

# > Inclusive Urban Development

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*In order for urban policies to really make change – to disrupt the status quo of institutions that systematically perpetuate marginalisation and inequality – they must come from a foundation of inclusivity. This means that those groups that have suffered the effects of marginalisation and inequality—the urban poor—must be involved in the design, implementation and monitoring of urban policies. The agency and innovation of organised communities of the urban poor must be recognised and resourced and collaborative urban planning and development institutionalised into national, regional and municipal planning programmes.*

For example, urban development policy and practice must be informed by the uniquely rich information that organized informal settlement and slum dwellers gather through settlement and city-wide community-driven data collection methodologies, including profiling, enumeration and mapping. Data collection serves as a critical tool for the empowerment of these communities, and as a powerful basis from which to enter into partnerships with other key stakeholders, including the State, to set the agenda for development priorities and upgrading needs.

In this way, innovative solutions co-produced by the urban poor, government, and other urban decision makers can begin to meet the needs of the entire city, starting with the poorest. When policy is informed by the needs and priorities of grassroots communities and integrated solutions are implemented, disruptive social change becomes possible.

Another critical example of this is the policy language around the prevention of forced evictions. At SDI, we like to talk about “inclusive” cities as being “slum friendly cities.” That is the kind of attitude and those are the types of strategies we want to see urban policies advocating for – ones that create cities that are embracing of informality. This includes cities’ approaches to evictions. What SDI advocates for is the creation of a holistic approach to evictions that calls for the co-production of alternatives to evictions through active partnerships between organised

urban poor communities and urban decision makers, particularly local governments. The co-production of in situ, incremental slum upgrading solutions should be referenced as providing effective alternatives to evictions and as the default approach to dealing with inadequate, unsafe housing, infrastructure and basic services. When this is not feasible, organised urban poor communities should be central to the planning and implementation of the relocation and resettlement process.

This, of course, is certainly disruptive to the institutions that perpetuate some of the most extreme forms of urban marginalisation and inequality through the continued practice of forced evictions—a practice rooted in the notion that there are indeed sets of individuals who should not be granted equal access to the city.

## **IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

Policies only take on meaning through implementation. This, of course, is the case for national urban policies as well. As such, these policies must be drafted in partnership with the local stakeholders responsible for implementation. Institutional space must be made for municipalities and grassroots communities to engage and offer input throughout the drafting process, allowing for the development of national urban policies that speak to the needs on the ground and are seen as implementable at the local level. This kind of collaborative planning must be institutionalised at every level and must be set out in the national urban policies themselves in order to ensure the devolution of sustainable, inclusive urban development.

Additionally, the incorporation of community-collected data plays a critical role in the drafting of any urban policy. Community-driven data collection allows for active participation of communities from the beginning of the development process through the identification of development needs and priorities, and through to the monitoring of implementation of strategies. SDI has demonstrated that cities have to work with urban poor communities to collect baseline data and maps of all

informal settlements in the city. This is the beginning of forming a relationship with those who have remained invisible in city planning in the past. When this knowledge is brought to the table in the drafting process, it results in national policies that speak to local realities.

### CRITERIA FOR INCLUSIVE CITIES

The first step in the creation of an inclusive city is the recognition of the existence of all settlements in the city and formalisation thereof. This is why SDI has partnered with Cities Alliance and United Cities and Local Governments–Africa in the creation of the Know Your City Campaign. The Know Your City campaign is a global campaign for gathering citywide data on slums as the basis for inclusive partnerships between the urban poor and their local governments. Every household, every neighborhood and every informal settlement has to be counted. There can be no inclusive or equitable development planning and investment, nor effective city governance if the increasing majority of the residents of informal settlements remain unaccounted for.

Key to this is the creation of protocols for cities to map and collect data on slums at the citywide level. SDI's experience shows that slum mapping has many immediate and long-term benefits. Firstly, it helps settlements to develop a collective understanding. When communities visit each other to support data collection, settlements begin to network. Most SDI federations have emerged through such exercises. Secondly, sustainable development for cities requires that information about all urban settlements is collected and updated. Invariably, city governments lack capacity to collect data on all settlements. This leads to skewed investments, exacerbated disparities between amenities and service provision, and increased backlog in service provision. Thirdly, in times of increased awareness of city responsibility to vulnerability, reaching the most vulnerable and often least documented is always a problem for city administrations.

Helping the poor to create a voice, a collective identity, and possibilities to participate in urban transformation and change is an integral aspect of what we all seek in the creation of inclusive, resilient cities.

Additional criteria include:

- Voice of the people living in poverty to be heard;
- Organized communities making a meaningful contribution to our own development;
- Capacitate and empower people from poor communities to be self-reliant and understand their role setting their own development agenda;
- Strong organized communities that are doing precedent setting projects that can be scaled up and influence policies;
- Decentralizing funds and resources to support communities to carry out their own activities and social, economic and political development;
- Connecting and funding organized communities nationally, regionally and globally with the main objective of addressing the issues of housing, secure land tenure, livelihoods and unemployment and putting women at the center of the process;
- Building grassroots social movements that will influence public policy to respond to the needs of the most marginalized communities at all levels;
- Forging and institutionalizing partnerships with grassroots communities at the center of decision making at all levels of government;
- Holistic development, through integrated approaches and community-centered processes;
- Strength of data collection of information to define our own development agendas;
- Respect of culture, ancestral knowledge, and language;
- Investing in the leadership and organizing of communities as the core step in poverty reduction and sustainable development.