



CO(MMUNITY)-FINANCE AS A TOOL FOR LOCAL DEMOCRATIC SPACE: THE CAPE TOWN CITY FUND

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There is a popular song that urban poor communities sing across South Africa. It is called Izwe Lakhiti (Our Country), the anthem of the Federation of the Urban Poor (FEDUP) and the Informal Settlement Network (ISN)¹:

Our country is full of shacks and toilets. Some are in Natal, Some are in Gauteng, Some are in Free State province, Our country is full of shacks. Everyone listen: the developers are building toilets for us, But what do we want? We want houses, we want schools. We don't want toilets. It is painful living in an informal settlement.²



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IZWE LAKHITI GIVES expression to the lived reality of poverty in South African informal settlements and critiques development approaches that exclude poor people from decision-making and priority setting. Exclusionary practice is often evident in local government spending on projects that are not deemed appropriate by informal settlement dwellers. Disproportionate spending on temporary toilets, for

example, depicts the failure of local government in Cape Town to address basic sanitation requirements in a sustainable manner (Social Justice Coalition 2016). Yet exclusion also relates to a broader concern, namely the right to participate in local democratic space, 'the arena between the state and the individual in which people interact to hold the state accountable, shape public debate, participate in

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politics and express their needs and opinions' (Horner and Puddephatt 2011: 3). The concept of local democratic space is reminiscent of Lefebvre's *Right to the City*, which similarly refers to the inclusion of citizens in decision-making around, and appropriating of, urban space (Lefebvre 1996: 150; Isandla et al. 2011: 4).

In the context of informal settlement upgrading, the National Department of Human Settlements (NDHS) introduced the Upgrading of Informal Settlements Programme (UISP) in 2004 as a new policy and finance instrument that emphasises the integral value of community participation (NDHS 2015:). In reality, however, there has been a notable lack of community participation and in-situ practice in UISP projects (NDHS 2015; Fieuw 2015). This is largely due to inadequate municipal capacity for meaningful community engagement and inappropriate understanding and usage of UISP as a financial mechanism (NDHS 2015)³.

Based on robust experiences of community-based saving as a lever for co-finance and an enabler of inclusionary practice, this paper suggests the need for an innovative co-finance instrument that enables a collaborative platform between urban poor communities, intermediary organisations and local governments to co-navigate in-situ informal settlement upgrading projects. If local democratic space presents an arena for multiple actors to deliberate options and priorities for development, this paper investigates how co-finance in the form of the

Cape Town City Fund presents a model and tool for enabling such deliberation.

WHY CO-FINANCE?

The value of co-finance is premised on the assumption that the central participation of poor people in planning and implementing their own development projects brings about more sustainable and locally nuanced projects (SA Shack/Slum Dwellers International 2012; SDI 2015). More significantly, meaningful participation contributes to building more resilient and socially cohesive communities, qualities that are echoed in the department's Breaking New Ground Approach (NDHS 2004). Where aspirations between communities and government are similar, 'innovative and responsive interventions by the urban poor have the ability to recast state-civil society relationships' (Fieuw and Ritchie 2013: 3). Co-finance, therefore, falls under a broader approach of co-production: a collaborative strategy that sees communities and local government jointly identifying outcomes.

SA SHACK/SLUM DWELLERS INTERNATIONAL (SDI) ALLIANCE EXPERIENCES IN CO-FINANCE

Co-finance and community-based saving is a tool⁴ used by FEDUP, ISN and SDI federations across the globe to mobilise and organise communities in order to build inclusive cities, namely ensuring engaged participation by informal settlement dwellers at local government level. Poor communities use saving as a tool to build trust and cohesion between members of a savings group, to accumulate their own resources and to leverage external contributions from the state or other organisations (SA SDI 2015).

