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Most Current Issues and Perspectives of the Urban Slum Problem in Kenya

Examining the Results of the KENSUP Slum Upgrade Programme in Kibera

The paper examines the largest-scale historical slum development program, that has been running in Kibera, the biggest slum of Kenya, since the turn of the millennium: Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme (KENSUP) and its two projects Kibera Integrated Water, Sanitation and Waste Management Project (K-WATSAN) and Kibera Slum Upgrading Initiative (KSUI). The paper synthesises the available literature to examine the extent to which the objectives originally set for 2020 have been achieved. The study found that K-WATSAN was successful both in terms of actively involving the locals and improving their life conditions. However, KSUI did not utilise the experiences gained regarding the significance of community participation. Consequently, structural flaws emerge that call into question the actual fulfilment of the programme's goals, as well as the programme's sustainability.

Keywords: Kibera, urban slums, KENSUP, community participation, slum upgrading

Introduction: problem identification and methodology

For the metropolises of the Global South, fast population growth presents an enormous challenge. The supply cannot meet the continuously increasing demand for suitable housing, workplaces and city services, so people are compelled to satisfy their own needs. In terms of housing, this equates with moving to the slums, that has assumed mass proportions in the second half of the 20th century.³ Presently, every eighth human on Earth is a slum resident; which, according to the estimates, amounts to globally approximately 1 billion people.⁴ In terms of proportions, even though some improvement can be discerned in the decades after the turn of the millennium – between 2000 and 2014, the proportion of city population living in the slums of the developing world decreased from 39 to 30% – considering the absolute numbers, we are facing a growing tendency.⁵ Since

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³ Czirják, Ráhel (2019): Community-led Planning: The Key to Successful Slum Upgrading? *DETUROPE: Central European Journal of Tourism and Regional Development*, 11(1), 164–181.

⁴ UN HABITAT (2020): *World Cities Report 2020. The Value of Sustainable Urbanisation*. Nairobi: UN-HABITAT. 377.

⁵ United Nations (2015): *The Millennium Development Goals Report*.

the turn of the millennium, the number of people living in metropolitan slums has been growing globally by 6 million per year, which meant the arrival of 16,500 new people daily. As a result of this, in Sub-Saharan Africa, 56% of city residents, and 46% of those in Kenya, are slum dwellers.⁶ For dealing with this problem, we can see various types of solutions, from forced relocation and bulldozing to improving local conditions through infrastructural development and building new houses for residence. In our present study, we introduce the settlement rehabilitation of Kibera in Nairobi, which is considered to be Africa's largest slum district, and within this introduction, we provide a detailed account of the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme (subsequently: KENSUP).

In our investigation, we are applying a secondary data analysis method, disclosing – according to accessible sources – the results of the programme, which was originally planned to be carried out by 2020. For this purpose, we present how KENSUP is historically and legally embedded, as well as summarising to what extent the aims that were set in relation to Kibera were realised.

Here, we have to note that in our work, the principle of autopsy could not be fully applied, as a considerable percentage of the UN Habitat documents listed in our references are inaccessible. Only the initial 2007 and 2008 documents can be downloaded from their homepage, and upon our request, the colleagues of the Nairobi centre confirmed that they do not possess any more reports. In spite of this, we managed to find a few more investigation results that were officially made for Habitat, but this situation undoubtedly calls into question the organisation's effective involvement, given that their emphasised task during this programme would have been to register, process and disseminate their experiences. We 'bumped up against' a similar problem concerning Kenyan state documents, without getting any response to our request.

In our writing, we first review the history of how Kenyan slums came to be, then we introduce how the legal environment that serves to manage the problem has been evolving. In the second part of our study, we provide a detailed account of KENSUP, with special regard paid to the two projects of the programme that are implemented in Kibera. Finally, based on the data from accessible literature, we present a summarised evaluation of the extent to which the established goals were realised during this rehabilitation. Such a large slum upgrading programme may offer numerous lessons for all the participants of the international development cooperation scene. Thus, the aim of this complex investigation – with its first element being the present study – is to disclose these lessons and summarise them in a manner that can be set into practice.

The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta and the Africa Research Centre of the University of Pécs have already completed the first summary of the KENSUP.⁷ The present paper presents the partial results of the settlement development programme in English language, complementing the first summary.

⁶ UN HABITAT 2020.

⁷ Solymári, Dániel et al. (2021): Overview of Kenyan Government Initiatives in Slum Upgrading: The Case of KENSUP and KISIP Projects. *Hungarian Journal of African Studies*, 15(3), 37–59.

A historic review: Slum problem and how Kenya handles it

Almost half of Kenya's city population resides in informal settlements, i.e. slum quarters, out of which the largest one is Kibera, by now evolved into an actual district in Nairobi. This settlement is a 'state within a state': the local jurisdiction does not extend here, the place has no sewage system, no legal (and safe) water or power.⁸ Actually, only an estimation of the population is possible, as the city management has no exact data. Often, not even the personal identities are known of the dwellers who rent their shanties without authorisation; these people are non-existent for the state's safety net.⁹ The history of how settlements such as Kibera came to be reaches back as far as colonial times, as a result of the settlement regulations excluding and restricting Africans.

