Chapter 15
Partnerships for Successes in Slum Upgrading: Local Governance and Social Change in Kibera, Nairobi

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Abstract With global trends towards increased urbanisation, conditions in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) present unique challenges. Kibera, in Nairobi, Kenya, is among the largest informal settlements in SSA, and has been part of ambitious programs to improve quality-of-life conditions for residents. This chapter explores one initiative involving a partnership of the Kenyan Government, UN-Habitat, a local NGO called Maji na Ufanisi, and community-based leadership groups. The program was part of a slum upgrading initiative called the Soweto East Project and relied heavily on community engagement to build trust, encourage active participation and define community concerns. Priorities included water supply, sanitation and waste management, but also an access road, a community resource centre and capacity building activities. We describe the mechanisms used to cultivate community engagement, the problems that emerged and the successes that followed. We conclude that environmentally sustainable and socially acceptable enhancements in informal settlements will require both a strong commitment from within the community and sustained support from outside institutions. The innovations that were a part of this program provide evidence of strategies that yield positive outcomes.

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15.1  Introduction

In July 2019, the Kenyan Government announced that Kibera, the largest slum in Nairobi and one of the largest in Africa, was to get over 3000 houses in a slum upgrading project (Daily Nation, July 21, 2019). The announcement might have been met with scepticism, given the record of slum upgrading projects that have ultimately proven to be eviction programs (Muraya 2006; Muraguri 2011), but instead it was enthusiastically received. There was one reason for this: the announcement was for Phase 2 of a Kenya Slum Upgrading Program (KENSUP) initiative, known as the “Soweto East Project”. Through strategic planning and management, Phase 1 had proven successful in meeting the expectations of the intended beneficiaries, and in early July 2019 822 families had moved into new, affordable housing units on land that they had vacated 6 years earlier, not as tenants but as property owners! The credibility of the government’s announcement for Phase 2 of the Soweto East Project was rooted in the proven success of Phase 1.

The pace of urbanisation in Sub-Saharan Africa, the high rates of urban poverty and the increasing proportion of urban population in slums are factors that present an explosive situation and an urgent challenge (World’s Cities 2018). Poverty, social and economic exclusion, and the challenges of meeting the basic needs of so many urban dwellers, have resulted in the growth and spread of informal settlements that are densely populated, poorly constructed and lacking in almost all formal services. A special report on “Rural-Urban Dynamics and the Millennium Development Goals” (World Bank 2013) noted that slums are growing fastest in SSA: “Urbanization is helping pull people out of poverty and advancing progress…, but, if not managed well, can also lead to burgeoning growth of slums, pollution, and crime”.¹ These conditions demand innovation in programs, policies and technologies, but these are only likely under innovative systems of governance. The research described in this chapter was undertaken to understand how community engagement can contribute to innovative urban governance. The guiding questions were: how are basic human needs met in informal settlements, what are the greatest challenges faced in the community, and how can conditions be improved without jeopardising what is functional? The chapter explores these questions by examining the governance aspects of Phase 1 of the Soweto East Project that made it successful; it also

¹Quoted in Bank press release at http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2013/04/16/urbanization-is-helping-power-people-out-of-extreme-poverty-and-assist-delivering-on-the-MDGs-says-report
addresses some of the complexities that came with its success. The chapter begins with a review of the background of slum upgrading in Nairobi and then focuses on the Soweto East Project and, particularly, the role of the Kibera Water and Sanitation (K-Watsan) Project as a catalytic component. It concludes with a summary of “lessons learned” from the analysis.

15.2 The Challenges of Urban Migration, Urban Poverty and Improving the Lives of People Living in Slums

Kibera occupies over 250 hectares and is less than 7 Km southwest of the Nairobi city centre. Its population has been reported to be as high as “almost a million”, but the 2019 census reports controversially reports it to be around 250,000 (World Population Review 2019). The policy adopted towards Kibera in the past was based on the assumption that it would disappear in a relatively short time, and so neither water supplies, sanitation, education or other facilities were provided (Cronin and Guthrie 2011; Meredith and Macdonald 2014). Historically ignored, hidden, undermined or, at best, merely tolerated, slums are now seen to play an important role in the economy of states, the cultural and social dynamics of nations and the human ecology of expansive rural hinterlands (Buckley et al. 2015; Farha 2016; Sticzay and Koch 2015), particularly in rapidly urbanising developing countries, including SSA (Croese et al. 2016; Ochieng 2013). Ecologically, economically, socially, politically and culturally—as well as ethically and morally—it is important to find and replicate pathways to success (Andreasen and Møller-Jensen 2016), but innovation requires records of success (Das and Takahashi 2009). The success of Phase 1 of the Soweto East Project in Kibera thus warrants analysis and wider recognition.

