North Africa Horizons

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Future of North Africa's Slums:
"Slums of Hope" or "Slums of Despair"?

Futures Studies Forum
for Africa and the Middle East

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Introduction

For decades, urbanization was probably the most visible future trend and the easiest to forecast. We now know that the future is urban and glimpses of the future can be seen already in North Africa (NA), where some countries are over 80% urbanized. However, the nature of this future is contested. While urban planners look to Dubai and other shiny cities as the model for the future, the realities are very different as most cities in NA have already formed their character; and to many this portrait is ugly and dysfunctional. Indeed many cities are teaming with slums and despite concerted efforts over the years to rid NA cities of slums, they continue to be pervasive future of the city.

Slums are the entry point to address the cities' challenges and there is a need to realize that as long as the urbanization process continues there will never be enough resources to provide decent housing for all. Therefore, energy should be spent to better understand the opportunities that slums have, as the formal city already relies on slums for many critical services, and building business models to help tap the opportunity while at the same time taking action to improve the slums in an incremental manner. Hence, a change of attitude is key. But this approach is not without challenges as slums tend to sit in prime locations and many times the glamor for a modern city is really a ploy to appropriate the valuable real estate by the well-established networks of political and economic power.

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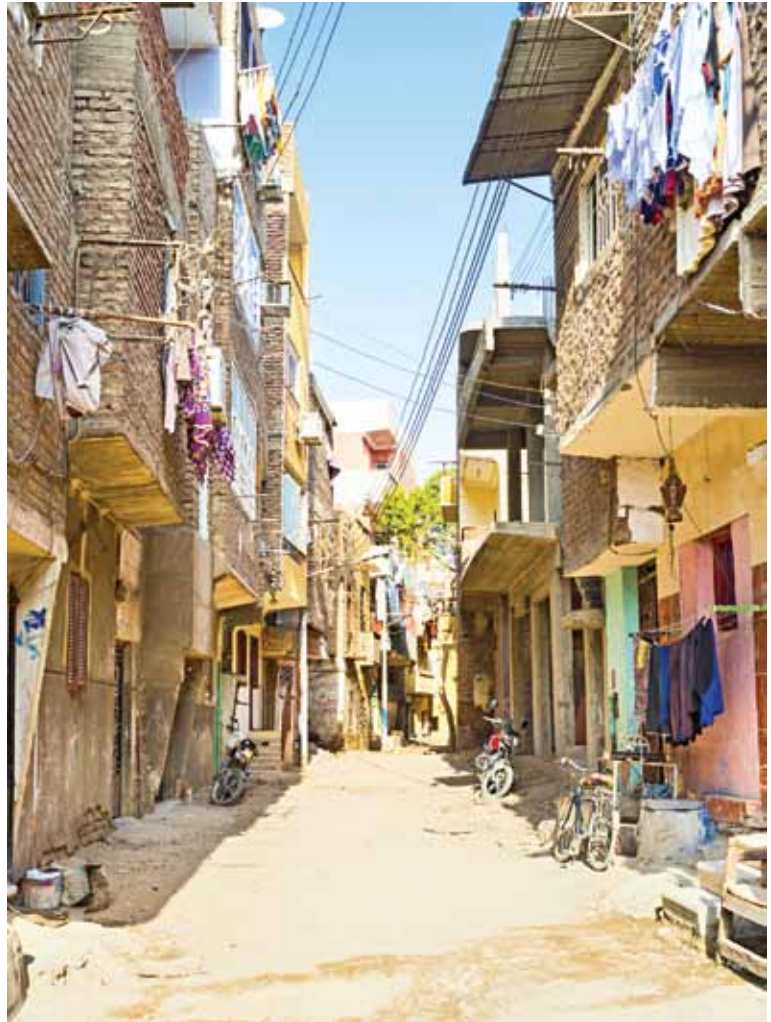
While the permanence of slums is now sinking as a reality, the right model or recipe for upgrading and integrating them is still unknown. Innovations will be the keyword as solutions are searched for. This issue of North Africa Horizons will explore the future prospects of slums in the region. Article one looks at the trends in slums and innovations being adopted to improve their future prospects. Article two explores the slum economy and how it can represent a strong backbone to the formal economy, while article three explores how to make slum communities more resilient.

Editorial

"Slums", "informal settlements" and "squatter areas" are different terms that are being used interchangeably to describe one of North Africa's most stark (visible) presentation of urban poverty and intra-city inequality: the development of 'squalid, overcrowded and wretched' places housing some of the urban cities' poorest segments of society.

Residents and visitors to North Africa's largest cities need not make any effort to witness this growing phenomenon; in Cairo, wherever you go, the core of the old city, with historic monuments, modern world-class hotels, and business centers, soon gives way to seemingly endless, ugly, unplanned residential tower blocks housing the middle classes and the richer of the poor.[1]

According to the UN-HABITAT, any specific place, whether a whole city or a neighborhood, is considered a slum area if half or more of all households lack improved water, improved sanitation, sufficient living area, durable housing, secure tenure, or combinations thereof.[2]

Even though slums in North African countries are by definition "illegal" settlements "with limited statehood", they are no longer just marginalized neighborhoods housing a relatively small proportion of the urban population. In many cities they have become the dominant type of human settlement, carving their way into the fabric of modern-day cities, and making their mark as a distinct category of human settlement that now characterizes many of the developing world's largest cities.[3]

Slums are now part of the urban landscape of many NA cities despite many attempts to eradicate them. They have proved resilient enough in the face of spirited attempts to wipe them out in the name of having modern cities. This resilience is what points to how they will continue to shape the landscape of the cities despite that fact that in many cities' plans and in planners' minds they do not formally exist.
It is ironic that something that plays such a critical part in the functioning of the formal city is invisible to the eye of the city planner or perceived as nothing else rather than a blight to be removed or an opportunity cost that needs to be turned to a true opportunity.

Slums play a critical role in holding the formal city. They provide many of the services the formal city needs in terms of labor, skills etc. ,but also many goods are generated in the slums. Slums usually host "messy" economic activities that are not permitted in formal parts of the city, namely garbage collection and recycling, workshops and warehouses for car repair, steel and iron handicraft activities, and many others. They also provide a significant market for the many formal businesses that operate and employ the formal city dwellers. As it has be put the slum is the base upon which formal city is created and recreated.

Cities also endeavor to achieve social cohesion and efficient use of natural resources. This is best reflected in slums where enterprise thrives on extremely small pieces of land and uses minimal resources, and where people from diverse backgrounds meet and create new cultures as they seek to be part of the wealth generating engine.

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All the same time, the slum is a place of hardship. Space is limited and squalor with desperation everywhere. The external view of slums as blights to be removed and as cesspools of crime and disease needs to be avoided and possibly quarantined is reflected on their residents' sense of worthiness and integration in society. Slums operate onthe margin of legality and many times are officially illegal and it is only a matter of time before the bulldozers roll in. This creates an atmosphere of great uncertainty for slum dwellers.