Not long after founding Nairobi, the new capital, in 1899, the rulers started legally regulating and restricting how the ethnically mixed population could settle down, move into cities, and what activities they could perform. The first such legislation was enacted in 1905, and similar laws followed it in 1927, as well as 1948.¹⁰ In practice, this law restricted moving into Nairobi for Africans, designating different zones where different ethnicities could reside within the city.¹¹ In the city, Kenyans belonged into the 'tolerated' category, and they lived in the city sections with the worst conditions, mainly in temporary residences.¹² The base of reference for establishing these ethnic and racial zones was the public health act of 1930, which aimed to create a disease-free city environment, at the lowest possible cost.¹³ They wanted to defend the European population from tropical diseases by means of ethnic segregation. Informal settlements and slum/shantytown quarters had already started to form at that time, as the Kenyans were not only crowded out from city areas with better conditions and thus forced to move into bad-quality lodgings without appropriate infrastructure supply, but in the 1915 Land Act, they were also prohibited from owning real estates – not only in good-quality agricultural areas – but in cities, as well. This way, Africans were forced to move into informal settlements near their job opportunities.¹⁴

When Kenya gained its independence, upon lifting the urban settlement restrictions, huge crowds began pouring into the cities from the rural areas where they had to tackle drought, in some cases low-quality land areas and the lack of jobs – their primary urban

⁸ Solymári, Dániel (2014): *Harcok és távlatok: Kelet-afrikai nyomortelepek ma és holnap. Afrika Tanulmányok*, 8(2), 5–16.

⁹ Solymári, Dániel et al. (2020): *The Impact of Covid-19 on the Livelihoods of Kenyan Slum Dwellers and the Need for an Integrated Policy Approach. PLoS ONE* 17(8).

¹⁰ Amiss, Philip (1988): *Commercialized Rental Housing in Nairobi, Kenya*. In Patton, Carl V. (ed.): *Spontaneous Shelter. International Perspectives and Prospects*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 235–257; Ottichilo, Wilber (2011): *Tracking Regional Growth and Development: The Nairobi Case*. In Birch, Eugenie – Wachter, Susan (eds.): *Global Urbanisation*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 167–171.

¹¹ Seger, Martin (1992): *Nairobi – egy gyarmati múltú nagyváros szerkezeti tagolódása. Földrajzi Közlemények*, 156(1–2), 57–68.

¹² Magutu, Jerry (1994): *The Role of Informal Settlements in Housing the Urban Poor in Nairobi, Kenya. Ekistics*, 61(366–367), 206–213.

¹³ Amiss 1988: 235–257; Ottichilo 2011; Macharia, Kinuthia (1992): *Slum Clearance and the Informal Economy. The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 30(2), 221–236.

¹⁴ Anderson, Mark – Mwelu, Keziah (2013): *Kenyan Slum Upgrading Programs: KISIP & KENSUP*.

choice being Nairobi – where they saw a better chance to get on.¹⁵ Facing the accelerated urbanisation, however, the government had neither an appropriate development strategy nor sufficient financial resources to satisfy the increased housing demand, so the people erected their own shelters from available raw materials.¹⁶ In this way, slums further multiplied.

In the very first years, rife as they were with numerous legal, administrative, governmental challenges, the government, led by Jomo Kenyatta, handled the unregulated growth and proliferation of informal settlements by returning to the public health act of the 1930s, which in practice meant bulldozing slums.¹⁷ In the 1960s, these shantytowns were regarded as dark stains on the cities, factors inhibiting the city's development.¹⁸

In the 1970s, the situation only changed to a lesser extent. In 1978, President Moi, who ascended into power after Kenyatta's death, continued to implement a similar procedure against the slums, and in spite of all the proposals, he did not modify the constitution that had been created at the time of gaining independence – in which human rights, such as the right for housing, did not appear to be emphasised with sufficient momentum.¹⁹ Internationally, public opinion grew more and more critical towards mass evictions and bulldozing. As it happened, by this time Nairobi became the centre of international organisations and NGOs; it grew into a bona fide 'humanitarian hub' of the region, so the concepts of adequate housing and general human rights that they have so frequently proclaimed, increasingly became a part of the policy discourse in the East African country, as well. Thus, as a result of outside pressure, the attitude of handling the problem gradually shifted from bulldozing towards Slum Upgrading.²⁰

However, the challenge of satisfying the increased housing demand did not diminish even in the 1980s. As a result of the Structural Adjustment Programs – SAPs – of the World Bank and the IMF, social inequalities grew considerably, and poverty escalated.²¹ After the mass evictions and bulldozing in the 1980s and 1990s, from the turn of the millennium onwards, the manner of handling the slum problem in Kenya was and still is characterised by a state attitude that is more favourable for the poor;²² in forming

¹⁵ K'akumu, Owiti A. – Olima, Washington H. A. (2007): The Dynamics and Implications of Residential Segregation in Nairobi. *Habitat International*, 31(1), 87–99.

¹⁶ GOK-KENSUP (2005): Government of Kenya, KENSUP Financing Strategy.

¹⁷ Macharia 1992: 221–236.

¹⁸ Lewis, Oscar (1959): *Five Families. Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty*. New York: Basic Books; Clinard, Marshall (1966): *Informal Settlements and Community Development. Experiments in Self-Help*. New York: The Free Press; Juppenlatz, Morris (1970): *Cities in Transformation. The Urban Squatter Problem of the Developing World*. St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press.

¹⁹ Omenya, Alfred – Huchzermeyer, Marie (2006): Slum Upgrading in the Complex Context of Policy Change: The Case of Nairobi. In Huchzermeyer, Marie – Karam, Aly (eds.): *Perpetual Challenge? Informal Settlements at the Local and Policy Level*. Cape Town: Juta–UCT Press. 290–311.

²⁰ Solymári et al. 2021: 37–59.

