



UN Habitat & Norwegian Government Visit Mukuru Sinai, Kenya



L-R: Joan Clos (ED UN Habitat), Heikki Holmas (Min. Int'l Dev't, Gov't of Norway), and Robert (Muungano leader) tour the Mukuru Green Fields project.

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NAIROBI, Kenya, November 13 | The Norwegian Minister for International Development, Heikki Holmas and UN-HABITAT Executive Director, Dr Joan Clos, visited Mukuru Kwa Njenga slums to share experiences with the slum dwellers as well as tour some of the ongoing projects such as the Mukuru Greenfields housing project.

The two visited the settlement to offer encouragement to the Kenyan people living in slums and encouraged the communities to instill confidence and scope to some of the projects they are engaged in, under the stewardship of Muungano wa Wanavijiji. The visit was organized by UN-HABITAT, SDI, the Norwegian Embassy, and the Kenyan SDI Alliance: Muungano wa Wanavijiji, Akiba Mashinani Trust and Muungano Support Trust.



Min. Holmas is received by founder of Mukuru Kwa Njenga settlement, Mr. Mzee Njenga.

During the visit, Minister Heikki Holmas made the following statement: “The objective of the visit by representation of the Norwegian Government and UN-HABITAT to Mukuru slums is to give support and encouragement to the Kenyan people and the country’s institutions as it continues to bring about reforms in Kenyan land and housing. The right to own a home gives one and his family the opportunity to grow as a human being. There have been strong movements in Norway that campaign for home ownership. There is also the need for public policy on land and housing to affect the housing agenda in Kenya, this will then give organized communities the opportunity to develop areas where they live in conjunction with their government.”

Mr. Heikki Holmas also took notice of the tool of savings, which helps community mobilize under a common vision, which in future will be a model to future generations within and without the country for years to come.



ED of UN Habitat, Joan Clos, addresses the gathering.

UN-Habitat Executive Director, Dr. Joan Clos, shared the following: “I appreciate the real change that we have been able to spot on the ground which is essential in every communal

setup. The world today is growing fast, specifically if I take issue with Nairobi which is one of the fastest growing cities in Africa, with the new constitutional changes and devolved county governments the country's growth will continue to be felt. I must say the grass root organizations around savings is important especially to some of the projects you are involved in, this is fantastic. UN-HABITAT will continue to support such movements be it technically or socially that they took root."

Dr. Clos also took note of the need for technical officials working with communities that we provide advice on technical aspects underlying fundamental things and not delegate knowledge to communities to initiate projects at the beginning which can easily compromise the well being of the project at its initial projects.



Mukuru community members gather for the visit.

The Millennium Development Goal 7, Target 11 commits the international community to improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by the year 2020. However, rural-urban migration, natural increase and expansion of urban centres all contribute to rapid urbanisation resulting in the constant increase in the number of slum dwellers.

Secure land tenure and property rights are fundamental to shelter and livelihoods, and a cornerstone for the realisation of human rights and for poverty reduction. Secure land rights are particularly important in helping reverse gender discrimination, social exclusion of vulnerable groups, and wider social and economic inequalities linked to inequitable and insecure access to land.

It is now well recognised that secure land and property rights for all are essential to reducing poverty, because they underpin economic development and social inclusion. Secure land tenure and property rights enable people in rural and urban areas to invest in improved homes and livelihoods. They also help to promote good environmental management, improve food security, and assist directly in the realization of human rights, including the elimination of discrimination against women, the vulnerable, indigenous groups and other minorities.

It's now being witnessed that changes in land policies, which reflect these principles, are being implemented in a variety of countries across the world. Today, however, land resources face pressures and demands as never before, and developing countries still lack the tools, systematic strategies and support necessary to deliver secure land rights for all.

Sound land policies should protect people from forced removals and evictions, or where displacement is determined by legitimate processes as necessary for the greater public good and is carried out in conformity with national and international norms, policies should ensure

that citizens have access to adequate compensation. Another critical dimension is ensuring gender equality, because women face such widespread discrimination around land and property. When women enjoy secure and equal rights, everybody benefits. Also, secure land rights for all citizens contributes to conflict reduction and improvement in environmental management as well as household living conditions.