Accepting the fact that slums are the reality of cities in NA is a first step and grudgingly this is being accepted by the entrenched elites. The second step is development of innovative solutions that are focused on how to upgrade slums in a participatory manner where the slum dwellers and developers and formal cities authorities co-create the city with a more inclusive vision for slum dwellers and functions. This is likely to be a very different city from the modern city that many urban renewal plans of the past envisaged. It is a city where the rich and poor live side by side in a symbiotic relationship. Morocco's "Villes Sans Bedounvilles" program is showing the kind of innovation that will be needed in policy to bring about this change.

Empowering slum dwellers will be key in making them able to participate effectively. ICTs have proved to be a powerful tool in empowering slum dwellers, this is happening in Kenya where residents of Kibera, the biggest slum in Kenya, have access to maps and data about the slums and can use them as a platform to inform residents and monitor actions that impact them by government.[4]

But there is still concern that smarter slums may empower those already in control if effort is not made to build capacities of poorer citizens to use them.
The new era of democracy in the wake of Arab Spring has provided both a warning signal of the importance of "social justice" and enhancing the living conditions of the less fortunate, which presented an opportunity, among other

national priorities, to rethink how to upgrade slums and better integrate them into formal cities, something that has started to be considered in many of NA's largest cities with planners trying to avoid expelling slum residents and try to integrate them in resettlement solutions.

For this situation to crystallize there needs to be a political change in the vision and orientation of urban policies away from the non-inclusive pursuit of "world class cities" to the realization of the vast potential existing in the current areas. Cities need to blaze their own paths given that each city has its own character and history.

Cities need to wake up to the potential of slum economies in powering the economy of the formal city needs.

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Urbanization and Future Prospects of Slums in NA

Urbanization has been a major trend across the world during the past decades, and more so in Africa which is one of the fastest urbanizing regions in the world. With about 65 percent of its population living in towns and cities, NA is the most urbanized sub-region in Africa.[1]

Though NA is fairly urbanized compared to the rest of Africa the process is still continuing as shown by the figure below. By 2050 over two thirds of North Africans will be living in urban areas.
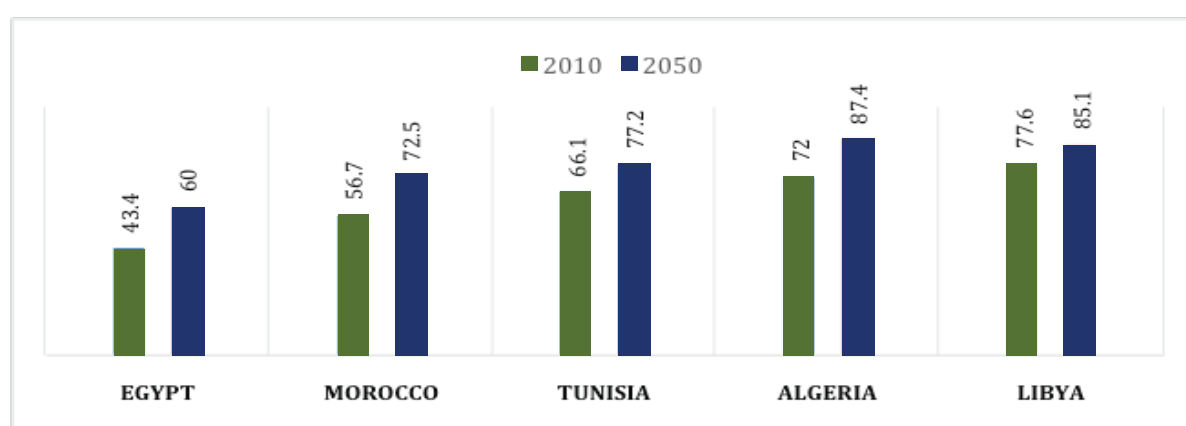
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Urban areas are engines of growth and more so in NA, where political and economic power is centralized in a few cities and thus the reason for the attraction as they promise opportunities. However,urbanization in North Africa is not driven by the pull factors of cities due to shortage of labor but mostly by the push factors of poverty and limited opportunity in rural areas. Essentially, rural poverty is being converted to urban poverty due to the lack of conscious transformational processes of the economic, socio-cultural and environmental patterns of urbanization.

The result is that urbanization has seen the rise of huge slums in its wake. Today, informal settlements along with squatter areas (usually termed in Arabic as "Ashwaiyat" are thought to accommodate about 12 to 16 million inhabitants, or about 40-50% of Egypt's urban population and over 20% of total population.[2]

Nevertheless, according to the 2013 Global Report on Human Settlement, 13% of North Africa's urban population were classified as living in slums down from around 20.3% in 2000.[3]

The trend shows a reduction in the proportion of people living in slums, and between 1990 and 2010 the number of North African urban slum dwellers had been reduced by 43%, with particular success noted in Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia.[4]

iHowever, t has been pointed out that the reduction should be looked at with caution as slum numbers depend on the definition of "slum" adopted. Further aggregate figures also hide significant variation across countries. For example, in Egypt informal settlements, including slums, are thought to accommodate 40-50% of the urban population and this explains the dubious reputation of Cairo hosting 3 of the 30 largest slums in the world.[5]

The slums problem is on one hand due to a lack of resources to build affordable housing but on the other it results from of poor policies, where supply has been constrained by government ownership of land, complicated property registration systems and regulations that discourage the construction of rental units. As a result, 90% of Egypt's urban land is not legally registered. In Morocco the figure is lower but still an astounding one, as most of the constructed buildings do not follow the regulations.

Thus, the rise in demand for housing has been reflected by an increase in prices rather than an increase in affordable housing production making housing increasingly unaffordable to the poor and even the middle income. For instance formal private investment in housing has been impeded by the Algerian government's inability to release land to meet the growing demand of its cities. As a result, a middle-income family in Algeria would have to save its household income for 9-12 years to afford an average dwelling, and meeting the demand for housing by low- and even middle-income families has been left to the informal sector.

In addition, policy has been skewed towards the well-off. The current government of Algeria provides an 80 per cent tax rebate on land sold for housing however the rebate benefits higher- and middle-income residents disproportionately. Only 14 per cent of the funding allocated to housing supports activities target the lowest quintile of the population.[6]

A similar trend is observed in Egypt, where policy measures benefit the well-off, such as the new rental law, the new mortgage finance law, encouraging the construction of social housing by private sector, and so forth.

The poor have been largely left to their own devices and have had to resort to building their own building on unoccupied lands. The lowest of them in the income categories would have to resort to slums.

There have been varied responses to the slum "challenge".

