

URBAN RENEWAL IN LUSAKA

Introduction

Slum/Shack Dwellers International through its affiliates in Zambia has offered me a rare opportunity to interact with the various stakeholders involved in Lusaka Urban Renewal Projects in Zambia. Various challenges, key among them, traffic congestion and pollution have heightened in the city of Lusaka so much that mobility in the city is at snail's pace during peak times. The problems of traffic congestion, lack of designated paths and pavements for pedestrians coupled with widespread vending and increased dependence on the motor vehicle has created enormous pressure on the government to improve Lusaka urban environments that would attract investments and contribute to the vitality of the city. Accordingly, the government of Zambia in collaboration with its corporating partners like the Government of Japan and the World Bank have initiated the Lusaka Ring Road Project that seeks to develop ring roads to reduce traffic congestion.

The Lusaka Ring Road Project

This project has one central goal namely to reduce traffic congestion in the City of Lusaka. Lusaka is the capital city of Zambia. The project has proposed ring roads that will pass through slums and affluent residential areas of the city. The project has led to the demolition of people's houses and consequent displacement of seventy-two families. I have visited the sites with demolished structures and have collected data about the demolition of seventy-two houses worth billions of kwacha and this translates to millions of US Dollars. Doing my internship with People's Process on Housing and Poverty in Zambia (PPHPZ) which is Zambia's Slum/Shack Dwellers International affiliate, has offered me an opportunity to interact with both the government officials and the affected families vis-à-vis the processes and nature of compensation of the affected families. This interaction has given me exceptional experience in making inclusive decisions that seek to protect both the poor and rich in slums and formal areas of the city alike in the quest to achieve urban regeneration by government and partners.

The implementation of the project has been based on consensus among stakeholders. There were many discussions between the government and the affected families prior to the demolitions in early June 2012. The stakeholders sought to achieve consensus on the nature and value of compensation for the property before demolition. Having been tasked by PPHPZ to study and produce a report on the demolitions, one of my key tasks has been to go to the sites where demolitions took place, and to get the

views from the affected families. The families revealed that they were well compensated and that they have an opportunity to build new and good houses. Preliminary findings in this study indicate that most people are building better houses in better serviced areas while others have become tenants in more affluent areas than their previous residential areas. "We are happy with the process and the amount of money given to us as compensation. Our family is already building another house", said one of the affected young couple in Kamwala residential area. The families were compensated based on the monetary value of a particular plot, the improvements made on a particular plot and the resultant psychological and social disturbance. Disturbance was quantified per individual family in monetary terms to cater for rent for one year. The value of every property that was demolished was determined by government evaluators in full consultation with the affected families. The images below show some of the remains of houses that were demolished after full compensation.

Figure 1: A partially demolished house in Libala residential area of Lusaka to pave way for proposed ring roads



Image by Gilbert Siame on 23/06/2012.

Figure 2: Owner of the house removes the rubble to pick water pipes after demolition



Image by Gilbert Siame on 23/06/2012

Figure 3: Mr Mudenda was affected by the demolitions and he explains the procedure followed to arrive at compensation amounts for the property



Image taken by Gilbert Siame on 06/07/2012

Figure 4: Mr Mudenda proposes to Gilbert Siame what City Planning should focus on to avoid similar demolitions in the future



Image by Gilbert Siame on 06/07/2012

Conclusion

As a result of a thorough government consultation and respect of every stakeholder, the demolition was so peaceful that it was literally done by the owners of the structures without any uproar. Both the government and the individual families were pleased with the whole process. The consultation, fairness and harmony exhibited in the initial stages of the implementation of this project has never been seen or heard of in Zambia. Previously, demolitions in Lusaka were done late in the night causing massive suffering and out of city migration among the urban poor. Therefore, PPHPZ sees this as a potential reference case for *just* efforts aimed at urban renewal in Lusaka and in Zambia in general. Although property owners and government had little to complain about, tenants revealed that they were terribly inconvenienced and were simply told to vacate the houses. "There was no money meant to compensate my tenants", revealed Mr Lingford Lungu whose flats were demolished in Libala residential area.

By Gilbert Siame,

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