²¹ Otiso, Kefa M. (2003): State, Voluntary and Private Sector Partnerships for Slum Upgrading and Basic Service Delivery in Nairobi City. *Kenya Cities*, 20(4), 221–229.

²² Muraguri, Leah (2011): Kenyan Government Initiatives in Slum Upgrading. *The East African Review*, 44, 119–127; Githira, Daniel (2016): *Growth and Eviction of Informal Settlements in Nairobi*. MSc Thesis. Twente: University of Twente.

this attitude, the influence of the international narrative as well as the recognition that physically annihilating slums is merely a symptomatic ‘treatment’ of the existing problem, played an important role.²³

In 2000, the UN’s member states elaborated on and accepted the Millennium Development Goals, in which they targeted the significant improvement of at least 100 million people residing in slums (Target 7.D).²⁴ Among those who signed the document, Kenya was also present. Partly as a result of this, in 2001, the Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi and Anna Tibaijuka, the executive manager of the UN Habitat at that time, discussed the challenges of the Kenyan housing situation within an official meeting, as a result of which in 2003, the parties signed a memorandum of understanding, and in 2004, they officially launched KENSUP, the long-term Slum Upgrading Programme, which was to be implemented via the cooperation of the Kenyan Government and the UN Habitat.²⁵

Kenya’s attitude shift and the country’s endeavours are also reflected in how the legal environment has evolved, and they are apparent in the strategic plan documents, as well. After thirty-seven years, in 2004, the National Housing Policy Directive was reviewed, which, similarly to the original version, sought a solution to the deteriorating housing situation and the problem of the lack of housing, primarily in the cities. However, on this occasion, they intended to achieve this goal by means of building apartments that would be offered to low- and medium-income people, improving the housing conditions of slums and informal settlements, as well as an incentive to the house rental system²⁶ – as opposed to bulldozing the slums that hinder the new investments serving the needs of more well-to-do people.

In 2007, the government issued the long-term state development strategy named Kenyan Vision 2030, in which the housing problem issue is also present. According to the document, by 2030, the goal would be for people to live under appropriate housing conditions in a safe environment.²⁷

In a subsequent move, the National Land Policy of 2009 dealt with the problems related to the spread of slums and the intervention measures directed at handling the estate laws of informal settlements. The act²⁸ suggested modernising the slums, evaluating the territories occupied by slums regarding the aspect of how suitable they would be for modernising, as well as a substantive consultation with the slum dwellers. However, as a result of weak implementation strategies, these endeavours could not be set into practice.²⁹

²³ Solymári et al. 2021.

²⁴ [Millennium Development Goals Indicators](#). [online], MDG Indicators, s. a. Source: unstats.un.org [22.01.2023].

²⁵ UN HABITAT (2008): *UN HABITAT and the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme. Strategy Document*. Nairobi: UN HABITAT. 72.

²⁶ Government of Kenya (2004): *Sessional Paper No. 3 of 2004 on National Housing Policy for Kenya*. Nairobi: Government Printer.

²⁷ Government of Kenya (2007): *Vision 2030*. Nairobi: Ministry of Planning and National Development.

²⁸ Government of Kenya (2009a): *Sessional Paper No. 3 of 2009 on National Land Policy*. Nairobi: Government Printer. 48.

²⁹ Obare, Michael (2015): *An Evaluation of Slum Upgrading Schemes in Nairobi County. The Case of Kibera Slums*. Research Project EPM 492. 96.

In 2010, Kenya's new constitution was adopted, guaranteeing the right for 'accessible and appropriate housing', as well as for reasonable norms of hygiene. Furthermore, Article 43 recognises the right of ownership for lawfully obtained real estates and lands, as well as firmly stating that the state cannot deprive a single person of their property, prescribing immediate full restitution as a compensation for the benefit of the possibly injured person.³⁰

The National Urban Development Directive of 2011 reorganised the city development, as up to that time, it had been burdened with corruption, contradictions and conflicts. The law intended to establish a proper framework for the sustainable development of city areas, also targeting the solution of problems pertaining to slums, such as social infrastructure and services, city housing, safety and disaster management, as well as the marginalisation of vulnerable social groups.³¹

The Kenyan Government's next move was the NSUPP – National Slum Upgrading and Prevention Policy draft,³² completed by the Ministry of Housing in 2012, which proposed accepting a comprehensive slum upgrading and prevention plan that could be the basis of slum-related interventions. This document's framers also deemed it necessary to deal with issues such as regulating property right relations, establishing a proper institutional background, environment protection, planning and development control, substantive inclusion of every interested party in the process of interventions, with special regard to more vulnerable groups, developing and maintaining the infrastructure, and so on.³³ Nevertheless, up to this very day, no all-encompassing slum upgrading law has been passed in Kenya, so the relevant developments that are implemented in the cities continue to be realised according to a number of ambiguous and ineffective legislations.³⁴

From the review, it is obvious that Kenya's attitude towards slums has changed a lot since the colonisation. Moving away from forcible evictions and bulldozing, the present goal is an approach that keeps in mind the interests of the most vulnerable; upgrading slums, improving the life conditions of their residents, guaranteeing the housing for the poorest is more or less a general directive.³⁵ Even though the slum upgrading act that would serve as a unified framework for effective intervention has not yet been passed, and evicting people from public properties in need of development is still an existing phenomenon in Kenya, the trend is by all means promising.

In the following section, we will introduce how the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme, one of the most significant results and tools of this attitude shift, was realised, and to what extent it contributed to managing the housing problem of the poorest.