The response by NA governments and local government has been shifting over the years, with years of regressive thinking interspersed by periods of progressive thinking about the challenge. The general underlying theme in government has shifted from one of complete negligence to one of seeing slums as problem to be solved. Slums were originally seen by most NA officials as unavoidable and short-lived phenomena lined due to accelerated rural-urban migration in the 1950s to 1970s.

The city planning departments have thus never recognized slums formally or even as a de facto. For many planners slums do not exist in their planning maps, and have traditionally been marked as vacant areas to be developed in the future. It is ironic since in some cases slums dwellers were encouraged and authorized to settle in their locations by the state, such as Ezbet El Hagana and Hadayek Zeinhom in Cairo. This is also ironical given that they are some of the most densely populated areas in the cities and that some of these areas are acknowledged in electoral zones.

This thinking has resulted in significant conflict as cities in cahoots with developers have sought to evict squatters from the "vacant" lots as they implement their lofty goal of building modern cities. This saw frenzied eviction in the 1970's and the 1980s as urban renewals projects got underway. What this action led to was relocation of slums from inner cities to peri-urban areas where value of land were not as high and thus not in demand.

There was an attempt to stem the growth of slums by proving low-cost housing. However too few houses were built in relation to existing deficit and they were also unaffordable. Low cost housing had to be re-targeted to middle income to ensure cost recovery.

There has also been shift towards self-help and in-situ upgrading mainly due to pressure fostered by increased global awareness and activism on rights of housing and protection against forces evictions.

The current strategy seems to be to relocate slums to new satellites cities. Cairo is planning 10 new cities on its periphery. Related to this is the increased emphasis on secondary cities. As part of its 2011 National Plan, the Grand Plan Urbain, Algeria is placing a greater emphasis on the development of its secondary cities, extending, restructuring, improving and redeveloping the shanty towns created during the 1990s.

Private actions:

For the rich one response has been to move out to super-elitist, new peri-urban purpose-built cities, such as New Cairo to the east. However this seems to have been in vain as in even those areas, slum areas are starting to quickly emerge.

For those without significant resources the trends have been to build gated communities and quarantine themselves of malfunctioning municipal services and infrastructure. These then become islands of prosperity in a seas of despair.

All the same, slums, whatever the definition are fairly pervasive across NA cities as most part of the cities show pockets of slum. This is more a testimony that the formal city depends heavily on the services generated by the informal areas including slums. There are indeed a part of the landscape of the city and this is a reality that is now hitting planning authority as they start re-evaluating the lofty desires of having a modern city.

Returning to the "Compact City"

In 2003, the United Nations Global Compact Cities Programme was created to translate the principles of compactness into everyday urban governance and management. The compact city remains alien to most of today's Arab planners, businessmen and municipal officials, who continue to shape their cities towards ever more disbursed and sterile urban landscapes, dotted with shopping malls, gated communities, car show rooms, tract suburbs and mega urban highways.

In Egypt, a penchant for disbursed, distance defying and function-segregated new towns in the desert started in the 1970s. This trend has not abated despite the fact few people have moved there. Likewise in Morocco, the state developer Omrane in Morocco is proceeding headlong with the creation of satellite dormitory towns miles and miles from existing cities.

Planners are at disconnect with the reality and trends in urban development. Urban informality continues unabated a clear message that the sterile Modernist city is being rejected by the urban dwellers as neither affordable nor the social habitat of choice.[7]

Future Prospects

Without significant improvements in the policy, legal, regulatory, and financial systems, the problem of current slums is only a glimpse of an even worse future. The debate is increasingly moving towards accepting the permanence of informality and looking for ways in which the marginalized can be involved in decisions affecting their lives and also seeking to improve their access to services.

The Arab Uprising has also been a wake-up call in many ways:

- First, it has woken government to the need to tackling issues of social justice as at the heart the movement was more than a clamor for regime change but for genuine change that brought social justice and improved opportunities for all.

- Second and most important is that it brought a whole new perception about slums. Part of the reasons slums are despised by the formal city is that they are seen as harboring criminals and a source of general public disorder. However during the uprising where for many months the police disappeared from the street the feared prospects of the "desperate" slum dwellers attacking and raiding the posh neighborhood was never realized. Indeed slum dwellers care as much about security and public order more than other for they are the most vulnerable to crime given that police rarely patrol their neighborhood and they are generally neglected by the city authority.

- Thirdly, by heralding moves from family dictatorships to genuine democracy it has given slum dwellers increased say in governance, at least on paper. However given new increased awareness of rights, the rise of a vibrant civil society and the number which the slum dwellers command there is good prospect for more meaningful engagement with the authorities and greater involvement of the slum dwellers in shaping their future.

New Found Power For Slum Dwellers?

Politically, slums can be an important source of votes especially in the new democratic tradition that is replacing family dictatorships. Therefore political manipulation of slum dwellers in NA is a problem expected to grow in the future. In the 2014 presidential elections, the current government - led by President Abdelaziz Boutfelika, who was running for a fourth term - has promised brand new homes to millions of citizens currently living in the slums if they exercise their right to vote. Boutfelika's opponents believe his promise to provide houses for the poor is nothing less than blackmail. Politicians are not averse to making promises they do not intend to implement. Indeed broad promises were made to Egypt slum dwellers campaigns for 2011 elections that came in the wake of the Arab Spring, however by 2013 no progress had been made on any of the objectives.

It is clear that slum vote is going to be heavily contested and with proper organization slum dwellers have the opportunity to have a powerful voice that can advocate their interests. This will require civil societies to put more emphasis on organizing slum dwellers and providing them with data and tools for them to engage effectively with the political forces and hold politicians accountable.[8,9]

This new perception, the desire to address the issue of social justice and combined with move towards democracy that recognizes the importance of slum dweller voice in political processes bodes well for seeking innovative solutions to the challenges of improving the livelihood of slum dwellers. And scanning the NA landscape does show creative thinking in addressing the slum challenges:

● Egypt's Core housing or 'Ibni Beitak' (Build Your House) program, another modality of the 2005 National Housing Program, was introduced to cater for individuals with a monthly income of less than 1000 L.E. The idea of 'Ibni Beitak' originates from financing mechanisms implemented in unplanned areas where an individual would buy a plot of land, then would approach a contractor from the neighborhood to partner with. The land owner contributes the value of land while the contract contributes the cost of construction. The split of units between the two partners is negotiated in terms of a number of units for each depending on the relative cost of land vs. cost of construction.[10]

● The government of Morocco's the "Villes sans Bidonvilles" (VSB), or literally, "Cities Without Slums") aims to eliminate slums through making home ownership affordable for the urban poor. The VSB envisions upgrading all slums and facilitating the economic integration of the urban poor. Its key innovation is policy which is based on three main principles: "City Contracts" which bind the local authorities and other stakeholders to the success or failure of citywide programs by setting a date by which time a city should be declared a "City Without Slums"; the willingness to let the private sector play the lead role in housing supply; and substantial share of public funding in order to mobilize land, develop the necessary infrastructure, and improve the affordability of housing. The key innovation in making housing affordable is helping relieving the slum family the burden of financing a new home (see box).

