

# Community Planning - an Overview

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## 1. Definition and Theoretical Data

Over the past three decades, throughout the world, there has been an increasing acknowledgment of the importance of local involvement in the planning and management of the built environment.

### a. The role of the community

Community as a concept refers to how people live together, interact and co-operate. Community development, positive social and cultural interaction and local organization are essential in a sustainable community.

Community development involves changing the relationships between local knowledge and experts knowledge, so that everyone can take part in the issues that affect their lives. It starts from the principle that within any community there is a wealth of knowledge and experience which, if used in creative ways, can be channeled into collective action to achieve the communities' desired goals. (Community Development Exchange<sup>1</sup>).

According to UN-HABITAT's methodology, community development is an *asset-based* approach, in opposition to a *need-based* approach<sup>2</sup>. Contrasting the typical need-based "deficit model" (Wynn 1991<sup>3</sup>) an asset-based approach does not seek to quantify needs. Instead, it aims to encourage an attitude favorable to change and capacity building by cutting across professional boundaries. The process is based on the idea that "the

<sup>1</sup> National membership organization for community development, based in Sheffield, South Yorkshire.

URL: <http://www.cdx.org.uk/about-us/about-cdx-community-development-exchange>

<sup>2</sup> Need-based governments policies typically focus on what communities lack as opposed to what they have

<sup>3</sup> Wynne, B. (1991) Knowledge in Context. Science, Technology, and Human Values, 16: 111-121.

environment works better if people affected by its changes are actively involved in its creation and management instead of being treated as passive consumers” (Sanoff 2000<sup>4</sup>).

### **b. Three essential tasks to community development**

Community development efforts include three separate tasks (UN HABITAT, 2008):

- **Self-help (or self-sufficiency):** Enables residents to mobilize and manage assets to materialize their visions (e.g., building adequate decent housing, creating decent jobs, providing education enhancing human capital and promoting civic participation and empowerment.
- **Technical assistance:** Gaining access to a wide range of financial or technical resources (consulting, house design, construction, loans and credit to start-up businesses)
- **Conflict resolution:** Two major purposes i) exploring avenues for conflict resolution within communities, and ii) encouraging consensus on shared interests and visions.

### **c. Community planning**

Community planning is one of the possible approaches to community development. This practice is engaged in by numerous disciplines: community work, urban planning, macro social work, architecture, urban geography, community psychology, environmental psychology, community psychiatry. UN-HABITAT develops urban planning in and with the community.

Also called participatory planning it designates a process in which “the technical staff meet with the community and the local authorities in order to discuss existing problems in the area, identify possible solutions, develop an action plan and, consequently, prepare for the implementation of priority intervention” (Guidelines for participatory development planning, UN-HABITAT)

## **2. Existing Tools**

In order to be able to implement community planning properly, some tools have been developed.

### **a. Guidelines for participatory local development planning, UN-HABITAT, UNEP, Dec. 2006**

The idea is to present in a simple and clear manner the sequence of key concepts that were used during fieldwork, which constitute a planning method that can be applied within the framework of other local development projects. The different stages of the process are the following:

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<sup>4</sup> Sanoff, H. (2000) Community Participation Methods in Design and Planning. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

<p><b>Stage 1</b> Characterising the area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation of maps, aerial photographs and/or satellite images</li> <li>• Determining the geographic location of the main features of the area</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stage 2</b> Mapping the existing situation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparing a land use map</li> <li>• Determining the location of the main infrastructure and basic services</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stage 3</b> Defining the main problems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drafting a list of the existing problems</li> <li>• Discussing and prioritising the problems</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stage 4</b> Identifying possible solutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposing solutions</li> <li>• Discussion and definition of interventions</li> <li>• Determining the community contribution</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stage 5</b> Developing the action plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organising the collected information</li> <li>• Presenting a draft action plan to the community and local authorities for their joint assessment, revision, and approval</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stage 6</b> Implementing priority interventions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defining the responsibilities of each stakeholder</li> <li>• Assessing training and capacity building needs</li> <li>• Preparing all required technical drawings and projects</li> <li>• Establishing partnerships at all levels</li> <li>• Involving the community in decision-making</li> </ul>

The guidelines are detailed in the document and can be easily followed step by step during the implementation of a community planning project.

