal settlement residents are now included in the council vision. As one member remarked: 'It is we who have made them start talking of ... upgrading [the slums], it was not there before.' The real challenge, however, is to harmonise strategies to achieve the vision, which is the federation's focus now.

6

Implementing the vision: changing ideas

'We are the ones making them plan for slums.'
NSDFU member Michael Kasedde

6.1 Accountability to the poor

'Our towns were not planned for the poor. The poor were supposed to stay in the rural areas. Now it is our obligation to plan for the poor.'
Mpumudde Division Town Clerk Benjamin Kulaba

With the growth of the NSDFU, slum communities and council see that accountability to the grassroots is now essential. Prior to the organising work of the federation, the JMC was accountable to the powerful: to the national government, donors, and Jinja's elite. The value of the federation approach is that it both convinces council they must be accountable to communities and also convinces communities that they have the right and the capacity to hold the council to account.

Federation members and municipal officials note that, historically, 'community' funds that passed through council would be dished out to politically connected individuals or families. This was possible because communities did not know what was meant for them and could not, therefore, demand what was rightfully theirs. The same applied to the wider urban vision. Today communities in the federation know the vision for their municipality and understand their right to be part of determining that vision and working with the council to implement, monitor and adjust it.

Because of the constant engagement between community and council, there is much more dialogue surrounding issues of financial accountability for both parties. The NSDFU now feels comfortable discussing budgetary issues with council officials in formal and informal settings.

6.2 Planning as negotiation (participatory planning)

'We can't implement plans where there are squabbles in the community.' JMC Community Development Officer

Plans and policies that exist on paper only are endemic in Uganda. NSDFU and council officials are in full agreement that Jinja is no exception. The five-year vision for the municipality, 10-year structural plan, City Development Strategy and detailed structure plans are often not in harmony with each other, and are not considered worth the paper they are printed on if there is no complementary implementation strategy.

It is clear that the federation's partnership has made the council recognise that negotiation at the community level is absolutely critical for transforming plans into action. Although the NSDFU has long acknowledged that plans conceived by a handful of technical staff or foreign consultants and then left on the shelf are useless, the alternative was not appreciated until the federation gained traction in Jinja.

6.3 Change in practice

'It doesn't make sense to be tied to standards that can't be implemented. The situation just becomes more terrible.' JMC physical planner

This shift in the conceptualisation of planning has facilitated changes in practice that have the potential to transform policy and make it far more responsive to the needs of the urban poor. Although there is still a long way to go in terms of effective implementation, participatory urban governance is now viewed as standard.

The council is showing a tendency towards greater flexibility in terms of planning standards, as the council's physical planner explained:

'Generally speaking, our planning standards have ignored the urban poor. We find ourselves lowering planning standards as we negotiate with organised communities. For example, the transit houses of the federation, which were constructed to support the urban poor who had been evicted. Other communities have negotiated for narrower roads, so more of their land can be retained. It doesn't make sense to be tied to standards that can't be implemented. The situation just becomes more terrible.'

The planner acknowledged that the whole experience was a learning process and that, as communities learn from council, the council also learn from them. She knows that the national trend is for greater recognition of the urban poor and more flexible standards, so she feels comfortable making such concessions in Jinja even before policy changes are realised. Indeed, according to the planner, much of this awareness stems from the partnership she has with the federation, which works closely with the Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Urban Development. She was hopeful that the experience of Jinja would feed into the national discussion.

Plans that are too rigid will simply not be implemented and the planner noted that the structural plan could be adjusted if communities and the council agreed that it was necessary. This is a significant change in practice, which acknowledges the value of local knowledge.

6.4 Change in policy

'We are already being more flexible and negotiating, because we know the will is there at the national level.' JMC physical planner

The JMC fully expects the changes in practices outlined above to affect policy. The physical planner explained how the council had become more flexible with planning standards because of the negotiations it now engaged in with communities. Thanks to the work of the Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Urban Development and other ministries, national policy is leaning in this direction to engage the urban poor, which encourages municipalities to experiment and innovate in this respect.

With the establishment of the National Urban Forum⁷, which the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development organises once a year, the experience of Jinja can be communicated to policymakers in the urban sector. The federation and council hope that this will make planning standards more responsive to Uganda's urban realities.

7

Triggers for a progressive urban agenda

An examination of the experience in Jinja shows that three key triggers activated the institutionalisation of participatory governance and planning. These triggers appear to have had a considerable impact on federation-council relations and have implications for creating an enabling environment in other municipalities and cities in the Global South. They are outlined below.

7.1. Critical mass

'We scare them because of our numbers. We must be listened to.' NSDFU member, Jinja

The NSDFU and JMC agree that the sheer number of federation members has been a major trigger for improving relations with the council. By 2011, the federation had mobilised members in all five slum settlements and consolidated its governance structures. Currently, 29 percent of slum dwellers in Jinja are NSDFU members.

This critical mass had three key benefits:

1. The political factor: the JMC could not ignore an organised group that represented such a large portion of its constituency.
2. The social factor: a critical mass of slum dwellers united a wide array of skills and experiences from across urban poor settlements in Jinja, which has enhanced the federation's capacity.

3. The economic factor: a critical mass of federation members mobilised significant resources through daily savings, which served to attract external support.

