

# People Living in Urban Slums Programme Strategy 2009-12



## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Millions of urban poor in African cities have few options but to live in squalid, unsafe environments where they face multiple threats to their health and security. Slums and squatter settlements lack the most basic infrastructure and services. Their populations are marginalised and largely disenfranchised. They are exposed to disease and crime, and are vulnerable to natural disasters. Instead of being able to take advantage of the opportunities offered by urban life, most slum residents are forced to focus on surviving from day to day.

Slums are the products of economic desperation, failed land and planning policies, inaccessible financial systems, and a lack of political will. Growing rapidly, slum and squatter settlements are the most poignant indicator of chronic urban poverty in the 21st century, and underline the acutely uneven distribution of resources in Africa's metropolitan areas.

Comic Relief is the only major funder in the UK to have an open-access programme dedicated to urban slums. Historically, Comic Relief has helped slum dwellers drive projects that lead to improvements in their communities, including securing the legal right to occupy viable land (as tenants or owners); access to basic services; better living conditions; and the opportunity to improve their economic prospects.

The programme is aimed at slum dwellers in general, with particular emphasis on women-headed households and other vulnerable people. Geographically, we want to give priority to slum areas in sub-Saharan Africa fitting the UN Habitat definition "extremely severely deprived", where residents face multiple challenges including living in overcrowded shacks, a lack of water and drainage, and no property rights.

This strategy sets out the ingredients that Comic Relief believes need to be present if fundamental changes in the lives of slum dwellers are to be achieved. These include: supporting slum dwellers to articulate their needs to the authorities; helping people living in slums to work together and pool their resources; making finance and credit available to slum dwellers; and involving young people centrally in all interventions. We have also included a set of questions to enable all parties to learn from their experiences and gain a better understanding of what type of interventions are the most effective.

## 2. WHY PEOPLE LIVING IN URBAN SLUMS?

### Background

During 2008 humankind reached an historic milestone: for the first time ever, half of the world's population were living in urban areas. The trend towards urbanisation continues with the population of the world's cities increasing by approximately 5 million people each month. Much of this increase is due to migration in search of economic opportunities rather than births. Within the next two decades nearly 60% of the world's population will be urban dwellers.

The rate of urban population growth is fastest in developing countries, which are least equipped to cope with the need to provide infrastructure and development control. The urban population of Africa is projected to more than double by 2030 (from 375 million to 760 million people – which represents more than the current number of city dwellers in the entire Western Hemisphere) and is likely to double yet again by 2050.

Of the 3 billion or so urban dwellers today, UN Habitat estimates that around a third live in slums. Urban slums have arisen because of the lack of affordable housing relative to demand, and the grossly unequal distribution of wealth and resources in most cities, particularly in the developing world. In Sub-Saharan Africa the problem of urban poverty is especially acute, with 62% of the region's urban population living in slum conditions.

Slums are defined (by UN Habitat) as households lacking one or more of five basic rights; namely lack of access to improved water supplies, lack of access to sanitation, non-durable housing, insufficient living area, and lack of security of tenure. Many also face uncertainty because, by virtue of their housing being informal, urban slums are often not recognised by the local authorities. Land disputes, intimidation and illegal evictions are commonplace.

## Global Commitments

### Millennium Development Goals

In September 2000, UN Member States made a commitment to achieve eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. Goal 7, Target 11 calls for a significant improvement in the lives of 100 million slum dwellers by the year 2020. Target 10 seeks to halve the number of people without safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015. These targets arose out of the 'Cities Without Slums' action plan developed under the auspices of the Cities Alliance, a coalition of bi-lateral and multi-lateral development agencies and local authorities who have pledged their commitment to urban poverty reduction and sustainable cities. Together, they have committed \$88 billion globally to slum upgrading by the MDG target date.

### Other significant instruments

In 1993 the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights came to a consensus on the right to adequate housing and a decent standard of living. Adequate housing was defined more broadly than simply a right to shelter: rather it is "somewhere to live in security, peace and dignity" and encompasses security of tenure, availability of services, affordability, habitability, accessibility, location and cultural adequacy.

Building on this, and on the momentum generated by other global summits in the 1990s, the ground-breaking Habitat Agenda was developed at the UN conference known as the Cities Summit held in Istanbul in 1996. The Habitat Agenda emphasised adequate housing as a fundamental human right and recognised the importance of civic participation in slum upgrading. Its 100 commitments and 600 recommendations were adopted by 171 nations and laid fresh goals for the new millennium .

## Global Response

In 2001, the Istanbul+5 Conference was held in New York to review the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. Less than a year later, in January 2002, the mandate of the United Nations agency on human settlements was strengthened, and it became a fully-fledged UN programme known as UN Habitat whose partners include governments, NGOs and civil society groups. Focusing on promoting shelter for all and reducing urban poverty, UN Habitat runs two global campaigns – on Urban Governance and Secure Tenure – and various programmes including Water & Sanitation, Sustainable Cities, and Slum Upgrading.