On an individual level, FEDUP members deposit savings in a bank account shared with the savings group. On a movement level, each FEDUP member

contributes a once off membership fee of R750 into a national Urban Poor Fund (UPF) that, at December 2015, amounted to R2 660 583. By combining group or UPF savings with external contributions, FEDUP has geared up capital for large-scale construction and infrastructure development in the People's Housing Process.

With regard to informal settlement upgrading, the SA SDI Alliance established the Community Upgrading Finance Facility (CUFF) as an alternative to state finance mechanisms for communities who are intent on improving basic services. Combined with a community's 20% savings contribution to the project's total cost, the fund provides seed capital for community prioritised upgrading projects (SA SDI 2015). Savings contributions play an essential part in project preparation as they indicate a community's willingness to take ownership of the project and co-produce its outcomes. Nkokheli Ncambele, Western Cape ISN Coordinator explains saying, "When people don't contribute savings to their projects, they often don't care about them. This is why you will find that many government toilets are vandalised. But if you contribute something you feel like it belongs to you" (Ncambele interview 2016)⁵.

The CUFF offered an opportunity for communities to experiment, learn and collaborate with local authorities in the upgrading process. As an advocacy tool, it demonstrated a range of viable upgrading projects premised on the Alliance's tools for community organisation including community-centred planning and community leadership. It also presented a model for citywide finance facilities with the potential for institutionalisation (Fieuw and Ritchie 2013).

In both FEDUP and CUFF projects, communities used savings contributions to leverage partnerships. FEDUP, for example, signed an agreement with the NDHS in 2006 that pledged 1 000 housing subsidies

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per province to FEDUP members (Hendler 2015). Following a joint reblocking and upgrading initiative in Mtshini Wam informal settlement in Cape Town, the City of Cape Town signed a partnership agreement with the Alliance in 2012, followed by joint upgrading projects from 2013-2015 (Fieuw 2013). After a site visit to one of these projects, the Western Cape Minister of Human Settlements in 2015 pledged R10m to the Alliance for further upgrading in the City of Cape Town (Madikizela 2016). This is how saving becomes a tool that enables communities to initiate projects because they have 'something with which they call [engage] government. When poor people save[,] government pays attention' (Ncambele interview 2016)⁶.

EXISTING MODELS BUILT ON CO-FINANCE

The principle of co-finance is reflected in a number of international institutions that promote community-based savings, credit and grant-making alongside community mobilisation and capacity building.

The Rashtryia Mahila Kosh, Women's Poor Fund in India, makes bulk loans to community-based organisations that are used to provide microcredit resources to affiliated community-based savings and credit schemes. The Orangi Pilot Project in Karachi, Pakistan, integrates innovative funding mechanisms with poor people's organisations to provide adequate low cost sanitation, health, housing and microfinance facilities (Fieuw and Ritchie 2013). The Community Organisations Development Institute (CODI) is a finance facility in the Thai government that provides

micro credit to autonomous urban and rural poor communities who organise independent cooperatives and savings schemes. With loans geared at informal settlement upgrading, housing and resettlement projects, CODI emphasises the core role of community organisations in the development process, savings systems that enable self-reliance and loan systems as a tool for development (Boonyabancha 2004). CODI is noteworthy for institutionalising community-centred development finance that has led to informal settlement upgrading projects in more than 226 towns and cities in Thailand (CODI 2008).

The effectiveness of these programmes can be attributed to their focus on strengthening urban poor community movements, *collaborating* with poor communities (as they are best positioned to design their own solutions), *engaging* the resources of poor communities and *pioneering new partnerships* between communities and professional agencies to better direct and manage development resources by the state and other agencies (Fieuw and Ritchie 2013).

Notably, these success factors reflect two aspects of local democratic space as suggested by Horner and Puddephatt (2011): the procedural and the metaphorical dimension. The procedural dimension refers to formally sanctioned avenues of engagement while the metaphorical refers to the ideals, values and interactions that underpin the procedural dimension. These co-finance facilities are premised on the values of collaboration, engagement and co-production, which in turn are reflected in formal partnerships or institutionalised practices and policy. However, the presence of these values does not necessarily indicate seamless cooperation. On the contrary, such spaces of engagement enable actors to navigate differing and at times conflicting views. For Scott (2008), the act of deliberating and navigating differences is a critical feature of local

democratic space and, as this paper suggests, of navigating development priorities through a co-finance approach.

