

LEARNING BRIEF

December 2011: No.1

How do land tenure issues affect sanitation provision for the urban poor?

Homeless International is a UK-based NGO working in long-term partnership with organisations of the urban poor to improve their lives and find lasting solutions to urban poverty. We support them in designing and implementing community-driven land, housing, infrastructure and slum upgrading initiatives. We believe that sustainable solutions can be created only if people have an opportunity to play a lead role in designing solutions that work for them and have access to land, finance, information, organisation and technology.

Background

Sanitation services are recognised as one of the most important elements of development due to the host of benefits involved, from increased public health to greater productivity and livelihood security (WaterAid, 2008). Through the support of UKaid from the Department for International Development, **Homeless International** implemented a multi-country project: *Water and sanitation provision for the urban poor in Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe*.

The project enabled our long-term local partners **CCODE** (Centre for Community Organisation and Development, Malawi), **DZ** (Dialogue on Shelter for the Homeless in Zimbabwe) and **CCI** (Centre for Community Initiatives, Tanzania) to provide access to improved water and sanitation for over 10,000 people.

The sanitation improvements include construction of household and community-managed public toilets using affordable loans from revolving loan funds, training and hygiene promotion. Local and international community exchange visits were used to encourage learning in communities facing similar challenges.

This learning brief aims to share experience and provide key lessons from the project for water and sanitation NGOs, community organisations implementing similar initiatives, as well as urban and housing practitioners. The brief, which focuses on the relationship between land tenure and sanitation, highlights lessons in four areas: the importance of community-led surveys; changing perceptions of sanitation provision for the urban poor; integrating tenure and sanitation; and tenant-landlord relations. These lessons are drawn from practical feedback from our partners and an external evaluation of the project.

Why is tenure important for sanitation?

As the provision of sanitation facilities requires land, the right to access and use land has a bearing on sanitation. The lack of tenure in slums – communities living on land that they do not own, or for which they have no official claim – is a major problem for sanitation provision. Local residents are reluctant to install systems themselves because of the risk of evictions and demolitions (Water Information Network, 2011), and official sanitation



Above: Leeroy, a resident in Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe, outside his new ecological toilet.

provision in slums is a complicated process, largely because of the political agendas associated with serving so-called “illegal” settlements: most authorities and public service providers consider lack of tenure as an excuse for not providing infrastructure services to informal settlements.

Official provision may only be possible after obtaining tenure, which can be slow and bureaucratic (Satterthwaite et al, 2005). For example, although inhabitants of Morogoro in Tanzania have been issued with two-year residence permits (Tanzanian Government, 2008), there is no long-term tenure security, which therefore does not actively encourage investment.

There are cases, however, where official sanitation delivery has been possible without tenure. In places such as Pakistan, alternative conditions are required to obtain sanitation facilities for the urban poor. Instead of proof of tenure, the authorities now accept proof of residence along with ID as a requirement for sanitation provision (WSP, 2009). This alternative is often facilitated by NGOs and Community-Based Organisations, which have the capacity to work with the communities to implement the sanitation facilities required. The alternative documentation process also enables the poor to prove to the authorities their ability to establish and organise themselves and to deliver results.

KEY LESSONS

Community-led surveys provide a stepping stone towards negotiating with authorities.

Our partners believe that to obtain official sanitation provision, slum settlements must be recognised by the authorities. On a practical level, without recording the number of inhabitants, plot size or layout, it is impossible for sanitation providers to adequately plan and implement services in these areas.

