



ESID Briefing No. 25

Promoting urban poverty reduction in Uganda: Lessons from TSUPU municipalities

KEY FINDINGS:

- Attitude change and improved relationships between municipal officials and the organised urban poor have created a more enabling environment for urban poverty reduction
- Governance has become more inclusive through the mobilisation of the urban poor into organised federations, the establishment of Municipal Development Forums, and the development of Municipal Development Strategies.
- The co-produced water and sanitation projects investigated have contributed most to poverty reduction by strengthening voice and bringing the organised urban poor and municipal officials into partnership.
- Municipal capacity to engage in more transformative models for social provisioning is constrained by the national institutional and regulatory environment.

INTRODUCTION

'Transforming Settlements of the Urban Poor in Uganda: A Secondary Cities Support Programme' (TSUPU) was undertaken by the Government of Uganda in partnership with Cities Alliance.¹ The programme sought to align national, municipal and community urban development efforts, and include the urban poor in planning and decision-making processes. The TSUPU programme was co-designed by the Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Urban Development (MoLHUD), Cities Alliance and Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI). Initial activities focused on five municipalities but with the intention of rolling out lessons from the programme nationally.

Key components of the initial three year programme (2011-2014) at municipal level included the use of SDI methodologies to mobilise informal settlement communities into savings groups and profile and enumerate informal settlements; the establishment of Community Upgrading Funds (CUF) for the co-production of basic services in partnership with the newly organised urban poor; and Municipal Development Forums (MDFs) through which multiple urban development stakeholders could engage council. The original idea was for the MDFs to produce Municipal Development Strategies (MDS). In the end, MDFs and the MDS process have been supported in at total of 14 municipalities under a complementary World Bank programme called Uganda Support for Municipal Infrastructure Development (USMID) which is focused on capacity-building municipal local governments and developing urban infrastructure.

This briefing shares lessons about the ways in which the TSUPU programme has contributed to urban poverty reduction and the promotion of inclusive urban development within Kabale and Mbale municipalities. It considers the effects of the programme on levels of organisation among the urban poor; access to basic services; and the governance of urban development; and drivers and constraints shaping the outcomes it has been possible to achieve. It concludes with some points of reflection for policy-makers and other urban development stakeholders.

FINDINGS:

Mobilisation of federations of the urban poor

TSUPU catalysed and enabled mobilisation of urban poor communities in the five municipalities into federations. In Mbale, the federation now has 55 savings groups with a total membership of 2103 slum-dwellers. In Kabale, there were 48 savings groups with a total membership of 1890 by 2014. As well as combatting poverty by promoting a culture of savings, these organised networks have been critical to implementation. Firstly, municipal officials and civil society agree that one of TSUPU's biggest achievements is community organisation and

empowerment including higher levels of confidence to ask questions and make demands, and an increased sense of responsibility and increased capabilities for achieving urban transformation. By 2012, the Kabale federation had become organised enough to demand remedial action in response to shoddy work on a local bridge, and then to occupy the municipal council offices, securing the required work on the bridge but also a shift in Kabale Municipal Council's stance on inclusion of the Federation within the TSUPU programme. Federation mobilisation was both an outcome of the TSUPU programme and a precondition for its effective implementation. Federation groups were well-organised enough to manage and sustain the TSUPU projects over time and projects were awarded to particular areas according to whether an active savings group was in place. In future, regional federations could focus more strongly on mobilizing very low-income households into savings groups and strengthening their participation in municipal decision-making.

Inclusive governance

TSUPU has helped information flow between the municipal councils, urban poor communities, and other urban development stakeholders. Previously the local council system was failing to provide a structure for representation and debate. Active Municipal Development Forums have helped to produce Municipal Development Strategies. It took longer for the MDF to become active in Kabale because of strong resistance among the technical and political wing of the municipality. In both municipalities, settlement or neighbourhood forums are only happening in a few wards. Active intervention by a local Federation leader or an area councillor encourages mobilisation. Community representatives and municipal officials both report significant and positive changes resulting from MDF activities. Each partner brings something the other needs: community representatives report what is happening on the ground; municipal officials bring information about programmes, projects, and development resources. Community and municipal representatives both emphasise the increased transparency and improved information flow that has resulted. As a senior technical official in Mbale explained: "it is like the voice and the ears of council...we use them to get information and we use them to share information". Forums require continued capacity-building as memberships change, and the sustained investment of resources. Their effectiveness is also dependent on the capacity of organisations of the urban poor to gather information about challenges on the ground, report these, and follow up to check action has been taken. The MDF Presidents (who are also the Federation Chairpersons in both cases) have not been provided with any kind of transport to support their frequent movements around the municipality and their expenses are not covered; this reduces their contribution and in turn the effectiveness of the MDF.