³⁰ Government of Kenya (2010): *The Constitution of Kenya*.

³¹ Obare 2015.

³² Government of Kenya (2013): *Background Document. The National Slum Upgrading and Prevention Policy*. Nairobi: Government Printer. 4.

³³ Government of Kenya 2013.

³⁴ Agayi, Collins Ouma – Serdaroğlu Sağ, Neslihan (2020): An Evaluation of Urban Regeneration Efforts in Kibera, Kenya through Slum Upgrading. *IDA: International Design and Art Journal*, 2(2), 176–192.

³⁵ Czirják, Ráhel (2018): A nyomornegyedekben rejlő lehetőségek. *Parola: a közösségi fejlesztőmunka folyóirata*, 27(3), 8–11.

The KENSUP Programme

The Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme – KENSUP – was launched by the UN Habitat and Kenya's government in 2001, after Kenya's former president, Daniel arap Moi met the UN Habitat's executive manager at that time, Anna Tibaijuka. The parties signed a memorandum of understanding in 2003, and the programme was officially launched on 4 October 2004, the world day of housing.³⁶ KENSUP includes altogether eight projects, with the venues for implementing them being assigned in five Kenyan cities: Nairobi, Kisumu, Mavoko, Mombasa and Thika.³⁷ In our present study, we will only focus on the projects linked to Kibera, the largest slum within Nairobi.

The programme targets the improvement of life conditions of Kenyan urban slum residents and workers. The long-term programme is intended to apply a multi-disciplinary, integrated approach to handle the complex problem, via improving the housing situation, generating income, establishing the safety of the right of estate ownership, as well as offering physical and social infrastructure.³⁸ According to KENSUP's intentions, and translated into numbers, all this means the improvement of life conditions for 5.3 million city slum residents until 2020; the budget of this endeavour was estimated to amount to 884 billion Kenyan shillings; that is, approximately 13 billion U.S. dollars.³⁹ For financing the programme, KENSUF (Kenya Slum Upgrading, Low-Cost Housing and Infrastructure Fund) was created, the budget of which is comprised of payments from international donors – such as the UN Habitat – and the Kenyan state.⁴⁰

A wide-range partnership between the UN Habitat, the Kenyan Government, local authorities, the affected communities, non-governmental organisations, as well as the private sector, constitutes the basis of this programme. The participants' tasks are divided as follows:

- UN Habitat: technical aid, capacity enhancement, counselling, documentation, analysis
- Kenyan Government and local authorities: implementing the programme, directing and managing the processes, such as resolving estate ownership issues, creating a favourable legal, institutional and political framework for developments
- Non-governmental organisations: contributing with their expertise, mobilising local communities⁴¹

In order to implement the programme, a Slum Upgrading Department (SUD) was established within the Kenyan Housing Ministry – as it was called at that time – as

³⁶ UN HABITAT 2008.

³⁷ At the same time, it is important to note that out of the five cities listed in the initial plans (UN HABITAT 2007; UN HABITAT 2008), Habitat's 2014 report only mentions four venues for implementing the project, leaving out Thika (UN HABITAT 2014).

³⁸ Candiracci, Sara – Syrjänen, Raakel (2007): *UN HABITAT and the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme*. Nairobi: UN HABITAT.

³⁹ GOK–KENSUP 2005.

⁴⁰ Anderson–Mwelu 2013.

⁴¹ Candiracci–Syrjänen 2007.

a government-level institution responsible for its execution.⁴² While at the start of the programme, the Habitat and the Kenyan Government participated in planning like equal partners, in the course of the following years, the multilateral organisation passed the programme entirely on to the East African state.⁴³ The Kenyan Government's participation is by all means promising, considering that up until recently, decision-makers turned a blind eye to slums, ignoring their existence – not listing them in any city development documents. In the UN Habitat documents, Kenya appears as one of the few governments in Africa devoted to upgrading the slums.⁴⁴

In order to successfully implement the long-term programme, in its early stage, a pilot project was chosen, so that the conclusions and experiences formulated in the process of implementing it would serve as valuable lessons for the later implementation of the programme. This project was named the Kibera Integrated Water, Sanitation and Waste Management Project, Nairobi, subsequently K-WATSAN. The pilot was implemented in the village named Kibera Soweto East. Based on these experiences, also the second KENSUP project related to Kibera (Kibera Slum Upgrading Initiative – KSUI was (and still is) implemented here. Besides these two partial programmes, a third initiative called Youth Empowerment Programme, Kibera and Mavoko was also actualised.⁴⁵ However, since this project – one that targets youth education and creates a more favourable labour market position for young people – does not entail infrastructural elements, it is difficult to investigate several years after its launch, so we do not deal with it in the following segment of our article.

So, as an experimental venue, Soweto East was chosen, with a population of nearly 20,000. The reason for choosing it was that compared to other parts of the slum, the ownership relations are relatively transparent here, the place possesses an optimal road accessibility, it is an ethnically 'heterogeneous' 'cosmopolitan' area, with a relatively stable inner 'government'. Also, there have been development endeavours earlier on, which KENSUP can join in a relevant manner.⁴⁶

Kibera Integrated Water, Sanitation and Waste Management Project (K-WATSAN)

The K-WATSAN project, which is being implemented in Kibera's easternmost region, in Soweto East, was intended for the 'entry point' of the entire large-scale slum programme, in the course of which the project, employing a hybrid approach, combined the community

⁴² KNCHR (2015): Kenyan Commission on Human Rights: A Report Submitted to the High Court of Kenya (Nairobi) by the Kenyan National Commission on Human Rights on the Implementation of Petition No. 304 of 2015. Allocation of housing units in Kibera Soweto East Zone 'A' – Redevelopment project under the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme. 101.