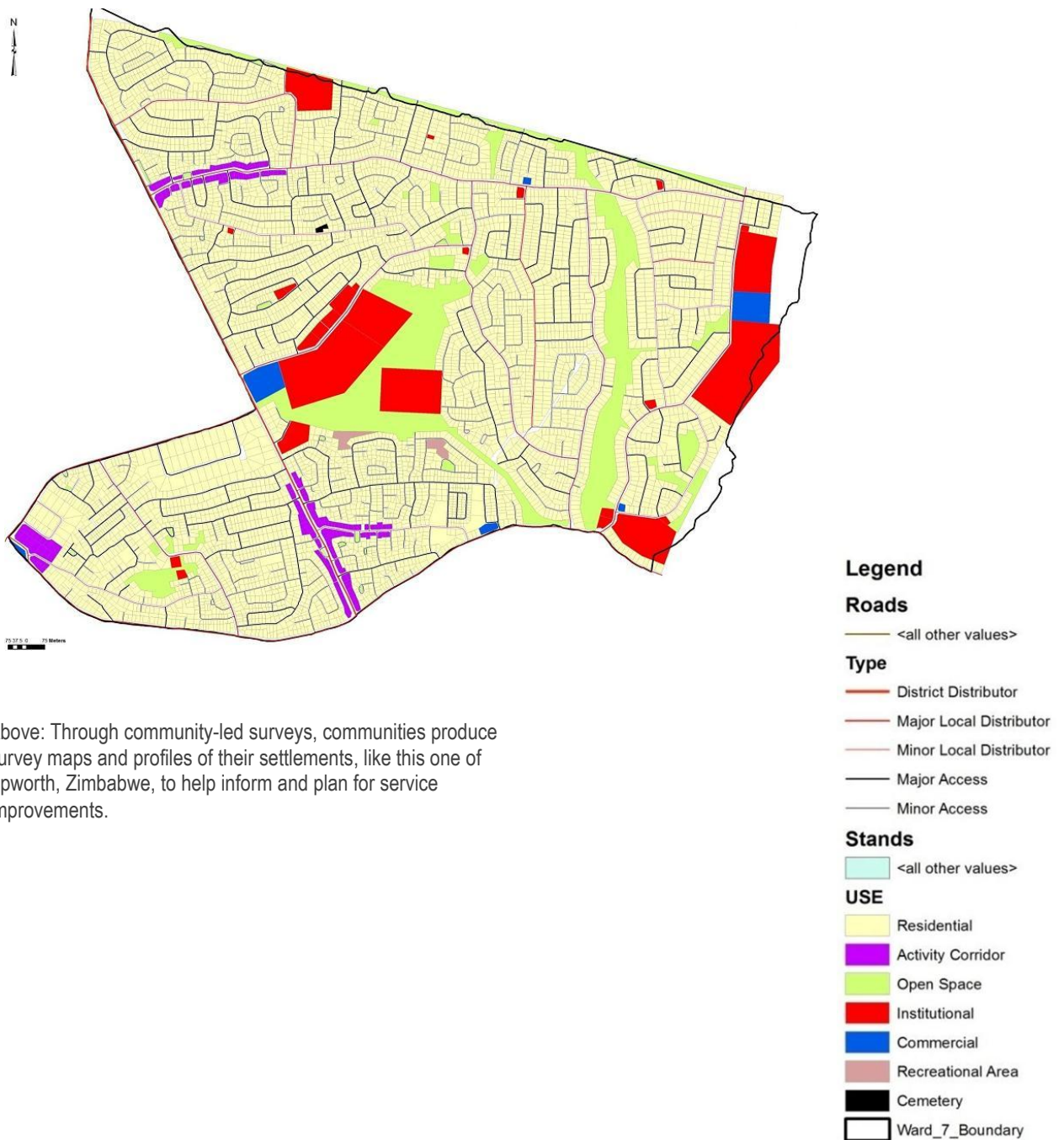
Mapping and community-led surveys carried out in the project countries provided detailed information to produce an accurate profile of informal settlements. Mapping the area officially shows the location of existing infrastructure, individual plots and boundaries, to use as informal proof of residence and to carry out suitable sanitation development. Demographic data was also collected in this way, giving a clearer picture of who the residents are, including their ages and means of livelihood.

The data was shared with government, forming a powerful negotiation tool. In Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe, for example, a community-led survey was central to convincing local authorities to allocate land to the Federation¹ and to invest in and improve sanitation facilities; a similar survey is being conducted in Epworth to address tenure and infrastructure issues for 14,000

¹ A network of community-level savings groups, which provides a basis for community members to come together, save, and tackle poverty and problems in their communities, whilst advocating for pro-poor initiatives.

families. Not only do mapping and surveys act as a way to leverage support from officials, they also increase community knowledge, cohesion and social capital within communities and build local capacity to plan and implement appropriate facilities.