As the record of failed low-cost housing projects suggests, if community dynamics are not accounted for in the design, results can be disastrous (Hossain 2007; Muraya 2006; Pal 2006; Rigon 2014). Engagement is not easily attained in “top-down” approaches (Andreasen and Møller-Jensen 2016; Croese et al. 2016; Das and Takahashi 2009; Pal 2006; Mutisya and Yarime 2011), and mechanisms for effective public participation can be complicated and time-consuming (Dupont et al. 2014; Rigon 2014; Samad 2006), and so are often neglected (Croese et al. 2016). Phase 1 of the Soweto East Project undertook to find best practices for engaging the community. It was the first stage of an ongoing large-scale, ambitious and controversial project, and involved land clearance, construction of new housing and temporary resettlement of over 5000 residents (Fernandez and Calas 2011).

In Nairobi, previous slum upgrading projects left damaging legacies of mistrust and suspicion. They were large, centralised projects led by institutions with power and resources, but failed to generate community engagement. The Pumwani-Majengo Project, initiated in 1983 (National Housing Corporation 2004), and the Kibera High Rise Project, initiated in the 1990s, both displaced local residents; the Mathare 4A project, started in March 1997, failed because it alienated local people...
(Kamau and Ngari 2002; Otiso 2003). This legacy posed conspicuous challenges for building community engagement: innovations in governance were needed if the Soweto East Project was to succeed.

15.3 Assessing the Best and Worst of Living in Kibera

Despite their material shortcomings, viable socio-ecological systems operate within slums—systems that make slums not only viable but the best available choice for at least some of the inhabitants. When assessing the prospects for slum upgrading, the attributes of the communities that account for their viability, vitality and even vibrancy must be considered, and an effort made to understand how these are generated, regulated and sustained. In any planned community transformation, it is incumbent upon project managers to know how essential attributes can be protected, replaced or enhanced; conditions must not be made worse. Three specific questions follow:

1. How are basic human needs met within a slum, and why are people drawn to them; what is functional (or “good”) about life in these communities, and what is challenging (or “bad”)?
2. If outside support is to be provided, what are the most important challenges to address, and how can these be addressed without collateral damage to elements that are functional?
3. What governance structures and practices are most likely to enhance the functional without exacerbating the challenges?

The success of a project is ultimately determined, not only by whether living conditions are made better, but also by whether the original inhabitants benefit from improvements. Phase 1 of the Soweto East Project met both of these conditions, and the processes leading to this success are addressed in relation to each of the three questions above.

15.3.1 Addressing Questions One and Two: Benefits and Challenges

To address these we draw upon data from a field survey undertaken during Phase 1 (Meredith and Macdonald, 2014), which investigated factors seen as positive aspects of the community and factors seen as challenges. Factors that make Kibera a good place to live are the low cost of living, the secure social network, the simplicity of arrangements, and ease of access to employment and services (downtown Nairobi and the Industrial Area) (Fig. 15.1). The age-specific assessment (Fig. 15.2) makes it clear that young people are drawn into the area primarily because of affordability
**Fig. 15.1** Best attributes of living in Kibera (Source: Meredith and MacDonald 2014)

**Fig. 15.2** Best attributes by age group—plotted as percentages with actual numbers shown. N = 407 respondents of known age (Source: Meredith and MacDonald 2014)
and community, while older demographics are more concerned about proximity (typically to employment) and business opportunities (typically because they operate kiosks). Top-ranked challenges include insecurity, sanitation and housing (Fig. 15.3). Age differences are less conspicuous, although young people are more concerned about access to housing, and older people about the impacts of poverty (Fig. 15.4).
This suggests that priorities should address insecurity, sanitation and housing, while ensuring that affordability and sense of community are not compromised. The sense of insecurity in Kibera arose from frequent experiences of theft and crime, concerns about personal safety, and memories of post-election violence in 2008. Sanitation concerns included garbage disposal, available/affordable/clean toilets, effective drainage, and clean drinking water. Rather than eviction being a common concern, the state of the housing was the most worrying. While displacement and demolition were concerns—based on the legacy noted above—larger concerns are about affordability, size, permanence, ownership and construction materials.