⁴³ Scuggs, Gregory: [Turning Mud Huts Into Apartment Towers in Nairobi's Biggest Slum](#). [online], Yahoo News, 10 August 2015. Source: news.yahoo.com [22.01.2023].

⁴⁴ Candiracci–Syrjänen 2007.

⁴⁵ UN HABITAT 2008.

⁴⁶ Mitra, Shreya et al. (2017): Developing Risk or Resilience? Effects of Slum Upgrading on the Social Cohesion in Kibera, Nairobi. *Environment & Urbanisation*, 29(1), 103–122.

perspective that ensured the involvement and active participation of the affected people with a ‘top down’ approach – which, in the present situation, meant connecting the decision-makers and sources of the process with the affected people.⁴⁷

Beyond the explicit target setting, the initiative was dedicated to gain the trust of the locals and ensure their commitment for the long-term programme.⁴⁸ This was necessary because, due to the hitherto failed slum development interventions in Kenya, such kinds of developments are typically surrounded by mistrust. For successfully realising this programme, however, the support from affected people (and what is more, their active participation), is indispensable – as Habitat calls our attention to it several times.⁴⁹

The K-WATSAN integrated intervention was intended to improve the living conditions of those who reside in Soweto East, with their active participation in the areas of water and sanitation, sewage, waste collection, physical accessibility, safety and capacity enhancement. Through gaining the locals’ trust and ensuring their commitment, the ‘entry point’ project prepared the field for a large-scale apartment-building investment – Kibera Slum Upgrade Initiative (KSUI) – to be implemented in the district – while at the same time improving the living conditions of those who were left out of the latter initiative.⁵⁰

According to the original plans, after some delay, and due to a development enlargement – namely building an exploration road, keeping in mind the feedback from the locals – the initiative with a \$318,000 USD budget, which was launched in November 2005, was finally completed in 2010, with an altogether \$1.05 million U.S. dollar expenditure.⁵¹

Disclosing the initial situation started in 2001, with the document entitled *Nairobi Situation Analysis*,⁵² followed in 2004 by the work Participatory Urban Appraisal, during the completion of which, investigations proceeded to discover local living conditions, with community participation, in all thirteen quarters of Kibera.⁵³ Until 2006, this was followed by the creation of several other analyses and strategies.⁵⁴

One of the most important institutions of the hybrid project that combined initiatives coming from below with a process governed from above was the Settlement Executive Committee, subsequently SEC.⁵⁵ The body that ensured the formal participation of the affected community consisted of 18 members, including local community-based organisations (CBO), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the representatives of religious communities, renters, building owners, as well as several participants from the

⁴⁷ Meredith, Thomas – MacDonald, Melanie (2017): Community-Supported Slum-Upgrading: Innovations from Kibera, Nairobi, Kenya. *Habitat International*, 60, 1–9.

⁴⁸ Meredith–MacDonald 2017.

⁴⁹ Candiracci–Syrjänen 2007; UN HABITAT 2008; UN HABITAT 2014; Meredith–MacDonald 2017.

⁵⁰ Meredith–MacDonald 2017.

⁵¹ UN HABITAT 2014.

⁵² Syagga, Paul et al. (2001): *Nairobi Situation Analysis*. Joint project of the Government of Kenya and UNCHS Collaborative Nairobi Slum Upgrading Initiative.

⁵³ KENSUP – UN HABITAT (2004): A study to conduct Kibera socio-economic mapping Participatory Urban Appraisal (PUA) report on main findings Soweto East village.

⁵⁴ UN HABITAT 2014.

⁵⁵ Ministry of Lands and Housing (2004): Terms of Reference (TOR) and roles for the settlement executive committee (SEC).

decision-making side.⁵⁶ The most important task of SEC was to create unity between the affected and the decision-makers, as well as guaranteeing that throughout the project's entire duration, the slum residents' requests and feedbacks would reach the decision-makers, who would keep these in mind, according to their promise.⁵⁷ This institutional form is unique in its own nature, and it is evaluated as an outstanding point of KENSUP's innovative methodology.⁵⁸

As the next important move within preparing for the upgrades, in 2006, a community sensitisation workshop was created, whose aim was to address each and every party affected by the project, and clarify the scopes of responsibility,⁵⁹ as well as agreeing on the financial action plan.⁶⁰ As a result of the workshop, the local community's better accessibility – namely, building an exploration road – was identified as a main priority, a development that was absent from the earlier plans. Inserting the road building into the project was a good demonstration of K-WATSAN's adaptive approach,⁶¹ as well as the effective operation of the SEC – since it could successfully mediate the local population's need.

As a result of K-WATSAN, set for being implemented by 2010, the following developments were executed: through implementing rainwater drains, altogether seven community sanitation facilities and small-scale, house-to-house rubbish collection, as well as recycling services, public hygiene conditions were successfully improved. Within the slum quarter, a low-traffic road and adjoining sidewalk for pedestrians or bicycle riders was laid in, thus improving the local community's accessibility. For the quarter's 1,000 households, the project provided the possibility of joining the power grid, with the contribution of the Kenya Power and Lighting Company. A community and youth centre were established, which, besides its community-building function, also offers healthcare services for local children and expectant mothers. The project also provided training for the local community's members, which would (will) enable them to effectively participate in the construction work – road building, handling solid waste, and so on – as well as maintenance work.⁶²

After implementing the project, the UN Habitat commissioned a widespread review among the affected population in order to assess in what manner the developments influenced people's lives, and how they relate to continuing the KENSUP programme. The review yielded the unanimous result that the K-WATSAN fulfilled its goals flawlessly, considerably improving the locals' life quality, and due to the successful active participation, as well as the satisfactory outcome, the majority of the people is optimistic

⁵⁶ Meredith–MacDonald 2017.

