Saleem Ali – Alleviating Energy Poverty in South Africa's Slums

Photo: Saleem H. Ali – The energy landscape of Khayelitsha.

The sweeping slums of Khayelitsha outside Cape Town are a stark reminder of the endemic inequality that continues to haunt South Africa almost twenty years since the end of apartheid. Here we find around half a million people living in a sea of shacks that are often associated with urban blight across the developing world. Yet, the sight of these shelters made of corrugated steel and wood in an informal settlement should not necessarily evoke fatalism about this land. The typical South African shack is a versatile piece of simple engineering that only costs around $400 to buy and meets the basic needs of shelter for its residents. Nevertheless, the government recognizes the need for providing more stable housing through its Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which has provided around 3 million homes to South Africans since the end of apartheid. Those living in the shacks on less than an inflation-adjusted amount per month are entitled to apply for RDP housing, though the waiting period can be as much as 10 years. Unlike high-rise low-income housing in China, the demand in South Africa is to have a small tract of land and a hut as the residence. Human ingenuity and resilience beams through through many residents in these areas as they traverse their life journeys from shacks to RDP huts.

Read more: http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com

William Cobbett – How Cities Can

Get Rid of Slums By Supporting Them

nextcity.org. April 22, 2013. In a guest blog post, William Cobbett, Manager of the [Cities Alliance](#), argues that cities can eliminate slums is by getting behind the people who live in them.

After a decade of announcements that the world is now more urban than rural, there are signs that governments and agencies are finally taking notice. During the course of the next three decades, the waistlines of thousands of cities will expand to accommodate new populations — while the world's urban population doubles, cities' land consumption will triple.

To make this process as successful and as sustainable as possible, there is an urgent need for national and local policy makers to dramatically change their policy responses. Globally, the biggest cause of badly managed slums is not rural-urban migration, nor people squatting on public land, nor poverty itself. The biggest factor is wrong-headed policy responses, and ill-informed, outdated and clumsy administration, all underpinned by a hostile and aggressive attitude to the urban and urbanizing poor. Quite simply, bad policy creates most slums, and ensures that slums do not improve.

Instead, mayors and city managers can help their cities by accepting what exists and working with it.

Most urban growth takes place in existing cities, not new ones, and mostly in small- and medium-sized cities. The dominant form of planning is feet and facts on the ground, not color-coded zones on the Master Plan (if it exists). Most city growth is informal, and development will be incremental as people improve their living conditions over time, as and when they can afford. Most employment is informal, too, with household enterprises dominant. The role of women is essential to stability and progress.

Slums disappear not through being removed, but by being transformed. Over time, the shack becomes a house, the slum becomes a suburb. This is how citizenship and cities are built.

Abby Higgins – Why Residents Of Kibera Slum Are Rejecting New Housing Plans

one.org – This guest post is by journalist Abby Higgins, in partnership with The Seattle Globalist. It's the fourth in a five-part series which reveals the economically complex and culturally rich life of urban slums, and challenges our perceptions of what life is like for the one billion people around the world that live in them.

Mildred Lunani knew that if she stayed in her village in Western Kenya she could pretty much count on a life of poverty. So, like the 200,000 people around the world who move to cities from rural areas every day, she came to the capital in search of opportunity. She found that opportunity in Kibera, the slum that her and her family now call home.

She opened up The District Commissioner's Restaurant, a small place named after the police station next door. Equipped with a window for take away food and a few rickety wooden tables, she offers donuts, samosas and sodas to the flood of people passing by on their way in and out of Kibera each day. Lunani was also trained as a community health worker by an NGO in Kibera and spends several days a week working to spread awareness about HIV and AIDS.

"Kibera is a good place. The community, the people, my neighbours, they mean a lot to me, I love that part of Kibera. But the housing, some of the housing isn't fit for humans. The toilets, the water?" She shook her head in disgust.

In 2009, Mildred learned of an opportunity to move her family out of Kibera's

substandard housing: The Kenya Slum Upgrading Project (KENSUP) launched by the Kenyan Ministry of Housing with the support of UN-Habitat and several other donor organisations.

Read more: http://www.one.org/why-residents-of-kibera-slum-are-rejecting-new-housing-plans/

Audio Archive: Funding Green Cities

 Advocates of sustainability know that urban retrofits and infrastructure projects offer opportunities to increase energy efficiency as well as livability, and reduce the environmental impact of our towns and cities. But proctrated economic challenges have left governments at nearly all levels ill-equipped to provide funding for many such projects, both in the U.S. and abroad. The Sustainable Cities Collective hosted our newest webcast to discuss this challenge, and potential strategies that governments and project planners might employ to overcome funding obstacles to sustainability.

Listen:
http://sustainablecitiescollective.com/25767/audio-archive-funding-green-cities

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Developing Countries Need To Harness Urbanization To Achieve

The MDGs: IMF-World Bank Report

worldbank.org. WASHINGTON, April 17, 2013 – Urbanization helps pull people out of poverty and advances progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), but, if not managed well, can also lead to burgeoning growth of slums, pollution, and crime, says the Global Monitoring Report (GMR) 2013, released today by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Urbanization has been a major force behind poverty reduction and progress towards other MDGs. With over 80 percent of global goods and services produced in cities, countries with relatively higher levels of urbanization, such as China, and many others in East Asia and Latin America, have played a major role in lowering extreme poverty[1] worldwide. In contrast, the two least urbanized regions, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, have significantly higher rates of poverty and continue to lag behind on most MDGs.

GMR 2013: Rural-Urban Dynamics and the Millennium Development Goals starkly compares the well-being in the countryside versus the city. Urban infant mortality rates range from 8-9 percentage points lower than the rural rates in Latin America and Central Asia; to 10-16 percentage points in the Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa and highest in East Asia (21 percentage points).

In South Asia, 60 percent of urban dwellers have access to sanitation facilities, compared with 28 percent in rural areas. In Sub-Saharan Africa, 42 percent of the urban population has access, compared with 23 percent of rural residents. Access to safe water in urban areas in developing countries was almost complete in 2010, with 96 percent coverage, compared with 81 percent of the rural population having access.

Read more: http://www.worldbank.org/developing-countries-need-to-harness-urbanization-to-achieve

Reviving Our Inner Cities: Social Housing and Urban Regeneration In South Africa

Research Series published by the Housing Development Agency.
nasho.org.za. 2013

Social housing in South Africa is a government programme to redress the old apartheid spatial inequities by providing low- and moderate-income households with good quality and affordable rental housing opportunities in well-located parts of South African cities. Its primary mechanism is the use of Restructuring Capital Grant (RCG) and Institutional Subsidy funding sources in Restructuring Zones (RZs) to assist in the financing and development of good quality rental housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income households by accredited social housing entities.

The restructuring capital grant
In the first 6 years of allocation from 2006 to March 2012, an estimated R1.204bn of RCG was allocated to projects. It is now appropriate therefore to reflect on the spatial spend of this financing and its impact on urban restructuring and urban regeneration within South African cities with the intent of recommending ways of enhancing the impact.

Restructuring Zones (rZs)
In looking at this, it is important to understand that during the above period the initially determined Restructuring Zones (RZs) were limited to 13 municipalities spread across all 9 provinces. Within these municipalities there was a diverse range of locally defined spatial areas – RZs.
Some of these and the resulting projects might or might not be linked specifically to zones for restructuring the apartheid city or areas dealing with urban regeneration of blighted parts of the city.

Read

more: http://www.nasho.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/HDA-NASHO-Reviving-Our-Inner-Cities-SH-UR-in-SA-Reseach-Report-2013.pdf