15.3.2 Addressing Question Three: Enhancing the Functional Without Exacerbating the Challenges—The Kenya Slum Upgrading Program and the Soweto East Project

KENSUP was formally launched on World Habitat Day, October 4, 2004 (KENSUP, UN-Habitat 2004b), Phase 1 of the Soweto East Project following soon after. It was founded on the recognition that a new approach to slum upgrading was needed, and published goals were: “to improve the livelihoods of people living and working in slums and informal settlements in the urban areas of Kenya through housing improvement, income generation, and the provision of security of tenure and physical and social infrastructure. Promote and facilitate broad-based partnerships utilising consensus building and consultation among all the stakeholders” (Government of Kenya 2004). The ideals of inclusion were further emphasised in the assertion that “slum upgrading is a social programme requiring broader and well-coordinated participation of all stakeholders. For this to be achieved a social scenario is desirable that offers an enhanced democratic space for citizen participation, capacity building and enabling environment for participation and engagement, sufficient and clear communication linkages and strategies” (Government of Kenya 2004).

This focus on “global best practices” complements the concern for built environment with a concern for those inhabiting the area. KENSUP was committed to break away from a top-down approach to slum upgrading, and promote decentralisation or “delegated decision-making”. If the guiding principles (Table 15.1) are grouped by whether they focus on the community or on the built environment, eight refer to community attributes, only two to infrastructure. This suggests a recognition of the need to approach slum upgrading through an informed, engaged, motivated and supportive community.

The development approach adopted led to important assessment initiatives, including the Nairobi Situation Analysis, the Participatory Urban Assessment, and the formation of a Multi-Stakeholder Support Group, all reflecting governance initiatives that supported community engagement (Meredith and Macdonald 2017).
15.3.3 KENSUP’s Focus on Communication and Capacity Building

As part of its commitment to effective communication and outreach, KENSUP commissioned four critical studies: identifying instrumental actors within the community, building awareness in the community, determining how best to communicate with the community, and capacity building for effective participation (Meredith and Macdonald 2017). The first noted that there was enough “goodwill among the slum dwellers across the whole spectrum of actors for participation in the process”, but rules of engagement with the different actors needed to be defined, and KENSUP needed to coordinate and communicate the intent of their intervention (Acacia Consultants and Maji na Ufanisi 2004). The second identified specific objectives: create awareness, develop consensus among stakeholders, and ensure full community participation in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (KENSUP, UN-Habitat 2004a). The third study described the challenge KENSUP faced in communicating the shift in upgrading philosophy, from eviction and demolition to development and working with the community (KENSUP 2005). The report offered a detailed communication plan between the KENSUP managers and other stakeholders. The final report argued that slum upgrading is a human rights process that requires developing skills and channels for democratic community participation (Handa 2006). The four studies discuss the importance of effective communication to build community engagement but recognised that part of the problem was not having proven “best practices” from previous successful pilot studies to draw on. The KENSUP commitment in Soweto East became a pilot project, so that its communication and engagement successes could be applied elsewhere.
Consequently, while the ultimate goal of the project was affordable housing provision for the residents, the first objective was to find ways to engage the community and build trust. This began by consulting with the community to identify priority concerns, not only to motivate the community, but also to define optimal “entry points” for working relationships with the community. A participatory needs assessment produced the following top four priorities (in order): water and sanitation, drainage, waste management, and an access road. Housing was ranked tenth. The project therefore used water and sanitation as the entry point to the slum upgrading in Soweto East, Zone A, and the Kibera Integrated Water Sanitation and Waste Management Project (K-WATSAN) was initiated.

15.4 The Kibera Integrated Water Sanitation and Waste Management Project

A proposal for the Kibera Integrated Water Sanitation and Waste Management (K-WATSAN) project was drafted with a planned start date of November 2005 and a proposed budget of US$ 318,000, with UN-Habitat contributing US$ 278,000 and the Government of Kenya US$ 40,000 in cash and kind. This was later increased to US$ 579,684, with partners including the Government of Kenya under KENSUP and the implementing partner, an NGO called Maji na Ufanisi (Water and Development). The start date was January 2006 with expected completion by 2008. The proposal spelled out the “integrated” nature of the project: while water and sanitation were the core elements, a broader range of activities would reflect the priorities that emerged from consultations and communication strategies.

