MAPPING THE SOCIAL AND GOVERNANCE TERRAIN IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

COMMUNITY PROFILING IN KOROGOCHO AND VIWANDANI, NAIROBI

ARISE
Accountability in Urban Health

INTRODUCTION

More than half of humanity currently lives in urban areas, and 90% of the global population is projected to be urban by 2050. Crucially, one in three urban residents now live in precarious areas, including informal settlements. Such settlements are prone to interconnected challenges in health and well-being, which are poorly understood globally and are often ignored as temporary aberrations by governments. The absence or inadequacy of local and national government institutions fosters the creation of multiple governance systems which challenge binary notions of public-private, state-society, and formal-informal, ultimately affecting service delivery in informal settlements.

SALIENT MOTIVATING FEATURES:
- Formal services in informal settlements are almost non-existent;
- Routine government data rarely cover informal settlements and data are usually insufficiently disaggregated;
- Inequities are often concealed and poorly addressed in informal settlements;
- Persistence of weak urban governance (particularly in policy, planning, and urban management);
- Pronounced disconnection of informal settlements from mainstream opportunities;
- Combined burdens of informal settlements are harmful to residents of these settlements, the cities they are located in, and the overall population;
- Intractable health and well-being challenges in informal settlements.

The Accountability and Responsiveness in Informal Settlements for Equity (ARISE) project seeks to understand the role of accountability in improving health and wellbeing inequities of marginalised and vulnerable groups living and working in informal urban spaces in Bangladesh, India and, Kenya and Sierra Leone.

Mapping of the social and governance terrain was conducted in the first phase of the study (Mapping Phase), to understand how existing governance and accountability systems affect the health and well-being of residents living and working in the study sites, Korogocho and Viwandani. This brief presents methods, key findings and recommendations our work profiling the community, identifying community needs, resources, and operational systems.

METHODS

Community profiling involved working with statutory and voluntary community organisations to identify community needs, resources, and operational systems. This was conducted through participatory focus group discussions with community members. Our participants included a range of population groups in the study sites including older persons, youth groups, and people living with disabilities, among others. This was useful in uncovering existing gaps, inequalities, and exclusions, as well as understanding how these influence access to services and the health and well-being of residents of Nairobi's informal settlements. 180 study participants were involved in this activity, with each focus group discussion consisting of 8-10 respondents.

KEY LEARNINGS:

- There were more basic informal amenities than formal ones.

- Formal amenities were largely inaccessible to many residents due to structural, individual, and cultural-related factors.

- There are pronounced inequities in access to basic amenities within informal settlements. Inequities in terms of gender, education, location, age, ability/disability, season, religion, tribe, and social connections were noted.

- COVID-19 further exacerbated inequities and modified the dynamics in access to basic amenities. For example, access to water by older persons and people with disabilities was a challenge due to their physical vulnerabilities.

- Existing actors (Table 1) affect the access to basic services both positively and negatively. For example, electricity is formally distributed by the Kenya Power and Lighting Company, but in informal settlements it is controlled by power vendors and youth groups who are readily available when the community is in need. However, they offer their services (access to electricity) at a high cost.

- There are different dynamics in access to some amenities like waste disposal points, with more challenges in Viwandani because it is farther away from the city's main dumping site than Korogocho.

- It is difficult for key actors to provide basic services in informal settlements due to lack of space and accessibility.

- With the growing urban population, the need for basic services will only increase over time.

- Residents of informal settlements regularly go against the prevailing legalities governing land use, planning, registration, and taxation. This impedes the provision of basic amenities and infrastructure to urban residents.

- Residents of informal settlements are vulnerable to hazards like fire and disease outbreaks due to over-crowding. They also face the risk of forceful eviction without adequate negotiations on relocation. Consequently, because they are vulnerable and marginalised, they do not have access to lawyers who can support their claims for fair compensation.

- Reports of illness were attributed to lack of or inadequate sanitation, water, hygiene, electricity supply, solid waste management, poor quality structures and uncontrolled development.

- Everyone in the community is responsible for access to basic amenities.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY, PRACTICE AND RESEARCH:

Key actors including the government should consider the following to improve access to services and enhance the health and well-being of marginalised slum residents:

- **Recognition of informal settlements and human rights** – Adoption of rights-based policies, regulations and integrated governance helps to promote sustainable and inclusive cities.

- **Formalisation** – Political and administrative recognition of informal settlements as part of the city fabric will help advance access to basic services for residents.

- **Legalisation** – Provision of legal backing to the informal services and tenure systems operating in the informal settlements.

- **Land titling** – This includes processes such as formal adjudication, cadastral surveys, and registration of individuals or groups in line with formal land tenure systems.

- **Integrative planning and design** – Reintegration of informal settlements with trunk infrastructure and basic services.

- **Acknowledgement of local context** – Interventions for basic service provision in informal settlements should be conducted in a manner that preserves the local context, while also improving outcomes for the most marginalised and vulnerable groups.

SUGGESTED CITATION:

[1]Ivy Chumo, [1]Blessing Mberu and [1]Caroline Kabaria (2023) Mapping the social and governance terrain in informal settlements - Community Profiling in Korogocho and Viwandani, Nairobi; ARISE Consortium.

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SECTOR	RESPONSIBILITY
Health	- Government - Private individuals - Tenants/inhabitants - Community - Faith-based - CBOs - Institutions
Housing	- Landlords - Individuals - Community - Tenants/inhabitants
Water	- Water vendors - Government
Electricity	- Government - Private - Youth groups
Sanitation	- Private individuals - Landlords - Government - Faith-based - CBOs - Community
Education	- Private individuals - Government - Faith-based - CBOs
Solid waste	- Private individuals - Government - Faith-based - CBOs

Table 1: Actors identified as responsible for amenities in key sectors within study communities.

The ARISE Hub – Accountability and Responsiveness in Informal Settlements for Equity – is a research consortium, instituted to enhance accountability and improve the health and wellbeing of marginalised populations living in informal urban settlements in low-and middle-income countries.

The ARISE vision is to catalyse change in approaches to enhancing accountability and improving the health and wellbeing of poor, marginalised people living in informal urban settlements.

ARISE is guided by a process of data collection, building capacity, and supporting people to exercise their right to health. ARISE works closely with the communities themselves; with a particular focus on vulnerable people living in the informal settlements; often overlooked in many projects and initiatives.

ARISE was launched in 2019 and is a 5-year project. It is implemented in four countries: Bangladesh, Kenya, India and Sierra Leone.