⁵⁷ Ministry of Lands and Housing 2004.

⁵⁸ UN HABITAT 2014.

⁵⁹ UN HABITAT 2014.

⁶⁰ Meredith–MacDonald 2017.

⁶¹ Meredith–MacDonald 2017.

⁶² UN HABITAT 2011.

regarding implementing further elements of KENSUP.⁶³ All this visibly demonstrated that the community participation also stressed by the UN has a key role in successfully upgrading slums.

Kibera Slum Upgrading Initiative (KSUI)

The K-WATSAN prepared the Kibera Slum Upgrading Initiative (KSUI) as an ‘entry point’, setting the aim of bulldozing the shanties in the Soweto East quarter, establishing new residence buildings for the people living there.

The first phase of the KSUI was realised between 2002 and 2004, when the social-economical mapping and situational analysis of the target area, Soweto East, was completed. The organisers managed to contact the affected population, as well as establish the framework necessary for enacting the project. Out of the \$410,000 budgeted for the initial project element, Cities Alliance financed \$240,000, the UN Habitat offered \$110,000, and the Kenyan Government gave \$60,000.⁶⁴

Soweto East was divided into four zones (A, B, C, D), and during 2004–2005, the household census started, under the management of the Ministry of Lands. The process was conducted with the participation of the affected community and other actors, while at the same time, numerous forums were organised that served the sensitisation of the public.⁶⁵ During the census, key information was gathered about the renters and owners, and it was all registered in the database called *Master Register*. Subsequently, the heads of the households received individual identification cards having their names, the building’s identification number, and the people residing in the given household printed on it, along with other personal data.⁶⁶ As a result of this process, altogether 19,318 individuals were enumerated, out of which 16,899 people were renters and 2,419 were building owners. In Zone A, altogether 6,377 people lived at the time of the survey.⁶⁷

In order for the project to be seamlessly implemented, the affected residents signed a memorandum of understanding with the Housing Ministry, in which the locals agreed to move out of the territory to the venue designated for them for the time of the construction work, and move into the buildings of Zone A after the new houses were completed, where they would pay the rent up to the 10th of every month. According to the implemented financing system, the rental fee that they paid would be the instalment of the apartment loan; that is, through paying these instalments, they may become the owners of the newly built homes.⁶⁸ The apartment prices were settled as a result of a consultation with the locals – well below the market value, considering their economic status. A one-room apartment’s price was fixed to be in 600,000 Kenyan shillings (KSh), a two-room apartment cost 1,000,000, and the price of three-room apartments amounted

⁶³ Meredith–MacDonald 2017.

⁶⁴ UN HABITAT (2007): [Briefing Note on GOK/UN HABITAT. Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme \(KENSUP\)](#). [online], United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 16–20 April 2007. Source: preventionweb.net [12.01.2023].

⁶⁵ KNCHR 2015.

⁶⁶ KNCHR 2015.

⁶⁷ KNCHR 2015.

⁶⁸ KNCHR 2015.

to 1.35 million KSh. The duration of the instalments was 25 years, with a 3% interest. One of the conditions for apartment-eligibility was for the beneficiaries to pay 10% of the entire purchase price as a down payment.⁶⁹

Several institutions were established in order to involve Soweto East's residents into the project. The first one, similarly to the K-WATSAN project, was a SEC (Settlement Executive Committee) which was established in 2004 in the case of Zone A of Soweto East; it consisted of 17 members; whose task was to address the community and mobilise them in order to ensure their participation in the project, as well as maintaining communication between the locals and the implementing organisations.⁷⁰

The other important institution was the Housing Cooperative, created by the Ministry of Housing in 2007. This type of organisation was established in all four zones of Soweto East, with the aim of helping mobilise the sources of the affected population in order for them to become the owners of the newly built houses. Until 2015, 1,766 members joined the Housing Cooperative of Zone A, collecting the sum of altogether 147,675,306 KSh for registration, stock sharing, savings and interests.⁷¹

For the temporary relocation venue of the residents, originally a location along the river Athi was chosen, situated 23 kilometres from Kibera, but finally, due to the intercession of Raila Odinga, Kibera's territorial parliamentary representative, the locals' protest was finally acknowledged, and the temporary lodgings were set up in Lang'ata, seven kilometres to the south-east of Kibera. The first phase of the temporary relocation was carried out in 2009.⁷²

The five-storey buildings consisted of 17 blocks⁷³ definitely meant a step forward in terms of infrastructure, as the good-quality houses offered appropriate hygiene conditions and safety. And yet, in spite of this – or rather, precisely because of this – after moving in, serious structural problems came to light. One of these serious problems was the issue of affordability. According to the complaints of the affected tenants, the government did not involve them into determining the rental fees.⁷⁴ According to certain sources, the rental fee for the temporary lodgings was almost equal to the earlier Kibera prices;⁷⁵ however, the fee for the formal public utility services established here exceeded the fee for using the former, informally provided or non-existent utilities.⁷⁶ Other sources reported on a significant increase in the rental fees: whereas earlier, the renters had to pay 500 KSh per month for a room in Kibera, in Lang'ata, this sum was raised to 3,000 KSh – together with the cost of living⁷⁷ – that is, the housing costs grew six times higher. Considering that two-thirds of Soweto East's population is not formally employed, this extent of increase

⁶⁹ KNCHR 2015.

