

Development Cooperation Sweden and Kenya

Urban poverty a dynamic challenge



URBAN POVERTY IS INCREASINGLY RECOGNIZED AS AN URGENT AND GROWING CHALLENGE TO DEVELOPMENT. THIS IS IN LINE WITH SWEDEN'S POVERTY FOCUS IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION, WHICH RECOGNIZES THE DYNAMIC ROLE URBAN AREAS PLAY IN KENYA'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. THE EXPLOSIVE SITUATION IN KENYA'S URBAN SLUMS IS ALSO A THREAT TO POLITICAL AND SOCIAL PEACE AS WELL AS NATIONAL UNITY.

Urban Kenya accounts for a large share of the country's economic output and much of its physical, financial and technological capital. However, Kenyan cities are not operating at their potential because they are suffering from major bottlenecks, including weak finances and poor management. Rapid urbanisation has left them with huge backlogs in critical infrastructure and basic services, which are in turn hurting the productivity of business and quality of life for the residents.

A highly visible result of this poorly managed urbanisation – combined with total disregard for planning – is the massive expansion of overcrowded and impoverished informal settlements which now house 30–55 per cent of the urban population in major cities. Further, most major cities are financially weak or insolvent. The framework for management is inadequate – mandates are insufficient, responsibilities are fragmented, mechanisms to ensure local accountability barely exists, and key institutions suffer low capacity. This poor performance reflects structural constraints that need to be altered.

Basic services

Access to basic service such as water, electricity and infrastructure tends to be minimal or even non-existent for the majority of the urban poor. It is estimated that 94 per cent of the population of informal settlements do not have access to adequate sanitation. Water is only provided to a few standpipes if it is provided at all, and then at high prices. Similarly, solid waste generated in these areas has outstripped the capacity to provide adequate and efficient waste management services.

Kibera, arguably Africa's largest shanty town, typifies the deplorable conditions of the urban poor in Kenya. Here, more than 600 000 people live in shanties, often constructed out of mud, wattle and iron sheets. Narrow alleyways, filled with garbage, cut open by stinking ditches, wind between crouching huts and homes. People are scratching out a living out of dire conditions. In Kibera, thousands upon thousands of determined people, fight for a better future against formidable odds. That's the daily reality for the majority of the



Photo: Per-Ulf Nilsson

Access to basic services tends to be minimal for the majority of urban poor.

urban poor in Kenya – ignored by government and surviving on their own.

Reforms and actions

The objective of Swedish support to Urban Development is improved urban planning which allows for the participation of the poor residents. Sweden has a two-pronged strategy: support to institutional and policy reforms parallel to funding of grassroots initiatives and participation. Key reforms supported by Sweden include policies in Land, Hou-

sing and Urban Development. Other areas targeted for Swedish support are development of a Land Information System, institutional reforms in municipalities, local governance and urban planning. These reforms are crucial to tackle environmental problems, the widespread urban poverty and to strengthen economic growth, but also to address one of the underlying causes of social and political conflicts in the country as well as spurring demand for rights and services.

For the period 2010–2013, Sweden continues its support and will, jointly with the Government of Kenya, fund a four-year Urban Sector Programme. The main components of the programme are:

- Kenya Municipal Programme (KMP) has the objective to strengthen local governance and improve urban service delivery in selected urban local authorities.

- Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme (K-SUP), a multi-sector operation with Ministry of Housing as lead agency. The overall objective is to improve living conditions in slums in selected areas in Kenya.
- A separate support to the development of a strong civil society movement in urban development.

Sweden emphasises the participation of the poor in development processes and strives to ensure that these processes are responsive to their needs. The programme will also build capacity of local authorities to fulfil their mandate in governance and service delivery as well as of a vibrant civil society network that sensitises and builds community capacity to demand for rights and services.

Sweden has supported civil society initiatives for several years. This empowerment process included a number of

community led projects, implemented through supporting civil society organisations like Pamoja Trust and Shelter Forum. The aim was to strengthen local communities' capacity to organize, articulate priorities, participate in planning and carry out housing and infrastructure projects.

Such support will continue in a new civil society urban development programme. Its mission is to facilitate equitable and sustainable urban development through improved management; access to basic services; governance and coordination, particularly for the urban poor.

For further information:

E-mail: ambassaden.nairobi@foreign.ministry.se

www: www.swedenabroad.se/nairobi

Sanitation towers

One of many small projects carried out in Kibera by community members with Swedish support is the water and sanitation programme run by Umande Trust.

– There are supposedly 2600 pit latrines in Kibera but most of them are not working, says Paul Muchire, Umande's communications officer.

– The authorities do not take their responsibility to keep them up, nor do the communities. The health and sanitation problem is enormous.

Likewise with the water. There are not enough water points and those that do exist are owned by individuals who sell water at high rates.

Umande Trust works to sensitize people about their rights to water and sanitation and solutions to the immediate problems. Their concept for improvement is community-owned Bio centres and water points.

At the Bio centres, a number of toilets and small washing rooms are

constructed within one towering building, cared for by an attendant who is a member of the local community association which has planned for and participated in the construction.

The waste is collected in an underground tank and produces biogas, servicing cooking burners on the second floor of the centres, where a small community hall has also been placed. There are plans to produce fertilizer with the remaining waste, and to sell biogas in containers.

At a cost of two shillings customers can use the toilets, while a card for 80 shillings allows a family to use the services for a month. In close vicinity to the centre there is also a water point, where people can buy water at a cheaper rate.

So far Umande and neighborhood associations have constructed 10 centres and plan for 30 more.

The essence here is not really the installations themselves but the participation and ownership by the



Photo: Per-Ulf Nilsson

In Kibera, outside Nairobi, this tower holds toilets and small washing rooms for the residents.

community associations. That is what makes them sustainable, while also strengthening the communities' resolve to improve their livelihoods.