A sensitisation workshop on the K-WATSAN project was held in February 2006. While the K-WATSAN focused on community needs and building trust, the Soweto East Project entailed relocating people temporarily to a “Decanting Site” while new and improved structures were built in the community. In May 2008 the Decanting Site (600 housing units in 17 blocks) was 98% complete, and a strategy for identifying and relocating persons from Soweto East was finalised and ready for implementation by a relocation committee. On September 15, 2009, a GOK press release announced that “Kibera-Soweto East Zone A residents will be relocating to the Lang’ata Decanting”. Site clearance was delayed by legal action initiated by structure owners, until a court decision on January 12, 2012 allowed clearance to begin. On March 6, 2012, President Kibaki launched what the Daily Nation reported as “the Sh3 billion Kibera People Settlement Development project that will result in the construction of 900 housing units…230 business stalls, a nursery school, a social hall, a youth centre, three solid waste handling sheds, three toilet blocks and a boundary wall”. Only in 2019 did people finally move into new accommodation. The K-WATSAN partnership initiated the governance and management structures to maintain community engagement, a key element in the partnership being the Settlement Executive Committee.


15.4.1 Soweto East and the Settlement Executive Committee

The Settlement Executive Committee (SEC) is “a committee formed by project beneficiaries through democratic elections to represent relevant stakeholders and the community members in the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme (KENSUP)” (Ministry of Lands and Housing 2004). According to the report, the “most significant and innovative aspect of the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme is the enabling of the slum dwellers and other stakeholders to be fully and actively involved in improving their own livelihoods and neighbourhoods. …In order to solicit the desired full and active involvement of slum dwellers, the Programme will establish Settlement Executive Committees (SEC) in every project area as part of its institutional arrangement”.

The original/official terms of reference were:

(a) Mobilizing and facilitating community and settlement stakeholders for active participation in decision making, planning and implementation process to ensure ownership of the project.

(b) Sensitizing the community, disseminating information and soliciting views and perspectives of the community on the Programme and project-related issues through holding of regular meetings and sessions with settlement representatives and residents.

(c) Working with the community and the [City of Nairobi Settlement project implementation Unit (SPIU)] in determining and prioritizing the needs of the community.

(d) Marshaling community support for the programme and facilitating the mobilization of community and stakeholder resources for investment in the upgrading process.

(e) Representing interests of the community and providing linkage between the community on the one part and Programme Secretariat, and SPIU on the other part, including facilitating smooth, efficient and adequate flow of information.

(f) Providing the SPIU and the Programme Secretariat with accurate and timely reports on the situation on the ground at all times.

(g) Creating unity among slum dwellers and stakeholders and ensuring that valid and reasonable views and interest of the slum dwellers are well taken care of throughout the project phases.

“The SEC consists of representatives from all the stakeholders. Each project area will have an SEC elected by members living and/or working within the settlement. As a starting point, and using the results of the Actors Study, all existing and active local organizations and groupings within the project area are identified and sensitized on the objectives and operations of the project, and the need to elect representatives. Each stakeholder group elects a representative to the committee. Committee members are sensitized and finally guided to elect office bearers of the SEC from among themselves”. 
The SEC in Soweto East reflected the need to improve communication and coordination of the project at the community level and with external partners. Its membership was drawn from the various interest groups in Zone A of Soweto East: tenants, structure owners, youth groups, faith-based groups, widows, disabled people, CBOs and ex-officio the area chief and the councillor representing provincial administration and the political class. SEC therefore not only championed the rights and safeguarded the various interest groups, but also became the focal point for all negotiations with the government and other stakeholders in the project. Some of the roles played by SEC included:

- Participatory development of the project implementation roadmap
- Development and coordination of sub-committees to champion project implementation, e.g. K-WATSAN Committee to identify and coordinate appropriate sites, construction and management of water and sanitation facilities and a Structure Relocation Committee to facilitate voluntary relocation of structures for the construction of access road, storm water drains and sanitation facilities, community resource centre, etc.
- Participatory housing design and approvals, operating with technical engineering support from the government and UN-HABITAT
- Negotiation with the government on behalf of the Zone A community to develop strategies to relocate people and to determine the amounts that would be payable by households to the government to acquire new housing and the terms of those payments
- Resource mobilisation by Zone A community through the creation and support of local housing cooperatives intended to help members raise the initial 10% payable to the government as deposit for the purchase of new housing units
- Development and coordination of the planned management structure for the new settlement Zone A slum upgraded housing units, to be known as “Canaan Estate”