⁷⁰ KNCHR 2015.

⁷¹ KNCHR 2015.

⁷² Fernandez, Rosa Amelia Flores – Calas, Bernard (2011): The Kibera Soweto East Project in Nairobi. *The East African Review*, 44, 1–13.

⁷³ Fernandez–Calas 2011.

⁷⁴ Anderson–Mwelu 2013.

⁷⁵ Mitra et al. 2017.

⁷⁶ Fernandez–Calas 2011.

⁷⁷ Fernandez–Calas 2011.

in housing costs amounted to a considerable financial challenge for them.⁷⁸ On top of all this, the locals even had to save money through the Housing Cooperation, in order to be able to make the down payment for the new apartments, which further increased their financial burden.⁷⁹

However, at the same time, the incomes of numerous affected people decreased or came into jeopardy: with their moving away from their original residences, their business and social contact network became impossible to sustain,⁸⁰ since the majority of slum residents sells various goods or provides services as a forced entrepreneur at the busier venues of the slum. Their customers are also coming from among lower-income people. With their relocation, they lost precisely this circle of customers – occasionally together with their facility. If they wished to continue their business activities within Kibera in the future, they had to travel a greater distance, which increased their expenses.⁸¹ Their economic exposure was enhanced by losing the established social networks connected to their living places.⁸² The close-knit connections with their neighbours and relatives function as an important safety net through mutual help for the slum city residents. Moving away, however, deconstructed the communities linked to their living place, which takes a long time to be rebuilt.

As a solution to these emerging problems, a lot of people moved back to other parts of Soweto East, illegally renting out their temporary lodgings in Lang'ata. The new tenants that moved in in this manner were typically not Kiberan residents but persons of higher social status, who for example possess their own cars, and go shopping into Nairobi's shopping centres – so they do not even contribute to the functioning of the micro-entrepreneurships owned by Soweto East residents who live in Lang'ata.⁸³

According to KSU's original plans, the vacated shanties in Zone A of Soweto East would have been demolished immediately after the residents had moved over to the temporary lodgings. However, this plan was postponed for three years, after a group of shanty owners filed a lawsuit to the Supreme Court in 2009, because they wanted to prevent their buildings – which guaranteed their income source – from being demolished without a compensation.⁸⁴ Finally, the court rejected the lawsuit, finding for the government, so the construction works could be started in 2012, as a result of which, 822 apartments, 245 commercial booths, a multi-function centre, as well as the adjoining public facilities and infrastructural elements were erected.⁸⁵

Following this, the beneficiaries had to declare what size of an apartment they would like; then in March 2016, the specific real estates were allotted to them. On 5 May 2016, the keys of the newly built homes were ceremonially handed over,⁸⁶ after which, the gov-

⁷⁸ Fernandez–Calas 2011.

⁷⁹ Mitra et al. 2017.

⁸⁰ Mitra et al. 2017.

⁸¹ Agayi – Serdaroglu Sağ 2020.

⁸² Mitra et al. 2017.

⁸³ Mitra et al. 2017.

⁸⁴ Government of Kenya (2009b): *Petition 498*. The High Court of Kenya, Government of Kenya.

⁸⁵ KNCHR 2015.

⁸⁶ KNCHR 2015.

ernment announced that for the second phase of the project; that is, upgrading Zone B, would be implemented within two years, which would entail building 3,072 apartments, to the value of 6.5 billion KSh.⁸⁷

Evaluating the K-WATSAN and KSUI projects

Based on the results of the impact assessment completed by the UN Habitat,⁸⁸ we can state that by 2010, the K-WATSAN successfully implemented the goals it had set: with the active involvement of the concerned community they managed to improve the living conditions of the locals with small-scale developments like building rainwater sewage and sanitation facilities, establishing a house-to-house rubbish collection system, or building an exploratory road.⁸⁹ One of the most important institutions involving the community was the SEC (Settlement Execution Committee), in which both the affected population and the project's decision-makers were represented, thus guaranteeing that slum residents' needs and feedbacks reached the decision-makers for the entire duration of the project, who then duly acted on these.⁹⁰ Although the committee's functioning was not exempt from criticism, they essentially fulfilled their goal, as the locals' requests were noted, and thus a new element was integrated into the development, which did not constitute a part of the preliminary plans; that is, constructing the already mentioned exploratory road. Another mark of the project's success is that according to Habitat's impact assessment, the commitment towards KENSUP grew considerably among those interviewed, with the majority of the people having an optimistic attitude towards the further realisation of the programme.⁹¹

The project demonstrated that substantially and actively involving the locals, even though it is rather energy- and time-consuming, has to be one of the key elements of a successful slum upgrade.⁹² In a certain sense, KSUI ran parallel to the K-WATSAN project – since the situation analysis started as early as between 2002 and 2004. According to the original concepts, building on the methodology of K-WATSAN, the KSUI project would have been implemented through the substantial involvement of the affected community; however, this aspect of the project drew a number of criticisms. Even though in the case of the KSUI a SEC was established, in which the local community had the opportunity to represent themselves, closer scrutiny of the project disclosed the lack of substantial involvement.