● A different type of urban renewals has also been advanced. In contrast to the Egyptian government policy of demolition of the old city and relocation of the urban poor, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture believes that the downward spiral of disinvestment and deterioration can be stopped and that renovation of historic areas in downtown Cairo can trigger urban revival and economic progress. However progress has been in the past few years the trust has only managed to work with 70 houses.

● Emergence of smart slums: Data is yet another powerful tool in helping improve slum reality. Existing data collection

methodologies often focus on extracting data from a community without engaging them in the process thus limiting opportunity for them to influence decisions. However participatory processes however encourage ownership of data and empower slum dwellers to better understand and have a stake in developing local solutions based on the information. The example Map Kibera in initiative in Kenya uses GPS and Open Street Map to enable residents of Kenya's biggest slum to make a digital map of their streets and alleyways. Map Kibera is a platform that allows residents to monitor and report on their experiences of government initiatives.

● Connectivity is key. Slum dwellers need to be connected to new opportunities and work places. Some innovation that have potential in NA include:
– Establishment of online platforms to connect informal laborers with potential employers (e.g. India-based LabourNet), or even in the form of providing training programs and placement services that match informal workers with employment opportunities (e.g. South Africa based Harambee).
– In 2011, the city of Medellin in Colombia opened an escalator connecting slums to the center of the city, reducing slum dwellers' commute and freeing time up for economic activity, as well as contributing to the city's broader plans to reduce crime and poverty. Also, the government of Rio de Janeiro provides slum dwellers with free transportation via cable car from hillside slums to the rest of the city, enabling easier access to employment opportunities outside of the slums.[11]

Morocco's Third Party Partnership System (tiers associe)

Financing social housing programs and the resettlement of urban slum dwellers is considered the main obstacle facing policymakers in NA, and the main reasons slums are an engorging problem.

Innovation in financing slum improvement programs is key to improving slum conditions in NA. Morocco's Third Party Partnership is considered an ad hoc initiative supported by the Moroccan authorities in their quest to respond to the housing deficit for low income households, and was initiated in Casablanca as part of the VSB program. The system represents a genuine innovation in terms of attracting private-sector businesses to enable slum families to be re-housed free of charge in new, good-quality homes.

Similar to the concept of Egypt's Ibni beitak, serviced plots developed on state-owned land is allocated to slum Similar to the concept of Egypt's Ibni beitak, serviced plots developed on state-owned land is allocated to slum households at subsidized prices and they are to build their own homes. The ingenuity here comes in the provided financing mechanism, where two slum families sharing the same plot are given a choice to enter a contractual partnership with a third party (developer, investor, homebuyer etc.) ineligible for the VSB Programme which undertakes responsibility of construction of a four-storeys residential building, and supply a housing unit to each family, as well as covering the cost of the land ordinarily payable by the slum dwellers. This is done in return for an allocation of the two remaining storeys for their own occupancy or for renting or selling, where they benefit from heavily subsidized land costs. .

The partnerships set up under these programmes undoubtedly helped to re-energies the production of social housing, structure the private sector and fa¬cilitate the emergence of large Moroccan real-estate groups: Addoha, Chaabi and Alliance.

The practice of financing construction by involving a third-party partner has now ex¬tended across the entire VSB programme in Casablanca. It highlights the benefit of these initiatives, which echo the principle of the 'additional development rights' introduced in various cities worldwide – notably in Mumbai, India, where investors are granted additional surface areas in exchange for financing hous¬ing within slum-eradication programmes.[12]

Upgrading of slums adopting the various innovations outlined above is an approach that is now gaining tractions. Terms like self-aid and self-help are also an indicators that the poor are taking active role in improving their own living environment. Slums have become increasingly cohesive, offering opportunities for security of tenure and local economic development.

Despite renewed awareness and increasing democratization it is instructive to note that networks of political and economic power survived the upheaval of Arab Spring. The state bureaucratic systems have also largely been unreformed and the power of these entrenched interest to derail any meaningful reforms and scaling of innovations to address the immense challenges of creating decent livelihoods for many of the urban poor. For instance in 2013 Egypt established the Ministry of Urban Renewal and Informal Settlement signaling renewed desire to solve the slum "problem" but by 2015 the ministry was abolished leaving question marks on sustainability of Egypt's government solving the slum "problem".

All the same, the comedown by the establishment of plans to evict residents of Maspero and the of Maspero agreement, that gives the resident much power and stake in the redeveloped Masapero triangle shows that even entrenched networks are grudgingly come to the realization that the old order cannot hold and a new dispensation is needed.

Tunisia's Success in Eliminating Slum Areas

Since the early 1980s, Tunisia established programmes to reduce the number of slums. Today, Tunisia has essentially eliminated all bidonvilles (slums) through a programme managed by the public enterprise, Agence de Réhabilitation et de Rénovation Urbaine (ARRU). ARRU mandate is to renovate and rehabilitate urban areas and promote real estate development. Since its inception, ARRU has acted to control urban sprawl, improve conditions in the older districts, regularize substandard fringe settlements, offer loans for housing construction and improvements and provide basic services including potable water, sanitation, schools and health facilities, especially to the urban poor.

From 2002 to 2009, ARRU spent over USD 72 million on urban projects that have improved living conditions for 1,140,000 people. The success of these interventions can be attributed to ARRU's effective coordination of public authorities, specifically its willingness to cooperate and collaborate with local agencies. This is particularly important as decentralization has devolved functions and responsibilities to local authorities and given them a more prominent role in planning and management.

ARRU has also formed partnerships with the private sector to ensure effective and efficient implementation of programs and projects. About 65 per cent of the funding for ARRU's projects targeting lower income families originates from the National Solidarity Fund. Through this fund, municipalities can borrow money to complete local infrastructure projects and community facilities as well as transfer funds to ARRU to undertake projects. The remaining support comes from the Housing Fund, government departments and the private sector.

As of 2004, less than 1 per cent of the population was classified as living in substandard housing and the government's focus shifted to infrastructure improvements and upgrading. ARRU is the agency primarily responsible for the upgrading efforts. In spite of the elimination of slums, informal settlements, particularly in Tunis, remain a challenge and it is estimated that around 30 per cent of housing production is informal.[13]

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The Slum Economy: The Base of the Pyramid that Holds the Formal City

Slums are the entry point for many, especially the poor and those lacking connections, to the engines of growth that are the cities. The slums therefore attract the most ambitious and the most tenacious.