Sheer numbers alone without organisation would not have had the same impact. But the fact that this critical mass developed governance structures that could unite members as one ensured that the urban poor came to be viewed as central stakeholders. The JMC recognised that the NSDFU could: (1) generate interest in urban issues; (2) disseminate information to the masses; and (3) negotiate for their rights as citizens, rather than beg for favours as small groups.

7.2 Transforming Settlements of the Urban Poor in Uganda (TSUPU)

Thanks to the TSUPU programme, once this critical mass was established, the space for engagement between organised communities and council opened up significantly. This can be seen to have strengthened relations in the following ways:

- It brought together the national and local governments and communities as the key actors in the national slum upgrading agenda, and legitimised the central role of urban poor communities in the planning process

- It institutionalised spaces for participatory planning.
- The backing of the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development gave the federation a solid footing to approach council officials.

7.3 Projects

'The federation can really make a contribution and make council's work easier.' Community Development Officer Geoffrey Muzusa

The NSDFU's pilot projects have institutionalised the role communities can play in the minds of local government and communities alike. 'Community participation' had become a platitude in development programmes, and the concept was often abstract in people's minds, which too often resulted in a shallow implementation experience. As the town clerk of Mpumudde Division noted, 'It used to be hard to convince the urban poor that they can do things for themselves.' Pilot projects, therefore, open the eyes of the community and council to the possibilities of partnership.

For example, the Jinja Rubaga Sanitation Unit showed that: (1) organised communities of the urban poor could contribute resources to urban development – in terms of finance, labour and ideas – that could actually strengthen the capacity of local government to deliver services; (2) could manage and maintain public facilities; and (3) community contractors cost less than municipal contractors.

7.4 Sharing lessons on triggers

When asked what lessons they would have to share with federation members and council officials in other parts of Uganda and the SDI network, the NSDFU members and JMC officials gave the answers below.

8

Conclusion

‘The “roots” of the relationship with [the] council are now evident. No one can shake that relationship. It is there. They have seen the federation grow. They know our history.’
NSDFU member Sarah Nandudu

This paper highlights the approach to community engagement with the council that the NSDFU initiated. It shows that the approach differed from what had existed before in four key ways. Previously:

1. The council had been viewed as a provider, rather than a partner.
2. The council had not been viewed as accessible to the urban poor.
3. Community organisation used to have a self-help, rather than municipal development
4. The urban poor did not used to be perceived as having a role to play in planning.

The NSDFU mobilised its members using the practices of SDI. It built collective capacity through the formation and federation of savings groups, and initiated community-driven data gathering through enumeration and profiling. The council came to recognise the NSDFU as a partner capable of addressing the information lacuna in the urban setting.

Pilot NSDFU projects showed that the urban poor also had the capacity to use this information to identify and implement projects to address specific challenges. With mounting pressure from the grassroots and the national government, it became necessary to address slum issues and the federation stood out as a strategic partner that the council could work with.

This approach resulted in joint initiatives for participatory planning, including the Joint Working Group, MDF and CUF, which recognised and institutionalised the productive partnership between the federation and the JMC. Improved relations have ensured that the urban vision of the NSDFU and the council – and more importantly the implementation strategy for that vision – have become increasingly harmonised.

As a result, it can be observed that the JMC has become more accountable to the urban poor and planning has become more participatory. The council and the urban poor have identified and are implementing concrete strategies for engagement. Practice is changing and a space has been opened up for learning with clear pathways for influencing policy.

The Jinja case shows that at least three key triggers have contributed to productive relations between the JMC and the urban poor. The first is the critical mass of slum dwellers that the federation mobilised and organised, which created a constituency that the council could not ignore. The second was the TSUPU programme, a national government programme that officially legitimised the role of the urban poor in the urban planning and development process. The third were the federation pilot projects that crystalised the possibilities for partnership and participatory planning in the minds of the council and communities.

We believe that three key lessons can be drawn from the Jinja experience:

- **Lesson 1:** A critical mass of slum dwellers creates a force that councils cannot ignore. An organised critical mass of people creates a force that can forge its own agenda, and then negotiate and partner with others to implement it.
- **Lesson 2:** Programmes that legitimise the role of organised communities in urban planning at multiple levels of government and create spaces for engagement between communities and government create an enabling environment for a progressive urban agenda.
- **Lesson 3:** Pilot projects can demonstrate the practicability of the 'community participation' concept, and highlight the capacity of the urban poor in a way that slum dwellers and local government appreciate.

Acronyms

CUF	Community Upgrading Fund
JMC	Jinja Municipal Council
LC III	Local Council Three
LC IV	Local Council Four
MDF	Municipal Development Forum
NSDFU	National Slum Dwellers Federation of Uganda
SDI	Slum/Shack Dwellers International
TSUPU	Transforming Settlements of the Urban Poor in Uganda

Related reading

Partnerships for progressive pro-poor city planning
<http://pubs.iied.org/17189IIED.html>

Brick by brick: transforming relations between local government and the urban poor in Zimbabwe, Beth Chitekwe-Bitii (In press)

A Politics of Resolve: people-centre development in South Africa by Walter Fieuw (In press)

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This paper explores the key triggers of strong working relations between communities of the urban poor and local governments. It does so by examining these relations before and after the National Slum Dwellers Federation of Uganda (NSDFU) began organising communities in Jinja, and by analysing the strategies of the federation and council for working together. It explores the vision of the federation and council for the development of the municipality. Following the examination of the work to date it identifies the key triggers of the strengthening relations and makes recommendations to the future process in Jinja and for urban poor communities more generally.

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