From the interview that Amnesty International conducted among the residents of Soweto East in 2009, it became clear that the locals were not sufficiently involved in the project, thus beyond their actual needs and insights not getting the chance of being sufficiently integrated into the plans; in several cases, they could not access basic information

⁸⁷ Nairobi News: [Kibera to Get over 3,000 Houses in Slum-Upgrading Project](#). [online], Nairobi News, 21 July 2016. Source: nairobinews.nation.africa [22.01.2023].

⁸⁸ UN HABITAT 2014.

⁸⁹ UN HABITAT 2011.

⁹⁰ Ministry of Lands and Housing 2004.

⁹¹ UN HABITAT 2014.

⁹² Meredith–MacDonald 2017.

such as the evolution of housing costs, the building designs of the new houses or the details concerning the relocation to the temporary lodgings. In the opinion of those interviewed, the decision processes were governed from above and the residents themselves could merely acquire information about the final results.⁹³

Leaving the affected community out of the planning process resulted in several problems. On the one hand, the relocation to Lang'ata can only be filed as no more than a half-success: even though the residents could forgo moving to a 23 km distance from Kibera, determining the relocation venue did not occur according to an assessment of their social-economic needs and requests, but it was rather the available space that determined the choice.⁹⁴ Even should it be true that the government's options in this aspect were limited, overarching solutions could have been found, substantially involving the affected, which might have helped the residents' economic prospering at the new venue. On the other hand, as the rental fee of the temporary lodgings was determined without considering their needs and financial status, many of them could not pay for the enhanced costs, so they moved back to other parts of Soweto East while they illegally rented out their temporary lodgings. A similar problem emerged concerning building of the new apartments, as well: in spite of the successfully completed construction of the 822 apartments, more than half of the families who were entitled to move in sold or rented out their apartments after delivery, as the rental fee or the monthly instalment stood too high for them.⁹⁵

Based on all these, we agree with Fernandez and Calas, who put it like this in their 2011 investigation: "There is no proof that during the procedure, the KSUI integrated earlier experiences and recommendations for the programme [that is, the K-WATSAN]"⁹⁶ which led to failure in several points of the project. On top of all this, the KSUI is a one-sided answer bestowed on a complex problem: the slums – similarly to the whole of the settlement – consist in three dimensions: society, economy, and (man-made as well as natural) environment, all in a tight interaction with one another. However, this intervention merely focused on the man-made physical surroundings, disregarding the economic dimension that guaranteed people's livelihoods, as well as ignoring the social dimension that functioned as a safety net, thus undermining the successful realisation of the project and its sustainability. After all, due to the enhanced housing costs, it was precisely the most exposed social groups, living in extreme poverty – the target group of the KENSUP programme – that were crowded out. Furthermore, to make matters worse, their exposedness was enhanced due to the dissolution of their connective systems that had been formed in their living environment, and which would have amounted to a certain level of social safety through the mutual support. The harmful effect of this cannot be measured at all.

⁹³ Fernandez–Calas 2011.

⁹⁴ Agayi – Serdaroglu Sag 2020.

⁹⁵ Agayi – Serdaroglu Sag 2020.

⁹⁶ Fernandez–Calas 2011.

Summary and closing thoughts

The present writing is the first element of the research that comprehensively scrutinises the effects and results of the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme (KENSUP), with which research, our ultimate aim is, deducing the lessons from the large-scale programme, to formulate practical advice which contributes to a more effective slum upgrade implemented by the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta on the one hand, and other actors of our Hungarian international developmental cooperation scene. In the course of our review, we focused on the two elements of the programme that Kibera saw implemented; that is, the Kibera Integrated Water, Sanitation and Waste Management Project (K-WATSAN) and the Kibera Slum Upgrading Initiative – KSUI, which was partly built on the aforementioned project.

This study provided an outline of the perspective shift, starting from colonial times that can be pinpointed in the attitude and problem-solving procedures regarding the slums of Kenyan cities. We found that following the turn of the millennium, the emphasis shifted from bulldozing, demolitions, and forced relocations as experienced during colonial times, towards an approach minding the perspective of the most needy, developing the conditions that dominate the slums. All this is reflected in policy directives and legal acts, as well. Even though in this aspect shortcomings still exist, launching KENSUP can undoubtedly be considered a huge result. In our writing, we subjected the two projects of the programme implemented in Kibera to scrutiny. We found that K-WATSAN, as an 'entry project' paving the way for the KSUI was successful both in terms of improving the life conditions for the residents of Soweto East village in Kibera and actively involving the locals, as well as ensuring their long-term commitment for the programme. However, contrary to the preliminary concepts KSUI did not utilise the experiences gained regarding the significance of community participation. The project, wishing to handle the complex problem with a one-sided intervention and infrastructural development, was governed from above, failing to present the needs and ideas of the affected. Consequently, structural flaws emerge that call into question the actual fulfilment of the programme's goals, as well as the programme's sustainability.⁹⁷

Considering all this, numerous questions were formulated, for which we will seek the answers by means of field studies as well as interviews with both the affected local residents and experts participating in the developments. Among others, we are seeking the answer to who are the new residents of Zone A in Soweto East, how did the situation change for those who were forced to move back to other parts of the slum, what is the reason for the lack of community involvement in the case of the KSUI project and to what proportion does the Kenyan Government consider this project successful. We continue our reflective study with an impact assessment of Hungarian developmental aid programmes. With the results of these, we can contribute to a better understanding of the region and specifically, urban segregates in Sub-Saharan Africa.

⁹⁷ Czirják 2019: 164–181.

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