Hence, slums team up with energy and enterprise. Despite the many challenges, many people make a living in these slums either as service providers for the formal city or as business operating to endogenously provide for the slums.

In Morocco, the informal sector employs approximately 40% of Morocco's active population, excluding agriculture.[1]

Casablanca is the economic hub of the country where most of the industrial and service companies are located, where the majority of the urban poor are actually wage-employed. Nevertheless, self-employment is pervasive in small-scale animal husbandry, petty trade, and handicrafts and is the second largest source of income for the urban poor.

Most slum dwellers in NA are in low-paying occupations such as informal jobs in the garment industry, recycling of solid waste, a variety of home-based enterprises and many are domestic servants, security guards, piece rate workers and self-employed hairdressers and furniture makers. However, information on the occupations and income generating activities of slum dwellers in NA emphasizes the diversity of slum populations, who range from university lecturers, students and formal sector employees, to those engaged in marginal activities bordering on illegality, including petty crime. The main problems confronting the informal sector at present are lack of formal recognition, as well as low levels of productivity and incomes.

Slum dwellers in NA range from university lecturers, students and formal sector employees, to those engaged in marginal activities bordering on illegality, including petty crime.

A quick look at how slums operate in NA draws very interesting results. Most of the urban slum areas represent economic clusters in a specific activity, or a range of related economic activities. Slum economies are comprised of slum-based businesses and workers and the complex network of economic actors and institutions that participate in and enable this economic activity. They play a critical role in fulfilling slum dwellers' livelihood and consumption needs, while also making important contributions to the growing urban economies in developing countries.

Slums are thus places of opportunities, and once there, fortunes of slum dwellers can be very diverse. Thus even though most slum dwellers work in the informal economy, it is not unusual for them to have incomes that exceed the earnings of formal sector employees.

Today's Slum Dwellers: Tomorrow's Winners

Kiberia in Nairobi may be Africa's largest slum, home to at least a million residents. And even though the government offers the residents no services, opens no schools, operates no hospitals, paves no roads, and connects no power lines and pumps no water into homes, Kiberia is an integral part of Nairobi. The key to making it in Kibera is access to capital. A market of one million potential customers crowds in on entrepreneurs; it acts as a magnet for talent from rural areas, attracting the most determined among young farmers.

Slums are far from hopeless places; many are not where economic losers end up, but rather reservoirs of tomorrow's winners.[2] Slum residents are using creative approaches to global problems such as urban density, technology access and waste disposal. Necessity breeds invention. And that necessity might just be what makes slum dwellers well equipped to take on a crowded, resource-strapped future.[3]

However, the economic opportunities of slum dwellers are constrained by significant barriers, including unsupportive – and in some cases, hostile – municipal environments, which fail to protect informal workers' rights and provide sufficient infrastructure in slums; information asymmetries in the labor market that prevent equitable access to jobs; and insufficient access to resources (for example, skills, finance, and markets) that enable growth. These barriers constrain the income generation and economic mobility of slum dwellers, and limit access to affordable goods and services within slums.[4] It can be added that when the state thinks of formalizing informal economies like in Egypt, the approach imposes high standards for labor, premises, environmental regulations and so on, that puts the informal producers off from official registration. Also, this approach is not coordinated at all with slum upgrading.

Looking Ahead

It is unfortunate that policies of slum eradication have failed to realize that slums, more than anything else, offer a livelihood to its dwellers. Beyond shelter, slums provide means to access jobs and also provide a network of relations that improve resilience of its members. Relocating slums to new satellite towns moves people to locations far away from where their service are needed and more importantly shreds significant social capital that slum dwellers have accumulated as they have created new relationships. This explains the failure of many relocation policies as many slum dwellers tend to sell new locations and return to their old neighborhoods.

In Egypt, those given new apartments in the 1980s and 1990s often abandoned them, either letting or selling them and returning to their original slums or slum locations where they feel more comfortable and are nearer employment opportunities. The importance of networks, social cohesion and human intimacy should not be underestimated as vital elements of social capital that develop in slums, despite the squalor, extreme lack of privacy and non-existent services.[5] People who ran small businesses from sites in informal settlements, such as grocery shops, butchers or electrical services, which are lost during the demolitions cannot afford to re-establish their enterprises in their new location.

> *Beyond offering shelter, slums provide to its dwellers livelihood; means to access jobs and a network of relations that improve resilience of its members.*

Beyond anything, livelihood is what most slum dwellers value most and this has been emphasized. According to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, "adequate housing must be in a location which allows access to employment options, healthcare services, schools, child-care centers and other social facilities." Governments need to realize that slums are already existing communities and should strengthen them and build their resilience.

Empowering Mansheyyet Nasser

The Egyptian government has been reluctant to legitimize the Manshiet Nasser illegal squatter settlement, which sprang up about 30 years ago. The squatter settlement of Manshiet Nasser is a dynamic place with a population of more than 500,000 who sustain thousands of businesses.

Manshiet Nasser has attracted the attention of several universities and international development organizations in the past few years. The German Technical Cooperation (GIZ) has produced some material to encourage the government to participate in the development of the area by empowering its residents rather than adopting its typical approach of razing communities and relocating them to mass-housing blocks on the city's fringes.

Manshiet Nasser is home to some of Cairo's most skilled craftsmen who make handmade goods that were sold in Cairo marketplaces. With the recent drop in tourism in Egypt, many of these workshops suffered. According to GIZ, over 5,000 informal industrial workshops have been identified in Manshiet Nasser. Potential expansion of these workshops will help create job opportunities for many.
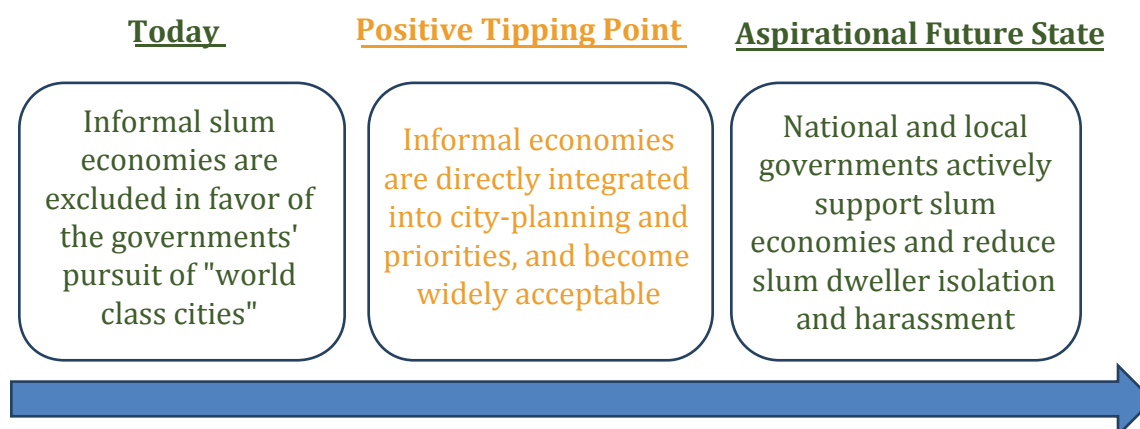
In this context comes the intervention of Nebny Foundation, a group established by young Egyptians inspired by the potential for a better Egypt that the 25 January uprising promised. The group has been active in bringing felt change to communities such as Manshiet Nasser where it has been working on upgrading Luxor Street. In an attempt to help rebuild the economy of Manshiet Nasser Nebny has implemented a number of programs to help provide employment opportunities for Manshiet Nasser residents. According to their statistics, 72% of those living in Manshiet Nasser are unemployed, but more than half of these are laborers who make hand made goods and have potential in this area. Nebny Foundation has developed a program focused on supporting the workshops in the area. Nebny supports the workshops by helping them to improve the quality of their products and by expanding their retail markets.