Non-governmental initiatives have played a crucial role in complementing large-scale slum upgrading programmes, such as in East Africa, the fastest urbanising region of the continent. Many NGOs have introduced innovative strategies to ensure the participation of slum residents in advocacy work and upgrading activities, including managing installations like water points and community bathrooms. Some NGOs have particular expertise in promoting savings and credit, or the use of alternative technologies for house building. An International Urban Poor Fund, designed to make finance available to slum residents for house building, is administered by Slum/Shack Dwellers International (a unique global federation of homeless people) with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, among others.

## How does Comic Relief fit in?

Comic Relief's Urban Slums Programme aligns with the MDGs and supports the NGO sector's efforts to achieve lasting change for slum dwellers. For many years Comic Relief has supported a wide range of efforts to reduce poverty in African towns and cities, but in 2005 the focus was deliberately narrowed to projects working in slum areas only. During the period 2005-08, Comic Relief allocated more than £12 million to organisations supporting people living in urban slums, and is now the only major funder with an open access programme focusing on this particular need.

The work we have funded in recent years has included helping slum communities organise themselves and embark on savings schemes, small businesses and house building. Others have formed residents' associations capable of successfully lobbying landlords and municipalities for their rights to better services such as water, sanitation and rubbish collection. Many projects have sought to bring about security of tenure for people considered to be living in the slums unofficially, and many projects have been targeted at disaffected and unemployed youth.

## How the Urban Slums Strategy was developed

This strategy has been developed through consultations with NGOs and funders working in urban development in Africa; by examining funding trends and gaps; and by identifying and prioritising areas of need. We have examined in detail the lessons learned from, and performance of, grants made by Comic Relief in the previous Urban Slums funding cycle from 2005-08.

# 3. WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

Our goal is to help slum dwellers drive programmes that lead to improvements in their communities, including securing the legal right to occupy viable land (as tenants or owners), improved access to basic services, better living conditions and the opportunity for slum dwellers to improve their economic prospects.

### How does Comic Relief believe this change can happen?

Though urban slums and their populations are not homogenous and their needs vary widely, Comic Relief believes that in general the lives of people living in slum conditions are most likely to be transformed by:

- Building slum dwellers' confidence to identify and represent their needs and rights to governments, local authorities, landlords and others so they become more accountable;
- Supporting slum dwellers to pool their resources for greater effect, for example by setting up savings clubs or contributing their labour communally to house building schemes;
- Enabling slum dwellers to obtain the finance they need to improve their accommodation, living environment and earning potential;
- Actively engaging young people, thus building a foundation for future generations to lead on representing their communities' affairs.

## Outcomes

Comic Relief wants to know that the projects we fund are bringing about changes in the lives of poor and disadvantaged people. We call these changes programme level outcomes, and define them as the 'intended or unintended effects or changes to people's lives that happen as a result of the project or organisation's activities'.

During the period covered by this strategy, we anticipate that the lives of people living in urban slums in Africa will be transformed as follows:

- Slum dweller households make progress towards obtaining secure tenure that they can afford, resulting in a measurable reduction in people living in fear of eviction or intimidation.
- Individuals living in the slums gain employment skills, money management skills and become better able to run their own businesses, resulting in measurable improvements to their standard of living.
- A higher level of participation by slum dwellers in urban planning/slum upgrading processes, and in the level of engagement by the authorities concerned, leading to measurable improvements to living conditions and personal safety in the slums.
- Slum residents' rights to basic services (e.g. water, sanitation, decent housing, education and healthcare) are realised – resulting in measurably reduced exposure to health risks, improved school attendance, a cleaner environment and more time for productive household and community tasks.
- Vulnerable people including women, youth, the elderly, disabled people and sex workers, are helped to live measurably safer lives, aware of HIV issues and free from physical violence and abuse.

## Geographical Focus

The People Living in Urban Slums programme will focus on all sub-Saharan Africa countries where people face multiple shelter deprivations (lack of water, sanitation and tenure, and poor housing, overcrowding). We anticipate that the new programme will build on work already supported, particularly in Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda, but we will also welcome applications for work in other countries with severe slum problems.

## Target Group

The overall aim of this programme is to support slum dwellers in a holistic way. While each slum has its own unique needs, in general we expect projects to give priority to the needs of women-headed households. This is because women usually form the greater proportion of slum dwellers; tend to be active (and in the majority) in slum dwellers' organisations; are disadvantaged and have unique needs; are more interested than men in improving living conditions; and are frequently more committed and likely to deliver tangible results more quickly across a range of issues.