During the visit, the following projects were presented to the Norwegian Government and UN HABITAT by Muungano wa Wanavijiji and the Kenyan Alliance:

1. Finance Modeling Through Community Tools: MUKURU GREEN FIELDS HOUSING PROJECT



Faith Moraa, an architect with AMT, explains the designs for the Mukuru Green Fields housing project.

Urban development and sustainable development are not contradictory. There have been recent efforts by Slum Dwellers International to show that urban growth and development can be managed to make cities more livable and to curb the issue of inadequate housing, especially when it comes to the poor living amongst us. However, the tendency to think that urbanization is primarily responsible for unsustainable development is still predominant.

Under this subheading, we look at the Mukuru Greenfield Project. As the clamor for better housing by the urban poor continues, the need for secure land tenure is indeed becoming a major problem for the poor. It is out of such circumstances that 2,000 community members using the SDI tool of savings came together to address their plight- housing and secure tenure. The community identified a 23 acre piece of land in Mukuru Kwa Njenga's sisal area.

Akiba Mashinani Trust (AMT) then took the mantle to help the community to negotiate the price of the land with the owner of the land on the behalf of the community. The negotiations began and a substantial price value were arrived at. The quest for acquiring the land began, AMT negotiated with ECO Bank for a loan to the 2,000 community members to offset payment for the 23 acre land. The loan was granted with Slum Dwellers International as the guarantor in the land acquisition deal.

Having been able to continuously save their personal resources, the community has been able to repay their loan to Eco Bank and have embarked on putting forward deposits for the next phase which is house designs and construction. The designs are awaiting approval from the Nairobi City Council and it is expected that ground breaking process will be in January 2013.

Opportunities that arose from the Process

- Community Mobilisation and Savings
- Access for basic services and infrastructure
- Security of tenure to over 2,000 Kenyan citizens
- House dreaming processes for the urban poor to ensure participation and project ownership
- Embracing current market cross subsidies strategies, hence affordability of housing infrastructure by the poor
- Competitive Community tendering process
- Incremental house improvement strategies.

2. Changing the Planning Discourse: MATHARE ZONAL PLAN



Edwin Simiyu of MuST and Emily Wangari of Muungano explain the Mathare Zonal Plan.

Mathare is an informal settlement that is home to nearly 188,000 people confronting a range of challenges. Mathare is one of the largest slums in Nairobi, a city where over half of the approximately 3.5 million residents live in over 180 different slums. Like many informal settlements, Mathare is characterized by unsafe and overcrowded housing, elevated exposure to environmental hazards, high prevalence of communicable diseases, and a lack of access to essential services, such as sanitation, water and electricity. Residents in Nairobi's slums frequently suffer from tenure insecurity, while widespread poverty and violence further increase their vulnerabilities.

The Zonal plan offers planning strategies for thirteen villages in Mathare Valley. The analyses and recommendations in the plan emerged from an ongoing collaborative project involving residents, the non-governmental organization Muungano Support Trust (MuST), the University of California, Berkeley (UCB) Department of City and Regional Planning, the University of Nairobi (UoN) Department of Urban and Regional Planning and Slum Dwellers International (SDI).

Guiding Principles and Goals of Mathare Zonal Development Plan

The Mathare Zonal Plan aims to integrate the dimensions of our Relational Model for Participatory Upgrading. Using this approach, we developed Community Planning Teams comprised of residents from each village in Mathare that focused on valley-wide issues. Through this process, the project worked with residents to build new awareness of the opportunities and challenges for infrastructure planning at the zonal scale.

While the Community Planning Teams generate ideas for improving the settlements' physical conditions, we recognize that local action alone is insufficient and broader policy change will also be necessary to improve living conditions and the lives of slum-dwellers. Thus, our approach rejects single-issue slum improvement approaches and instead focuses on the inter relationships between poverty alleviation, securing infrastructure and services, improving housing, economic opportunities, food security, human health and safety, among other issues.

Key project principles and goals include:

Principles:

1. Build upon existing community assets and strengths.
2. Use infrastructure planning as an entry-point to address other related issues.
3. Ensure meaningful participation & community ownership.