In an attempt to economically empower El Mansheyya's residents, a vocational center was created where people are trained and taught a profession then hired in Nebny's workshops to work on producing a unified product. The profits are reinvested in economic empowerment to support new workshops and micro-projects. Nebny provides interest-free loans, cash-for-work schemes and technical support.[6,7]

Slums as contributors to urban development:

Local government and other public-sector bodies should adopt a more supportive role towards the informal sector, either in their own direct work or when contracting to the private sector. While slum economies are already interfacing with the formal city economy through the many services and goods that are exchanged between them more formal arrangements can unleashes better synergies between the two. For instance, inclusive business models that link formal and informal business have the potential to creat jobs; opening new markets for formal business who have no knowhow on how to operate in informal slum economy. While slum based business can get much knowhow on supply chains and marketing from the formal business.

Slum economies can play a central role in the cities' economy and they need to take action to better integrate the informal slum economy to the formal city economy. As shown in figure (1), slum economies are currently not in the priorities of NA national and local governments, who are instead pursuing the vision of "world-class cities". Hence, municipalities in NA often view slum economies as an impediment rather than a critical contributor to urban development, restricting willingness to support these efforts.

Today	**Positive Tipping Point**	**Aspirational Future State**
Informal slum economies are excluded in favor of the governments' pursuit of "world class cities"	Informal economies are directly integrated into city-planning and priorities, and become widely acceptable	National and local governments actively support slum economies and reduce slum dweller isolation and harassment

Adapted from the Rockefeller Foundation study, "Constrained Opportunities in Slum Economies", Decision Intelligence Document, Search Cycle 2, Nov 2013,
https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/app/uploads/Constrained-Opportunities-in-Slum-Economies.pdf

A positive tipping point in favor of slum economies is urged in the short and medium term. Where informal slum economies are directly integrated into city planning priorities and become a widely acceptable vision for urban development.

For this situation to crystallize, there needs to be a political change in the vision and orientation away from the non-inclusive pursuit of "world class cities" to the realization of the vast potential existing in the current areas. Also, allowing the private sector to lead slum engagement initiatives which puts pressure on urban planners to accommodate and support slum economies.

Another approach to reconcile the vision of "world class cities" with the upgrading and integration of slums and other informal areas is that, all cities, including "world class cities" may include low income neighborhoods that have an attractive spirit of vividness. With good physical upgrading that maintains their spontaneous urban form, slums can be seen attractive locations for higher income groups to go for popular restaurants and cafes, or for cheap goods and services, including fresh-produce vegetable markets.

Finally, realizing change in the current situation will require effort from slum-based workers and businesses to organize themselves better in a manner that enables them to have a voice in municipal decision making. Shared and open data will be key in fostering cooperation and emerging slum data systems point to an important innovation in giving greater voice and accountability.

Slum Data Systems: SSA experience

While overall dynamism in the slum economies problem space is low to moderate, relatively stronger dynamism around the increased availability of slum data presents opportunities to shape interventions that improve slum economy outcomes.

Technology advancements and uptake are enabling a better understanding of traditionally hard-to-reach populations in NA countries, including the urban slum dwellers. Researchers are increasingly leveraging these technologies, including geographic information systems (GIS), global positioning systems (GPS), and mobile, to collect data about slums and slum dwellers. To increase the usability of this data by urban stakeholders (e.g., urban planners, municipalities, and private sector), academics and researchers are also developing new analytical tools and approaches. As data about slums improves and government and donor resources become more constrained, multilaterals, NGOs, and slowly, governments, are beginning to realize the potential of data to inform important decisions that affect slum economies, such as those regarding potential slum infrastructure upgrades, or choices between in-situ slum upgrading and slum re-location.

There are regional and international experiences on employing new technologies and tools to collect data on slums, where in SSA, Nairobi-based Spatial Collective uses hand-held GPS devices to collect detailed data about slums, and the organization recently collected data on behalf of social enterprise Living Goods to help inform the feasibility of four new products in Nairobi's slums.

Increasing the availability of slum data creates more opportunities for innovative analysis and dissemination, and this can be facilitated by the Global Open Data Initiative which helps developing countries to build open data management systems, including data about slums, to improve governments' decision making capabilities and accountability. The Gates Foundation has funded Slum Dwellers International (SDI) and The Santa Fe Institute to expand the scientific study of slums. Building upon SDI's existing collection of local-level slum data, the project will aggregate, standardize, and disseminate data about slums to urban decision makers. In partnership with Google, SDI has also developed a platform integrating data collected by slum communities with Google maps, improving its usability for governments.[8]

On the long-term, NA local and national governments should actively support slum economies, ensuring slum dweller connectivity with their surroundings and instituting mechanisms to provide legal protection for informal workers and maintain their rights.

Given the complexity of the issue at hand, the process and vision outlined above for integrating and even actively supporting slum economies will not come without risks. Many NA orientations view urban areas inhabited by slum dwellers as increasing opportunity costs to cities, and hence relocating slums is one of the widely preferred strategies of dealing with slums in favor of making way for private real estate development which is much cleaner. Therefore, cities' planners and decision makers need re-training to help them visualize a different city that sees slums as opportunities, rather than opportunity cost and to develop new governance models that can tap to this opportunity. There is a need to better understand how inclusive business models work and the types of public private partnerships required for that purpose.

NA governments should support slum economies, ensuring slum dweller connectivity with their surroundings and instituting mechanisms to provide legal protection for informal workers.

Enhancing Slum Dwellers Connectivity

Improving slum dwellers connectivity to economic opportunities should be a major priority of NA cities. Economic empowerment means more resources available to slum dweller to help in paygrade and building the economic base of the slum communities.

Some useful examples that NA cities can learn include instituting and providing physical connectivity of slums. This aspect needs to be at the heart of NA's strategies; especially when it comes to resettling slums to new areas, as failure to do so could lead to the failure of the whole resettlement attempt.