SEC eventually succeeded, but had to withstand many challenges. The main concerns expressed by members of the SEC were:

- Changing political regimes: the project was launched initially in 2004, and over the years, two political regimes came to power each with different approaches to and ideologies on slums. Although unit costs for acquiring the new houses had been negotiated and agreed upon between SEC and the government, and witnessed by UN-HABITAT, these had to be renegotiated with members of the new administration, some of whom believed housing units should be sold to Zone A residents and/or to any other interested parties at prevailing market rates, and an evaluation was ordered to that effect. The outcome of successful negotiation by SEC resulted in Government offering the housing units at these rates: 3 rooms Kshs 1.35 m, 2 rooms Kshs 1 m and a bed sitter Kshs 600,000, payable over a maximum 20 years.
- Civil court case by a group calling themselves structure owners, seeking compensation from the government before the Zone A site could be cleared of struc-
tures for reconstruction. The case lasted over 2 years but eventually decided in favour of the project.

- Keeping Zone A community together and focused on the project: residents were required to save and make contributions into the housing cooperatives for Zone A Soweto East. The coop was established in 2004, but members had to wait until 2019 for the project to be concluded.

- Balancing between serving as a volunteer in SEC (almost full time) and livelihood chores: almost all the SEC members had no formal employment and depended on casual labour skilled and/or non-skilled. The many hours they invested in community work were uncompensated, and often other personal or employment demands limited flexibility for full participation in SEC work.

## 15.4.2 Maji na Ufanisi and Community Development Officers within K-WATSAN

*Maji na Ufanisi* (MnU) was the NGO implementing partner working in and with the community to ensure the KENSUP/K-WATSAN objective of community mobilisation. MnU’s initial mandate was to contribute to improving livelihoods for the urban poor in Soweto East by mobilising and supporting residents to form small-scale community-based initiatives in water, sanitation and waste management. Community Development Officers (CDO) from MnU worked in the community throughout the project, and closely with SEC at each stage. The CDO, SEC and leaders from the community—working in consultation with representatives of K-WATSAN and KENSUP—constituted a community development team whose work is described below.

The community was involved throughout the project cycle from inception to commissioning. This enhanced community ownership and project sustainability. For reasons outlined above, the project took longer than anticipated, but throughout this time period, it was essential to ensure that the community continued to embrace the project as its own. The CDO undertook the following:

**Community Participation and Enthusiasm** Community members were actively recruited and engaged in a community needs assessment, mobilisation activities, group meetings and community trainings. A unique innovation was to employ community members in project-related construction activities. The construction work as a method of mobilising new members served as tangible evidence that K-WATSAN Project could provide real and immediate benefits.

**Community Needs Assessment** Public meetings were set up by the community development team and SEC members from respective zones. The community was given a chance to map out their own environmental strategies, and identify areas needing improvement. The meetings were often held in open spaces. Though the project was intended to address affordable housing, the needs assessment revealed
water and sanitation as priority concerns, with housing last on the list. These pro-
vided a good entry point to mobilise residents. The community was sceptical during
the meetings, as they had previously been promised development projects that
yielded no results. Overcoming mistrust required openness and patience; commu-
nity meetings took much longer than anticipated.

Mobilisation Activities  Following the needs assessment, mobilisation was encour-
aged through door-to-door outreach, public meetings and clean-up activities. The
public was informed and invited to participate in the planned activities, and in each
zone, two areas were identified by the community for construction of sanitation
facilities. The community involvement in planning, management and execution of
the water and sanitation projects gave them a sense of self-esteem and recognition.
The youth participated in clean-up exercises, spearheaded by Soweto Youth Group.
The exercises created awareness of the project, built trust in the project partners, and
helped to develop interim leadership capabilities.

Awareness Creation  Each community group met once a week at an agreed time.
The community groups formed interim leadership teams with the assistance of the
community development team. To enhance ownership of the projects, each group
was mandated to look for meeting areas—generally open spaces or churches within
the community. Groups were taken through training on constitution-making, leader-
ship and gender mainstreaming.