GRANT MECHANISMS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

A brief overview of existing finance mechanisms for informal settlement upgrading in South Africa indicates the absence of institutionalised and meaningfully participatory practice.

As the primary financial mechanism for the in-situ upgrading of informal settlements, the UISP provides grants to municipalities to fast track the provision of tenure security, basic municipal services and social and economic amenities. Significantly, UISP grants are only valid for the duration of an allocated financial year (NDHS 2000). UISP is premised on 'the empowerment of residents in informal settlements to take control of housing development directly applicable to them' (NDHS 2000: 9). To this end, 3% of the total project cost is reserved for social facilitation that, in reality, is rarely allocated sufficiently (Fieuw 2015: 63).

Given the specific conditions for using UISP funds, the Urban Settlements Development Grant (USDG) acts as a capital and supplementary grant available to metropolitan municipalities. It is often used by cities to finance upgrading projects, can be applied to various projects aimed at realising sustainable human settlements and is thus a more flexible tool than UISP (Fieuw 2015). While the Built Environment Performance Plan was intended as a tool for implementing and reporting on the USDG, it is now a strategic planning tool to coordinate capital spending and coordinates infrastructure grants related to the built environment such as the Integrated City Development Grant, USDG and Human Settlements Development Grant (Fieuw 2015).

CHALLENGES IN FINANCING COMMUNITY-LED INFORMAL SETTLEMENT UPGRADING

Although the value of community participation is expressed throughout the UISP (NDHS 2000), challenges relate to the minimal success of implementing in-situ upgrading and deep-rooted community participation (Fieuw 2015, NDHS 2015). The National Development Plan refers to ‘an ambivalence across government towards how to address the upgrading of informal settlements’ and the need to ‘develop appropriate regulations, in a participatory and empowering way’ (NDP 2012:271). In Southern African cities, “Governance challenges revolve around integrating bottom-up and top-down priorities of development at city and local scales. The challenges also require governance to embrace more inclusive and supportive approaches towards informal sector activities rather than focusing purely on their regulation” (UN Habitat 2014: 241).

Once again, the tension between the ideals of inclusion/participation and the lacking implementation thereof becomes evident. Similar tensions transpire in recent policy expressions in the Draft White Paper on Human Settlements (2016). Where section 5.9 of the Draft White Paper acknowledges ‘there has been an inability for communities and civil society to meaningfully and effectively participate in all facets of human settlements development’ the paper does not offer a robust alternative for community involvement. Instead it is ‘largely concerned with a “culture of entitlement”’ (CORC et al. 2016: 1). With implementation remaining largely technocratic and local knowledge remaining side-lined, this paper questions the efficacy of current finance instruments for in-situ upgrading.

THE CITY FUND MODEL: A TOOL FOR CO-FINANCING INFORMAL SETTLEMENT UPGRADING

How, then, can community/co-finance models enable community-led informal settlement upgrading?

The Cape Town City Fund set up by the SA SDI Alliance serves as an example. As a people-centred finance facility for Cape Town, the City Fund enables communities to apply for funding of small to medium scale interventions. The fund responds to the challenge of 1) building community capacity⁷ and 2) developing mechanisms and models for partnership-based informal settlement upgrading. Its rationale was based on an external review of the CUFF in 2012, which suggested the possibility for greater impact by devolving authority to city governments (CORC and uTshani 2014).

The City Fund concept therefore focuses on metropolitan governments such as the City of Cape Town (current initiative), Johannesburg and municipalities of Ekurhuleni, eThekweni and Nelson Mandela Bay. Its strategic principles are 1) demonstrating a diverse portfolio of effective upgrading and livelihood support projects and 2) influencing policy change through evidence-based advocacy (drawn from a pipeline of projects) which would present a viable model for institutionalisation (CORC and uTshani 2014).