A key lesson drawn from this project was the significance of the surveys, led by members of the community, to represent and prioritise their own needs. In this way, the residents became part of the development process and NGO professionals could ensure that the data collected had an impact on authorities.



Above: Through community-led surveys, communities produce survey maps and profiles of their settlements, like this one of Epworth, Zimbabwe, to help inform and plan for service improvements.

Engaging with local government can change the perception of officials towards sanitation provision for the urban poor.

Engaging local government in negotiations for land and including officials in exchanges to learn from other successful projects strengthens the relationship and improves understanding of what is needed in the local context. Our partners ensure that local authorities are exposed to demonstration projects undertaken by them to showcase what is possible.

In Malawi, CCODE involved government officials by raising awareness of the physical conditions of the land. For example, in Mzuzu, officials recognised that the high water table, combined with the sandy nature of soils, causes pit latrines to quickly fill up with water and collapse easily. Officials are therefore increasingly supporting innovative technologies like composting toilets, which use less space in the long term when compared to conventional pit latrines (as there is no need to dig additional pits over time). As a result, awareness of the connection between land and sanitation can be used to leverage land access, to provide good quality, sustainable sanitation in slums. In Tanzania, CCI's demonstration sanitation projects have paved the way for house and infrastructure upgrading in the Chang'ombe settlement, which has been supported by officials.



Above: Workshops like this one in Mzuzu, Malawi, are an opportunity for Federation members to engage with local government officials and traditional authorities.

Integrating tenure and sanitation creates a more sustainable, long-term model.

Although this initially involves a longer, more difficult process, this holistic approach has enabled our partners to negotiate with government to gain secure tenure as well as improved sanitation. In Zimbabwe, for example, DZ used the funds from the project to negotiate with the authorities to construct on-site sanitation facilities, on condition that the beneficiaries would be provided with secure tenure, thus ensuring that the investments will not be demolished. As a result, former “squatters” become landowners, which in itself is an incentive for individuals to invest in sanitation improvements, and in turn impact positively on the wider community. In Tanzania, the national Government has taken steps to recognise informal settlements by providing regularised residential licensing, through which the urban poor can obtain loans from financial institutions for improving their houses and toilets.

Sanitation improvement provides a platform for re-shaping power dynamics between tenants and structure owners (landlords).

Tensions between landlords and tenants are often strained when tenants require improved toilet facilities, but landlords are unwilling to invest because it may reduce rental space and cost more without yielding



Above: In Daraja Mbili compound in Arusha, Tanzania, Rachel and other tenants were able to persuade their landlord to install a toilet.

additional economic returns. Because the tenants do not own the land, they become dependent on the will of the landlord.

In Tanzania, CCI estimates that as many as 80% of those living in slums in Dar es Salaam are tenants. A key lesson from this project comes from tenants trying to raise awareness among structure owners of the benefits of providing improved sanitation. CCI has helped to achieve this by introducing technologically appropriate (composting toilets) and financially efficient (affordable loans) means to persuade structure owners to invest in their property and construct toilets. An important part of this process was to foster a partnership with the local authorities for structure owners to receive permission to improve sanitation on land for which they may not have legal tenure.

In addition, health promotion teams carried out focus groups and settlement-wide discussions with structure owners to raise awareness of health benefits and to introduce the benefits of ecological toilets. Whilst the initial investment may be greater, the lifetime cost is smaller compared to conventional pit latrines. This way, instead of structure owners blocking improvements, they are now aware of a product that saves money and improves relations with tenants.

If the landlord does choose to improve sanitation facilities, it is often expected that the rent will increase, thereby forcing some tenants to relocate to more affordable housing – a process which excludes the poor. CCI has tried to mitigate against rent increase by offering sanitation loans, or inviting structure owners to join the Federation. Instead of viewing tenants as powerless dependents, CCI has linked land and structure ownership to sanitation advocacy, thereby facilitating a deeper understanding with key stakeholders.

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This learning brief, produced by Homeless International can be found with other resources on our website at www.homeless-international.org. For more information and comments about this publication, please email Rémi Kaupp at remi@homeless-international.org or contact us at our address below.