Goals:

1. Generate Valley-wide analyses of existing conditions and concrete ideas for improving lives and living conditions.
2. Provide evidence & ideas that can strengthen community organizing, leadership and coalition building.
3. Provide a framework for addressing emerging policies and plans at the county, municipal, and national level aimed at slum dwellers.
4. Inspire service providers to invest in valley-wide infrastructure provision.

3. Linking the National and International Development Agenda to Community Needs and Processes: Railway Relocation Action Plan (RAP)



David Mathenge (MuST) and Jack Makau (SDI) present the concept behind the RAP.

In 2004 the government of Kenya through various state agencies issued eviction notices to persons living on public lands that were considered riparian. It's to this effect that the Federation of Slum Dwellers (Muungano wa Wanavijiji) initiated advocacy and lobbying campaigns to address the looming danger of forced evictions which would have rendered

millions of people homeless. Out of these efforts the evictions were suspended and dialogue given a chance.

The federation, with the help of SDI, approached Kenya Railways to foster discussions on suitable mechanisms of preventing mass evictions. It is estimated that 10,000 people live along the railway riparian. Through an exchange programme organized by SDI, government officials from the Ministry of Transport and Kenya Railways toured India to learn how the country had dealt with a similar situation.

This then led to the formalization of an engagement between the World Bank and the Kenyan Government on the need of coming up with a Relocation Action Plan (RAP). The Kenyan SDI affiliate, through recognized tools of enumerations and mapping was able to develop concrete recommendations and plans that would see 10,000 people resettled. It is estimated that the project cost was USD 40 million.

4. Kenya Jubilee Campaign

On 12 December 2013 Kenya will celebrate 50 years as an independent republic, marking the nations Golden Jubilee celebrations. The Fiftieth Anniversary marks a significant milestone in a nation's heritage, a very symbolic moment. In the Bible it formed the year of Jubilee, a year that literally signified "**True Liberty – Ukombozi wa Kweli**". The Jubilee is an announcement of freedom, restitution of land and property, ending inequalities created by the extremes of wealth and poverty. In Nairobi, slum land is claimed by three distinct categories of owners, namely:

- The Registered Title Deed Holder
- Slumlord Cartels
- Slum Tenants

The Kenya Jubilee campaign was started to build awareness to the plight of issues affecting urban poor Kenyans and to give hope to Kenyans. Those who occupy slums live under the shadow of constant threat of demolitions, violent evictions, fires, floods and insecurity. Their neighborhoods often lack the most basic amenities and infrastructure and this situation is often preserved by powerful forces within Government and the private sector. The Jubilee campaign is meant to set a legal precedent to deal with land occupied by the slum dwellers and the development of legislation with a bias on guidelines on evictions and community land ownership bill.

5. Sanitation Campaign.

The Women and Sanitation campaign is a comprehensive campaign to improve sanitation conditions for Nairobi's slum dwellers, beginning in the expansive slum of Mukuru. Women are the most severely affected by a lack of toilets and bathing facilities in informal settlements, as they become vulnerable to sexual assault, unique health problems, and a lack of dignity.

It is rather obvious that lack of sanitation facilities in poorly planned areas has got a tremendous impact on the health and economic development of communities, unfortunately women and girls are the hardest hit by absence of toilets and bathrooms within the areas they reside.

In crowded urban settlements women go through the entire day without relieving themselves and also risk harassment or even rape when accessing toilet facilities in the cover of darkness. In urban areas, shame, embarrassment and the great desire for privacy force women to defecate in secluded areas where they risk assault or underneath their beds put plastic containers that act as emergency toilets. Needless to say, menstruation, pregnancy and postnatal bleeding add further complications and discomforts.



Ben Osumba, chairperson of Muungano wa Wanavijiji, give the Ministers a few tips on Federation building.



Minister Holmas has a word with Jane Weru, Executive Director of AMT.



Ambassadors of Christ pose for a photo with Minister Holmas.



Mukuru-based theater group Ambassadors of Christ did not disappoint with their choral verse "Jubilee."



Community group photo with Joan Clos and Minister Holmas.



Tree planting ceremony at the Green Fields Housing Project.

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For more photos from this exchange, please visit the [Muungano Federation's Facebook page](#).