### **b. Building bridges through participatory planning, Part II, Toolkit, 2001**

This toolkit is extracted from a series of training manuals. The part two of the document is divided in two sections.

- *Component 1* includes a few training design ideas and exercises in case you want to organize and conduct a more traditional learning event (for example a short workshop to introduce the concepts and ideas of participatory planning to local government and community leaders).
- *Components 2* includes exercises and worksheets to be used during a participatory process based on a real need and real people.
- However, the authors remind users of the toolkit that facilitating participatory planning process will be a *voyage of discovery* requiring him on occasion to take a side road or double back and retrace territory already covered.

### **c. Community mapping**

Community mapping is one of the tools currently developed at a local level in order to make urban planning more participative. The Partners and Youth Branch of UN-HABITAT has therefor developed an 'Asset Mapping Programme Manual for Urban Youth Centres' (2010).

This manual is written for people wanting to engage youth in community-based planning. There is growing recognition that asset mapping can be powerful tool for change, prompting youth to view their communities from an asset-based perspective and becoming advocates for the transformation of the spaces they live in. The purpose is to create a concrete output – a map, either in paper or web based format, which can be incorporated into formal and/or informal community planning process. The toolkit provides an easy to use and effective tool tested in communities and cities to help them implement a mapping project.

#### **d. Participatory GIS**

Participatory GIS is an urban planning technical tool that facilitates the representation of local people’s spatial knowledge using two or three-dimensional maps.

PGIS practice is geared towards community empowerment through tailored, demand-driven and user friendly applications of these geospatial technologies. It often relies on the combination of ‘expert’ skills with local knowledge.

PGIS spatial analysis uses the functionality and data associated with GIS technology to explore community driven questions. In the process, local spatially referenced as well as non-spatial data are integrated and analyzed to support discussion and decision-making processes.

The Mapping for Change International Conference on Participatory Spatial Information Management and Communication held at the Kenya College of Communication of Technology, in Nairobi (September 2005) brought together practitioners from around the world to share with practical experience in implementing Participatory GIS (PGIS)<sup>5</sup>.

### **3. Case Studies**

UN-HABITAT has developed community planning projects in several countries and across different sectors.

#### **a. Slum upgrading in Mozambique**

One of UN-HABITAT’s project activities target in Mozambique is to seek for active involvement of the government, local authorities and communities at each implementation stage, from decision-making to implementation. Therefor “facilitating participatory land use planning coupled with physical upgrading interventions at the local level” is one of the main objectives. “They (the community) need to be actively involved in all planned activities, i.e. from decision making up to self-organization in labor-intensive collaboration” (Spaliviero, 2006).

During this project, four environmental land use plans and associated disaster management plans were produced by integrating the local slum dwellers during the all process, namely: Maputo, Chokwe, Tete and Quelimane. This participatory approach had several advantages:

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<sup>5</sup> Jon Corbett, Giacomo Rambaldi, Peter Kyem, Dan Weiner, Rachel Olson, Julius Muchemi, Mike McCall and Robert Chambers, Overview. Mapping for Change – The emergence of a new practice, April 2006

- i. It facilitated the effective resolution of any conflict of difficulty that may have risen during implementation phase
- ii. It maximized the use of local knowledge. Thanks to the detailed spatial information contained in the aerial photos or satellite images, even illiterate slum dwellers could provide valuable contributions, based on their experience and deep knowledge of the study area
- iii. Motivation of the community contributed to the planning activity, since they could effectively take the initiative and influence the decision taken.

Reference: Spaliviero, M., *Integrating Slum Upgrading and Vulnerability Reduction in Mozambique*, OPEN HOUSE INTERNATIONAL, Special Issue: "Managing Urban Disaster", Vol. 31, n. 1, pp. 106-115, 2006

URL: [http://www.openhouse-int.com/abdisplay.php?xvolno=31\\_1\\_12](http://www.openhouse-int.com/abdisplay.php?xvolno=31_1_12)

## **b. Post-disaster Projects in Asia: the new use of Community Action Planning**

A large number of countries in Asia and the Pacific region are prone to disasters of various kinds, impact of disasters on terms of loss of life, assets and impediment to development is colossal. The challenge for UN-Habitat to address is how to launch the recovery soon after a disaster or a conflict, involving the affected people?