Also, the illegal status of slum dwellers puts them at great risk of economic manipulation by corrupt officials and individuals, where many slum dwellers have to pay bribes to maintain their informal economic activities. Moreover, increasing slum dweller connectivity with non-slum employers and opening the space for an increasing private sector role in engaging slums opens risks of exploitation through unfair wages and poor working conditions, this needs to be closely monitored and mitigated.

Future policies should go beyond the physical dimension of slums by addressing problems underlying urban poverty. Slum policies should seek to support the livelihoods of the urban poor, by enabling urban informal sector activities to flourish, linking low-income housing development to income generation, and ensuring easy access to jobs through pro-poor transport and low-income settlement location policies.

Slums Dwellers and The Creative Economy

Slums are the melting pots of NA attracting many people with huge dreams and determination to make it in the cities. Slums residents comprise impressive people including fairly wealthy entrepreneurs, university professors, students etc. who live in slums for many reasons some historical. The 2012 Business classification and development program of Egyptian slums showed that half of slum dwellers are engaged in services work, more than a quarter are engaged in crafts work and the rest in vocational work. Vocationally, 25.9% of slum dwellers worked as teachers, while 24.4% worked as farmers, and 16.5% as nurses. By services, 20.2% of slum dwellers worked as sellers, and 17.7% as drivers, while in crafts 35.3% of slum dwellers worked in construction, 13.4 worked as carpenters, and 6.2 as steel workers.[9]

These slum dwellers are not a homogeneous population. Indeed people from all walks of life are to be found in the slums. This make them an important driver of change in thought, the arts and culture.

But perhaps the diversity to be found in slums can be most dynamic is in creative economies. Already slums are centers of craft economies. Slums have also product acclaimed musicians, athletes etc. Creative economy is now acknowledged as one of the most dynamic sectors of economy with significant potential for growth.

Slums can be supported to be center of creative economies, places where the rich culture of both Arab and African traditions can be mined and blended with others art forms to produce new creative products that can be sold world over.

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Building Resilience of Slum Communities

"WE ARE NOT DIRT. It is our right to live. We demand to live a proper and healthy life."
Female resident of Ezbet Abu Qarn informal settlement in Old Cairo

Much as there is enterprise and determination in the slums, they are vulnerable places. Slums in many places are located in areas prone to natural disasters like flooding, mudslides etc. for instance, over 1 million Egyptians live in what are considered unsafe areas, at risk of floods and mudslides. Their crowded nature also magnifies threats as it is hard for emergency services to reach those who need help.

Climate is also likely to have a disproportionate impact on NA slum dwellers as they are more exposed to vagaries of climate change. It can be noted that most, if not all, NA countries have cities on the Mediterranean, and these cities surely have slums. There is always a disaster waiting to happen in the slum. For slum dwellers, their poverty means that it is hard to recover from a disaster.

Social impacts of gentrification of slum dwellers

The issue of gentrification was raised as a crucial issue in all slum upgrading and prevention programmes in NA.

The challenge is to create affordable housing units that are an attractive alternative to slums.

Real life experiences of many slum dwellers show that authorities have continuously failed to respect the rights of slum dwellers targeted for major improvement or development projects. Under international human rights law, evictions should only be carried out as a last resort and after all feasible alternatives have been explored in genuine consultation with affected communities.[1]

According to the UN Basic principles and guidelines on development-based evictions and displacement "Resettlement must ensure that the human rights of women, children, indigenous peoples and other vulnerable groups are equally protected, including their right to property ownership and access to resources".[2]

NA governments however, are simply resorting to forced evictions. Moreover, in some places, people living in areas designated as the "most unsafe" or life threatening are not being evacuated for considerable periods, despite requesting urgent intervention, while others living in less dangerous situations – particularly in areas categorized as "unsafe" because of poor housing conditions ("shack areas") – are being evicted speedily to get their valuable location. This has left many families in dangerous situations witnessing sporadic deaths and injuries caused by collapsing buildings or other hazards. Slum dwellers in Egypt victimized by forced evictions and left in the streets to face their fates resorted to even worse ways out, they turned to inhabiting areas out of official scrutiny, such as the City of Dead or "Al Qarafa" in Cairo. Unofficial statistics show that one and half million people are currently living among tombs and graves. Refugees and migrants from the country (Upper Egypt and Nile Delta) and Cairo residents who cannot afford the rent cost in slums are coming to the cemeteries.[3]

In Egypt, a rockslide in 2008 from Al-Muqattam Hill into Al-Duwayqa -in the informal settlement of Manshiyet Nasser- killed at least 119 people and injured 55 others. In the same year, a presidential decree established the Informal Settlements Development Facility (ISDF) to develop plans to deal with informal settlements, co-ordinate government efforts in this respect, and identify informal settlements that are "unsafe".[4] It has also spread suspicion among slum-dwellers that some of them are being cleared out of their homes not to protect them, but so that the land can be developed for commercial gain.[5]

Most slum dwellers' 'life chances' are low; most of them are rarely able to obtain formal-sector jobs because of their lack of social capital, including lack of education, lack of patronage and contacts, and a general exclusion from 'regular society' that is mediated by signifiers of social class and a lack of empowerment. Slum dwellers are also not able to access regular sources of finance to develop their own businesses. Banks do not usually have branches in slums, and if they do, the lack of legally registered collateral will exclude all but the most well-off slum dwellers from obtaining loans. Slum entrepreneurs are forced to draw on informal sources of finance at exorbitant rates and very short repayment periods. Though the informal sector can be very effective in providing livelihoods and cheap goods and services for low-end consumers. However, at its worst, employment in the informal sector can be exploitative, with poor contractual relationships, unhealthy working conditions and low payment, while limiting the ability of governments to raise local revenue for vital services within poorer communities Reduced access to safe food and water, poor sanitation, a breakdown of traditional family structures, and high unemployment rates affect slum dwellers' health. They have more health problems; slums are home to a wide array of infectious diseases (including tuberculosis, hepatitis, dengue fever, pneumonia, cholera and malaria), which spread easily in highly concentrated populations. And despite the tremendous need, health-care services are generally difficult to access in these areas.