Ensuring Community Ownership  The intention was that communities would
organise and work independently, with minimal supervision. Each community
became involved in their own implementation processes, and developed their own
by-laws to govern them. Members were encouraged to ask questions about their
group and the project during the training and meetings. In each meeting, both SEC
officials and the community development team were available. As employment
opportunities in the project were to be given to community members, the commu-
nity group members had oversight of employment opportunities in the construction
projects. In each group, the community development team assisted members to
develop a duty roster for the construction work. Those unable to work for various
reasons were permitted to recommend family members to work on their behalf. The
community control resulted in 70% of the workforce being women. Work assign-
ments included construction and ferrying materials where narrow paths prevented
trucks from entering.

Providing Assurance  MnU and SEC met every fortnight to review the project and
emerging issues. This created room for any adjustments and community reporting
mechanisms. One issue that emerged was concern about loss of business or loss of
rights to business locations for kiosk owners during construction. The community
development team together with SEC were able to coordinate temporary relocations
to other identified open spaces, and to assure priority access to new spaces opening
along the new road corridor. The issue of tenant relations with landlords also
emerged, but the engagement of community members in project activities increased their confidence in taking on more challenging roles, including dealing with structure owners as equals and claiming their stake in future management of the facilities.

Community organisation leads to empowerment, and is a major boost to successful project implementation. The sense of community control of and engagement with the elements of the project led to demonstrable advances that built enthusiasm and support. The CDO, working with the SEC and the K-WATSAN Committee, were very instrumental monitoring community participation and supporting MnU in averting external threats to this project.

15.5 The Project and the Outcome

The SEC, the partnership with MnU and the close work with UN-Habitat mentors and monitors ensured that the many challenges met through the project were overcome. The new housing units were completed in 2019, and 822 families from the Zone A community were allocated housing units in what was named Canaan Estate. The selection of families was done openly and transparently, through a balloting process in the National Stadium witnessed by the Cabinet Minister for Housing. Those eligible for the draw had savings, based on their participation in community cooperatives initiated and supported by the community development team. Phase 1 of the Soweto East Project succeeded largely because K-WATSAN and KENSUP met their target of winning community support. There was concern that a volatile situation would arise if expectations were not met, but in January 2020 site clearance work for Phase 2 began, paving the way for new houses. Site visits and discussions with current community leaders for Phase 2 suggested that smooth progress resulted from the trust and lessons learned during the successful pilot work in Phase 1 and the creation of new housing in Canaan Estate. The record of the planning, implementation and outcome of K-WATSAN component of the KENSUP Soweto East project thus has value for other actors in the field (Fig. 15.5).

15.6 Lessons Learned

Slum upgrading is a transformative process, and without the active support of those involved or, worse, with resistance from those involved, the prospects of success are greatly reduced. Inclusion builds confidence at community level, and can stimulate interest in a project and a sense of empowerment for the community. Moreover, effective communication can give a voice to the marginalised (e.g. tenants vs landlords), and reduce power imbalances that have corrosive effects. Ensuring a formal structure and assuring standing can help entrench the sense of inclusion and give
more focus and motivation to engagement (as illustrated by the successful role of the SEC).

Naturally, formalising governance structures and giving voice to more stakeholders can increase the complexity of decision-making because of competing interests that may take time to formulate and articulate. This may expose conflicts with other groups’ interests, and therefore require more time for compromise or mediation, but it reduces the risk of major conflicts emerging later in the process, or of groups being unfairly marginalised—as has so often happened in previous slum upgrading initiatives.

Seeing positive results builds trust and engagement that can lead to tangible results. An incremental approach is therefore a way of building trust and engagement, and as positive outcomes emerge—whether it is in seeing a physical change in the community (such as a sanitation block), or in the level of community coordination (as in finding that a community has a voice)—successes become
self-reinforcing and may open opportunities for other initiatives within the community, or the example in one community may inspire trust and openness in another community.

To achieve these successes, capacity building became an essential part of engagement. Engaging in democratic, decision-making or planning forums is not easy for all; effectiveness within these forums is often related to the skills of the participant. Assistance and training in some of the required skills are essential. Sustained capacity building programs offered to SEC over the course of the pilot project became instrumental to SEC effectiveness. Members acknowledged that capacity building programs and the link with the MnU community development team helped them lead the process to success.

Notwithstanding, counter-intuitive outcomes may arise: for example, the Decanting Site was intended to provide temporary housing to residents of Zone A (Phase 1) displaced by the clearance for construction of the Canaan Estate. However, because it provided stable high-quality housing, some households lost motivation to make required monthly contributions through the cooperatives and, in the end, could not raise the 10% deposit needed to be eligible for new units at Canaan Estate. Decanting Site housing was therefore not made available to those displaced for Zone B (Phase 2), but, rather, the government has made provision for issuing every household with money to facilitate relocation and payment of rent for a period of one and half years (Zone B is expected to be ready for occupation within 2 years).