Table 1: Proportion of urban population living in informal settlements²

	Population (2014 census)	Informal Settlement Population (Profiles ³)	Average incomes in settlements (Profiles)
Mbale	96,189	62,148 (2010)	3,000 – 5,000 UGX/day ⁴
Kabale	49,667	28,920 (2014)	2,000 – 5,000 UGX/day ⁵

Table 2: Assessing significance: TSUPU and Municipal resources

	Released Municipal Budget 2014/15 ⁶	Local Revenue 2014/15	TSUPU funds 2011-14	TSUPU project funds (CUF) 2011-2014	TSUPU project funds per capita (in settlements) ⁷
Mbale					
UGX	18,639,452,000	2,078,047,000	753,939,005	697,952,517	11,230
GBP	3,748,492	417,906	151,621	140,361	2.3
Kabale					
UGX	13,873,556,000	1,643,532,000	769,436,470	713,449,982	14,364
GBP	2,790,045	330,522	154,738	143,478	2.9

Increasing access to pro-poor services

Tables 1 and 2 demonstrate the limited financial capacity of the TSUPU programme to significantly increase access to basic services for the urban poor. Specific projects have clearly benefitted limited numbers of users. However, through the community contracting model adopted after year one, savings groups have been trained in different approaches to contracting; have learned how to form and sustain project management committees; and have learned skills in project development, management, and monitoring for accountability. Municipal officials have seen the value of community contracting in terms of the promotion of local ownership and more accountable use of local resources. Beyond TSUPU implementation, they are constrained by rigid procurement regulations which rule out the use of community contracting for projects costing more than one million shillings⁸. Technical officials did not share the longer-term vision of the TSUPU programme held by certain national and transnational stakeholders and sustaining partnerships with project management committees beyond implementation has been a problem. On balance this seems to be a challenge of both commitment and capacity. Highly motivated technical officials argued that they had a duty to, and were attempting to sustain partnerships around projects. Others argued strongly that the municipality lacked the financial capacity to continue to work with project management committees to ensure new initiatives were well-maintained.

Box 1. Community contracting and sustaining partnership

A community contracting model was adopted for the second two phases of TSUPU. Community groups were able to employ their own contractors and received training in project management and how to procure workers and materials. Qualitative accounts across the two municipalities suggest this led to more accountable investment of resources and better quality services with higher levels of community ownership. However, challenges have arisen over questions of sustainability. An example is the rehabilitation of a gravity water scheme in Kabale. The need for this rehabilitation was identified by the surrounding community, who were closely supported by technical officials at the municipality to develop a project proposal and set up a project management committee (PMC). The PMC was made up of one member of each of the six savings groups in the area to ensure inclusivity and minimise conflict. They monitored expenditure and the rehabilitation process. The project has brought clean drinking water to an estimated 4,349 beneficiaries across 8 villages. The PMC is still in place in 2016 and one of the members has been elected as area councillor. The committee are facing serious challenges with vandalism linked to resentments from a particular group of people whose tender for the work was rejected. Despite active work on the part of the PMC to get taps replaced and raise money for maintenance they continue to struggle. Partnership working with the municipality was strong during implementation but ended when work was completed. The PMC and the user community need continued support from the Municipality in terms of technical advice, enforcement action against known vandals, and ongoing awareness-raising across the parish about the importance of maintaining the scheme and supporting the PMC.

What we learned about inclusive urban development at the municipal level

Making services transformative

Municipal officials who think of service delivery as a process rather than a one-off development can help promote inclusion and sustainability. How community members are included matters significantly for continued maintenance of the investment. An example is the Mbale slum dwellers federation springboard sanitation project. Local residents identified the need for the project, were involved in design,

construction and fee-setting, and now continue to be engaged through community meetings where governance arrangements and challenges are discussed. Transparency is also critical for both user-communities and project committees to avoid conflict, politicisation, and to generate information that tells people whether a service is benefitting as many settlement-dwellers as possible within the limits of financial (non-profit) feasibility. Finally, there must be a sustainability strategy! The biggest single challenge for projects funded under TSUPU has been inexperienced project management committees left to manage a collective resource with no municipal support (see Box 1).

Recognising mutuality as a cornerstone of effective governance

Municipal Development Forums in Kabale and Mbale began to function effectively when communities and local government workers recognised each other's contributions and constraints, and the mutual benefits of partnership. During Phase I of TSUPU, the municipalities attempted to control the programme with little involvement from communities. Once technical officials began to work with savings groups to develop projects, and federation leaders came to meet regularly with municipal officials within the MDFs, attitudes and relationships changed. Community mobilisation also became easier once people saw the partnership working in practice. Communities will organise and help government do its job if they see government rewarding them for these efforts (and change on the ground). Technical professionals are motivated by working in partnership with organised communities and seeing positive changes result (combined with financial facilitation). The increased access to information and exposure brought by partnership enables each to see the extreme challenges that the other has to negotiate on a daily basis. Cultivating these strong relationships over time is key for improved urban governance. The constant transfer of Town Clerks undermines this kind of progress.