We also expect projects to support young people – particularly orphans and the very disadvantaged, such as those who are out of school and out of work with no qualifications or prospects. Youth in these situations have time on their hands which could be harnessed for improvement projects and the strategic development of the community. The 'return' on engaging them (which includes benefits to themselves and their families, as well as diversion from potentially more, harmful activities) tends to be considerably higher than the input required.

Similarly we hope that projects will also specifically seek to support informal sector workers (traders, rubbish pickers etc) and, where appropriate, commercial sex workers. Workers in these sectors have no employment rights, have insecure jobs, work in precarious or risky situations, are generally under-paid and untrained and therefore have low status and limited ability to engage strategically in slum transformation programmes.

## 4. UNDERSTANDING WHAT WE'VE ACHIEVED AND HOW WE ACHIEVED IT

### Understanding what difference we have made

We want to be able to tell the public what difference our funding has made in each grant-making programme, both in terms of individual stories of change and on a more systematic and aggregated basis. We want to be able to say who we have helped, how many have benefited and in what kinds of ways. We want to understand the extent to which our programmes have brought about lasting changes in the lives of those directly benefiting, as well as changes in policy.

We will ask grantees to provide information on progress towards their project outcomes on an annual basis, at the end of the grant period and through external evaluations, using outcomes and indicators that they agree with us at the start of the project.

### Understanding how we made a difference

We are also committed to learning from the work that we fund, so we can understand not only what difference we have made, but how changes to people's lives happen. For example we want to test out our assumptions about the key factors that create change for our target groups, and find out which approaches or methodologies work better than others in different contexts. We also want to know which types of local organisations are most effective in supporting change for different groups in a variety of contexts, and how relationships between, and inputs from, partner organisations and other stakeholders, including Comic Relief, help or hinder the delivery of change. Some cross-cutting issues that we are also interested in include education, sport, disability and gender.

Alongside these broad questions above, which we will explore through all the work that we fund, we have developed specific learning questions for each programme to help us gain a more in-depth understanding of some of the assumptions underpinning our work in different contexts. For the People Living in Urban Slums programme, these are:

#### **What are the most effective ways of empowering people living in urban slums to obtain secure tenancy rights and land tenure?**

Security of tenure is a complex and sometimes thorny issue, often complicated by cultural traditions, lack of records, population movement and personal interest. In West Africa it is thought that only 2% of land is officially titled, and in many slums the process of laying claim to a small parcel of land on which a shack is considered to be illegally built is highly cumbersome. We recognise that overcoming the bureaucratic hurdles may take longer than the period of the grant, and we will welcome innovative solutions that can be shared with other grantees.

#### **What are the most effective ways of engaging with central and local government authorities opposed to informal settlements, and ensuring they become more accountable to slum dwellers in the long term?**

Ensuring that municipalities and water companies continue to provide services after the grant has ended, possibly when the elected leadership has changed, is one reason why Comic Relief looks to agencies to demonstrate a long term commitment to the community concerned. We are keen to identify and share proven ways of sustaining services that are robust enough to cope with political and administration changes, as well as future population influxes.

### **What support do slum dwellers with uncertain incomes and precarious employment need in order to secure group credit and manage individual mortgage repayments effectively?**

Much of Comic Relief's funding in the past has been spent on establishing community-based savings and loans schemes, and unlocking micro-finance. There has been little analysis of whether this approach to economic strengthening is the best one for people living a precarious existence in urban slums, especially in the medium to long term. The impact of the interventions needs to be tested.

### **How can multiple agencies best work together to help a slum community to transform their circumstances, and how can change be attributed appropriately to the different players involved?**

In some areas, such as those which are part of the Kenya Slum Upgrading Project, many (often quite large) agencies are working with the target communities to achieve lasting change. Though Comic Relief is a significant funder of urban slums work, it is a smaller player than many and it is therefore important to be able to measure how the various elements of a consortium approach contribute to impact on a community with multiple needs, and provide value for money.

## **Learning Activities**

We want to take every opportunity to collect the evidence needed to address these learning questions. We expect most Comic Relief grantees to address some of these learning questions in their work. Annual reports will ask for any evidence grantees may have collected over the year in relation to learning questions, either through systematic research or more anecdotal reflection by staff. We also expect external evaluations to address any learning questions relevant to the project.

The People Living in Urban Slums programme may also commission independent research, including literature reviews to get an overview of existing evidence. Comic Relief visits to projects, and discussions with staff and those benefiting from the project will also provide important insights into the issues raised by the learning questions. During the period of this strategy we intend to conduct a study of the impact achieved by the Urban Slums programme over the years.

We will share what we learn through dedicated reports, ongoing learning meetings both in the UK and overseas with grantees and other donors, and through online learning environments. We are committed to applying what we learn, in order to help our grantees deliver change more effectively; to improve our policies and processes, and our performance as a grantmaker; and to support our advocacy and public education work.