Disaster-affected communities are assisted in identifying their needs for housing reconstruction and community infrastructure needs as well as actions required to meet these needs. These communities implement their plans with the support of the Local Governments and other support organizations with the resources provided for reconstruction either by Government or partner agencies. Community Action Planning, which develops the capacity of the communities to take appropriate action for their own development, is the framework for the implementation of actions decided by the communities. It is important that the community prepares the Community Action Planning itself. This helps in the communities to internalize the plans and to take responsibility for their implementation and maintenance.

Reference: UN-Habitat, People's process in post-disaster recovery and reconstruction

URL: [http://www.fukuoka.unhabitat.org/docs/hpress/pdf/GC21-Peoples\\_Process-  
Pages\\_1-4.pdf](http://www.fukuoka.unhabitat.org/docs/hpress/pdf/GC21-Peoples_Process-Pages_1-4.pdf)

## **c. Community planning applied to neighborhood planning**

### **i. Housing in Erbil**

A housing facilitation unit guidance manual was developed by the technical advisory services for enhanced slum upgrading of UN-HABITAT (March 2009) following a Kurdistan Regional Government initiative willing to improve living conditions in the low-income neighborhoods of Saidawa and Kurani Ainkawa. This document proposes general principles to favour engagement of people in development and planning projects. These are:

- Involve and encourage all sections of the community

- Avoid raising false expectation
- Ensure a correct understanding of the concept of 'common interest'
- Value local knowledge
- Build local human and social capacity
- Plan for the local context
- Adopt a flexible attitude
- Ensure proper communication
- Set clear project deadlines or milestones
- Work on site
- Involve people in design
- Favour hands-on and visual methods
- Ensure a regular documentation of the process

A very practical and concrete 'step by step procedures and process' table was also developed, as well as supporting documents.

## **ii. A national initiative: Community development fund in Thailand**

This case is part of UN-HABITAT's Human Settlements Financing Tools and Best Practices Series (2009). The Urban Community Development Office (UCDO) was set up in 1992 by the Thai Government to address poverty. This program was created in order to provide a mechanism that enables urban poor organizations to tap into resources directly by building up their own capacities and to allow communities to decide and design various activities.

This example is relevant because it operates at a national scale. UCDO was provided with an initial fund from which it could provide loans to organized communities for a variety of activities related to housing, land acquisition and income generation. The UCDO also supported communities in a particular city or province to form networks, negotiate as a block with local authorities etc. The establishment of welfare funds for communities to use as grants, loan or partial loans for education or income generation was another important initiative.

Finally, success of the UCDO is evident: by the year 2000, 950 community savings groups had been established and supported in 53 of Thailand's 76 provinces.

The report also gives a detailed overview of the evolution of the Thai UCDO Office and develops the case study of the Baan Mankong upgrading program, which channels government funds (in the form of infrastructure subsidies and soft housing and land loans) directly to urban poor community organizations. It was implemented by the CODI (Community Organization Development Institute) and is a demand-driven approach that imposes a few conditions as possible, in order to give urban poor communities, networks and various stakeholders as much as much freedom as possible to design their own programs.

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Wates, N., *The Community Planning Handbook. How people can shape their cities, towns and villages in any part of the world*, Earthscan, London, 2000, pp. 11-21

- All these documents are available in *dropbox*. To have access to the *dropbox*, please send your request for an invitation to the Urban Planning and Design Branch or to [laura.petrella@unhabitat.org](mailto:laura.petrella@unhabitat.org)

### **Films**

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### **Website References**

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Prepared by Ava Zekri  
Urban Planning & Design Branch  
United Nations Human Settlements Programme  
P.O. Box 30030, GPO Nairobi 00100, Kenya  
Email: [laura.petrella@unhabitat.org](mailto:laura.petrella@unhabitat.org)  
[www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org)