Making politics an opportunity

Settlement forums and savings mobilisation are an opportunity to re-engage urban citizens in local development. Area councillors have played a key role in making TSUPU a success by linking together savings groups with the municipality and helping information flows. Higher numbers of local and area councillors are joining the federations. This is a strength but also a challenge. The question is how to ensure that governance does not become limited to representation by existing leaders and that the benefits of mobilisation are shared. In Mbale, the politicisation of TSUPU projects during the electoral period has been challenging. In both Kabale and Mbale, local and national politicians have taken credit for developments that should have enhanced the reputation of urban poor federations. In Kabale, TSUPU resources were distributed evenly across council wards but this prevented more expensive but critical projects starting up that required successive investments. A conscious effort needs to be made to engage a breadth of informal settlement dwellers, and perhaps through doing so, to draw more of those directly affected by poverty into non-partisan citizen action.

Creating an enabling institutional environment and policy framework

Technical officials have developed skills and knowledge in participatory working and are motivated by having resources available for project implementation. This has been augmented as working conditions have improved and career development opportunities emerged under USMID. Working in partnership with organised groups and seeing positive outcomes has been motivational, as have learning exchanges to other municipalities. Municipal officials are constrained however by the lack of suitable land for projects; slow and rigid procurement processes; and most critically by meagre discretionary resources and local revenue. Centralised budgeting and decision-making means technical officials see themselves as implementers of Ministry programmes rather than innovators. Plans to reform intergovernmental fiscal transfers and budgeting processes are therefore a positive step forwards.⁹

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

A more enabling operating environment for municipal officials:

- Subsidising access to basic services within informal settlements and exploring alternative approaches to land access for slum upgrading¹⁰ would create room for municipal officials to apply their capabilities to urban poverty reduction in partnership with the poor
- Increased investment in making public service within municipal local governments an attractive career, for example through higher salaries and more professional development opportunities, would increase capacity and incentivise commitment.
- Greater devolution of fiscal and administrative power to municipal local governments would create space for innovation and increase citizen influence over development resources.

A more enabling environment for progressive state-society relations:

- A reduction in the frequency of transfer of senior administrative officials would enable progressive relationships to develop over time between the municipal leadership and the organised urban poor while creating a stronger sense of leadership and ownership at the top
- Financing regular cross-municipality learning exchanges for municipal officials and community representatives has the dual benefit of strengthening relationships between municipalities as well as within municipalities, creating horizontal solidarity in support of inclusive urban development investments from the centre.
- Mentoring arrangements attached to the MDF structures would enable experienced professionals to assist community representatives to understand complex council processes
- Provision of shared motorcycles for leaders of the organised urban poor as well as technical and community development staff would support community mobilisation and partnership working.
- The informal 'facilitation' costs that motivate technical officials to do community outreach are controversial. Cultivating commitment without also giving a financial incentive for partnership working at settlement level does not work beyond the timescales of a funded programme. Can stronger systems for enforcement of duties be introduced? Should targeted investments cover these informal fees until financial capacity exists locally?

ABOUT THIS BRIEFING

This briefing reports on findings from an ESID project exploring what shapes state vision, commitment and capacity for the promotion of urban poverty reduction in Uganda which was carried out in partnership with the National Slum Dwellers Federation of Uganda and ACTogether Uganda. It draws conceptually on an earlier ESID research project exploring urban poverty programming in India. Accompanying briefings which give a national overview of our findings and summarise findings about the activities of participating urban poor federations can be found at: www.effective-states.org/publications. This briefing was drafted by Sophie King (University of Salford), Peter Kasaija (Makerere University) and Diana Mitlin (University of Manchester).

¹ Cities Alliance is a global partnership of bilateral and multilateral agencies financing urban development. TSUPU is also referred to as the suite of eight research and capacity building projects that have made up the Cities Alliance Country Programme 2010-2016.

² Based on 2014 census data (Uganda Bureau of Statistics), and settlement and city profiling data gathered by affiliates of the NSDFU and ACTogether. The two different sources mean one is not a direct proportion of the other. Nonetheless, this provides an indication of the proportion of the municipal population residing in informal settlements and the extent of urban poverty.

³ Settlement and city profiling data gathered by affiliates of the NSDFU and ACTogether.

⁴ 5,000 UGX is approximately £1 GBP.

⁵ Kabale is a peri-urban area. Some residents live a subsistence lifestyle with no regular cash income.

⁶ The amount actually received/collected by the municipality as opposed to indicative planning figures.

⁷ Total TSUPU community upgrading funds disbursed to the municipality from the Ministry of Lands over the three years of the programme divided by estimated number of people living within informal settlements.

⁸ Approximately £200 GBP.

⁹ See for example aspects of the Ministry of Finance's Third Financial Management and Accountability Programme (FINMAP III): <http://bit.ly/2gEbFoU>

¹⁰Such as existing approaches employed by ACTogether and the NSDFU

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