Due to limitation of land, Canaan Estate could only provide 822 units, less than the number of families that were relocated to the Decanting Site. Zone B is therefore planned to offer enough space to accommodate the balance of households still at the Decanting Site and those at the Zone B. The Decanting Site will finally be vacated and the housing units donated to Kenya Prisons, as per the original plan.

15.7 Conclusions and Implications for Governance

The research described in this chapter was undertaken to explore how community engagement can contribute to innovation in urban governance. This final section lists seven observations made by those directly involved in Phase 1 of the Soweto East Project, when asked what aspects contributed most the outcome.

1. **The value of formal engagement through entities such as the Settlement Executive Committee**: Providing a formal, structured, institutional arrangement to give voice to a community—as the SEC in Soweto East has done—and treating that entity as a full and important partner helped ensure consistent, sustainable and effective links with the community.

2. **Volunteerism may impose unfair burdens on participants and therefore lead to suboptimal intervention outcomes**: Community members may have a strong interest in participating in a development processes, but may be limited by time, ability or other commitments. As a project begins to demand more time, or is
protracted over a longer period, the ability of volunteers to maintain effective engagement may be reduced. If this is recognised, compensation or incentives (such as the work rotation used by Maji na Ufanisi) may help.

3. **Equitable distribution of benefits**: In a community impacted by poverty and limited resources, having visible benefits or opportunities (financial or otherwise) go to some groups of volunteers or committee members may limit the willingness or eagerness of others to volunteer or participate, especially if there are limited opportunities for a position in the group or committee. The lack of access to a benefit that a neighbour is getting may seem to be a penalty that discourages engagement.

4. **The dangers of a non-transparent or nondemocratic group serving as the link between project proponents and the community**: If a formal and mandated liaison body cannot be maintained, and active volunteers cannot continue to be engaged, a vacuum could open that would attract individuals who might purport to speak for the community but fail to do so. This could build frustration and resentment, which will cause the intervention to suffer.

5. **The importance of an inclusive and respectful approach to public engagement**: A perfunctory, superficial or condescending approach will not have desired effects. Sincere outreach is time-consuming, and may open discussions that are difficult to resolve; however, without it, trust may be lost and, with it, willingness to engage.

6. **The value of continuity in relationships of trust**: Relationships of trust take time to develop. Continuity of contact, and/or a thorough process for introducing new members or member replacements, will allow the benefits of personal trust to persist. The enduring contacts among those we consulted in field were clearly important to the successes that were achieved.

7. **Personalities matter**: Closely related to the above, the personalities, interest and commitment of people forming the relationships are important. The patient and empathetic approach required for working effectively in a partnership does not come easily or naturally to all and may seem frustrating or inefficient to some. What appears to be the most efficient or effective path to a goal may not be achievable if progress is hampered by mistrust or hostility. It was clear in this study that the mutual respect, trust and good working relationships were essential to the success of the governance structures.

These factors, exercised in the context of the committed governance structure of KENSUP and the K-WATSAN initiative, succeeded in overcoming the inherent mistrust of outside interveners, and identified locally acceptable procedures that improved living conditions and allowed new structures for the site’s original residents. The actions created a strong commitment from the community that was met with sustained, responsive and well-resourced support from outside institutions, notably the Government of Kenya, UN-Habitat and Maji na Ufanisi. Based on this success, Phase 2 of the Soweto East Project is underway and has strong community support. There is evidence that this model can be replicated and scaled up to address housing and sanitation for low-income urban settlements elsewhere.
Since the research was undertaken, COVID-19 has emerged and asserted itself globally. The paramount importance of access to safe water, effective sanitation and secure housing has been underscored by the pandemic. It is hard to imagine a more perilous environment than that targeted by the Soweto East Project, and yet in SSA the number of people in high-density, poorly serviced, informal urban settlements is projected to increase dramatically. As the evidence from this case study shows, there are pathways to solutions: international-, national- and community-based organisations working together, and drawing on the expertise of dedicated actors in key positions, can indeed be transformative. Skill, commitment and resources are the critical elements. Effective governance is the essential catalyst.

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