Poverty has led to high levels of school dropouts, illiteracy, drug use, delinquency, violence and crime, and therefore have the potential of a violent time bomb if found in combination in dense urban areas. Children are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and crime at the hands of older children and adults. In deprived urban settings, children have higher rates of psychological and behavior problems and lower educational and occupational expectations than those from rural areas.[6]

Lack of social security safety nets means that slum people are unable to take opportunities. So when people resist being relocated to better housing it is because they would rather stay in the slum with free accommodation, electricity, and water,

> *Recent analyses suggests that slum dwellers are not a threat to the larger city, but are themselves victims of urban crime and related violence, often organized from outside slum areas.*

than risk falling behind on mortgage payments. People are reluctant to rent an apartment. This is because they have no social safety net there. So when people are jobless they have no income unless what they can have from family members. Relocated people found that there was a big problem of insecurity in the new dwellings.[7]

Slums are often associated with crime. While more globally representative empirical evidence on the linkages between crime and slums is needed, recent analyses suggests that slum dwellers are not a threat to the larger city, but are themselves victims of urban crime and related violence, often organized from outside slum areas. Slum dwellers are, in fact, more vulnerable to violence and crime by virtue of the exclusion of slums from preventive public programmes and processes, including policing.

Assistance from government is also viewed with suspicion, as slum dwellers are wary of the motives of government officials in declaring areas unsafe. Some believe that this could be used as a ploy to evict them and hand over land to developers. So communicating messages about safety is much more difficult.

Gender Dimension of Slum Challenge

Poverty in slum areas has become highly feminized. Compared to their male counterparts, poor urban women tend to have lower-paying jobs and higher illiteracy rates. They also are excluded from certain types of jobs because of lack of education or discriminatory practices. On top of this, women are often excluded from land and home ownership and inheritance. All these factors place poor urban women and their dependents at increased risk for a range of health problems.

Women and children living in informal settlements are particularly susceptible to death and injuries as they are more likely to be at home when accidents happen. They already face the danger of sexual assault due to the lack of privacy, the proximity to other homes and the absence of safe toilet facilities, especially at night.

Separated women who are at risk of forced eviction or who do not receive alternative housing also tend to lose their jobs as they are either too afraid to leave the house in case they are evicted in their absence or do not want to leave their children alone in the street if they end up homeless. Many separated women in NA are not entitled to alternative housing if evicted because re-housing letters are usually issued in the name of a man.

There is a need to give voice and visibility necessary for women to report their experiences. Slums are inhabited and managed by women, who represent two thirds of the slum population. In general, it is women who face the daily management issues (water, sanitation, health centers) for the latter, all is far, everything is expensive, and everything is inaccessible.

It is thus women who have the greatest stake in upgraded slums. Thus authorizing tenure privileges to the woman family-head instead of the man protects her and the kids from the threat to be homeless, and gives them an asset that can be used for income generation purposes.

Way Forward

Clearly, the task is how to ensure that slums become an integral, creative and productive part of the city. The broader context, therefore, has to be good, inclusive and equitable urban governance. But inclusive and equitable urban governance requires greater, not less, involvement of the state at both the national and local levels. Particularly needed in this respect are equitable policies for investment in urban infrastructure and services.

Do-it-yourself (DIY) approaches can tap into local communities' capacity to self-organize. Encouraging data ownership by communities and strengthening coping mechanisms and individual and household incentives align with community actions to implement holistic, sustainable community solutions. Using crowdsourcing and open data, especially mapping data, to inform community design activities can bridge these gaps and empower households and local communities to integrate a wider set of resilience measures into daily lives, budgets, and decision making.

Interventions to improve the resilience of slum dwellers are being piloted. Some of these are:

● Children living in slums are a potential for recruitment to extremist ideologies. An intervention in Morocco is trying to address that. The Sidi Moumen Cultural Center was set up to lure marginalized children away from the troubled paths so often followed by those living in squalor. The center is run by Idmaj, Arabic for "integration," an association of youths who come from the impoverished neighborhoods they are serving. The center has several classrooms, computers, an extensive library and a stage. Students join sports activities, learn French or English, attend conferences or gather to debate the issues they face. They recently began a journalism project, Words for Change, in which the children blog about their lives. Instead of living in distress and insecurity, the center has succeeded in giving slum dwellers hope.[8]

● Egypt's El-Zelzal settlement (a temporary-turned-permanent "Earthquake Victims' Resettlement Project") developed on Al-Hadaba Al-Wosta (The Middle Plateau) tells a story of how art can emerge from amongst the rubble. The "El-Mokattam Blog Tales" is a civil society project to empower young men and women living there. It trains youth on the use of digital photography and the skills of internet-writing providing the most ambitious, yet least socially-mobile the means to express themselves and have their voices heard globally. The project is part of an initiative by Namaa Initiative in partnership with the NGO Alwan & Awtar. It is also supported by the Rising Voices initiative of Global Voices.[9]

> *The problem of slums is not only a physical housing problem.*
> *There are social, economic and environmental issues that need more*
> *solutions for policy implementation*

Gender issues are also being addressed:

● One inspiring initiative in Egypt aimed to empower girls living in slums is the "Girl Power" community initiative that uses sport as a tool for development, social change and gender equality. The initiative's main target is underprivileged girls, aged 9 to 14, who have never previously played any kind of sport. The project reaches out to the girls through partner NGOs that are well established in their local underserved communities and willing to offer the sports programs as part of their activities. Girl Power is now working on two projects: Mansheyet Nasser in Cairo and Talbeya in Giza. The program is meant to empower girls by teaching them self-confidence, importance of leading a healthy life and providing them with a force for gender equality that can breakdown gender stereotypes and challenge traditional scripts for females. The program started as an idea presented for the "Global Sports Mentoring Program", an exchange program sponsored by ESPN and the US Department of State.[10]

● The Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women (ADEW) is another organization that targets empowering women in some of the poorest areas in Cairo and its suburbs, namely, Manshiet Nasser, Masr El-Qadeema, Dar Essalam, El-Gamalia, Shoubra, Qalyoubiya and Gharbiya.[11]

Slums are not only physical objects but also centers of population with lifestyles. The problem of slums is not only a physical housing problem. There are social, economic and environmental issues that need more solutions for policy implementation. Development plans must be linked to characteristics and revenues of the area, residents' demands and distribution of development gains with equitability and transparency so that all population categories can benefit.

Opportunities that allow slum upgrading include, among other things, considering cities as engines of sustainable development, to test and promote leaders and strengthen democracy, to boost construction jobs, and ultimately to empower the poor. The poor inhabitants should be at the center of development, which means that governments must not only consult slum households, but empower them to be active agents of change in the formulation of policies, programs and implementation.

There is a need to give voice and visibility necessary for women to report their experiences. Slums are inhabited and managed by women, who represent two thirds of the slum population. In general, it is women who face the daily management issues (water, sanitation, health centers) for the latter, all is far, everything is expensive, and everything is inaccessible.

Improving the resilience of slum communities is key to unlocking the full potential. Resilience will require putting in place interventions to empower people, upgraded slums that are safer and easily accessible, improved trust, greater attention to gender and children issues among other interventions.

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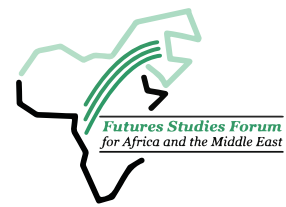
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