In the Cape Town context, City Fund applications fall into three funding categories. *Informal Settlement Upgrading Projects* can be large scale/area based projects or smaller scale projects. Large scale

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projects look beyond the needs of a singular settlement, demonstrate an understanding of regional developmental agendas and present a first step towards a potential partnership with government, the private sector or non-state actors. Smaller scale projects respond to an immediate need including reblocking, drainage, and water and sanitation facilities. *Livelihood Projects* are seeded by the City Fund and require innovative models such as social enterprises. *Proposals from the general public* provide an opportunity to build partnerships beyond the confines of a single organisation or entity (CORC and uTshani 2014).

By April 2015, the City Fund had approved 16 applications, installed 1 420 fire detection devices in 10 informal settlements in Cape Town, informed plans for 80 toilets in five informal settlements with the Department of Water and Sanitation and secured project approval for an area-wide urban park in Khayelitsha. These projects were preceded by deep community mobilisation which included over 32 facilitated partnership meetings between communities and city departments, over 40 learning exchanges, and 75 community-based planning initiatives facilitated by CORC planners and architects (SA SDI 2015)

Although the City Fund is yet to be institutionalised, it presents an opportunity for communities to creatively think about and incrementally work towards the future of their settlements. Communities affiliated to ISN and FEDUP, for example, have used City Fund grants

to plan the upgrading of eight informal settlements in 2016/2017 within the alliance's partnership with the City of Cape Town. Regarding advocacy, the model has been used by urban sector NGOs in Cape Town to make an input into the city's BEPP (SA SDI 2015).

UPGRADING MASILUNGE INFORMAL SETTLEMENT THROUGH THE CAPE TOWN CITY FUND

Based on the work of the SA SDI Alliance, Masilunge informal settlement in Gugulethu Cape Town serves as a case study that indicates the shortfalls of current funding approaches to informal settlement upgrading and the potential of an institutionalised City Fund model. The settlement was established on an open space in Gugulethu by nearby backyarder families who erected informal structures to maximise living space. Located on a hilly slope, a number of Masilunge's residents experience regular floods during winter rains and a rising rate of related illnesses.

In 2011, the City of Cape Town identified Masilunge as one of 23 people-led, pilot projects for informal settlement upgrading as part of the city's commitment to furthering its evolving partnership with the SA SDI Alliance (Fieuw 2013). The plans for reblocking Masilunge were confirmed in April 2012 when the Cape Town Mayor signed a memorandum of understanding with the SA SDI Alliance, and in November 2013 when an official policy on reblocking was released by the city (WC Province 2013; City of Cape Town 2013).

Since Masilunge was first identified as a reblocking project, five years have passed without any changes in the settlement. Why is this the case? At the time of implementation, the city found that community readiness was low, namely that the community was not sufficiently mobilised (low buy-in) or organised to proceed with participatory implementation (Hendricks

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interview, 2016)⁸. The apparent lack of community readiness needs to be understood in a context that requires high levels of community facilitation to achieve convincing buy-in from residents, especially in a settlement that is as dense as Masilunge. Such facilitation requires detailed household-level engagement that requires far more time than half-day community workshops, which are often conducted by contracting companies. Delayed community readiness was also linked to disunity among residents caused by tensions linked to a nearby government subsidised housing project which rendered the prospect of upgrading an undesirable alternative to attaining a house. Locked to the financial year, the budget for Masilunge's upgrading was allocated to a different project.

After Masilunge's community leadership and SA SDI Alliance members intensely engaged with the city, Masilunge was finally allocated funding on the city's upgrading budget in 2015 and comprised one of the communities the SA SDI Alliance would prepare for upgrading. When the time for implementation drew near, the community was ready – equipped with a detailed enumeration survey, reblocking plans and a percentage of required savings deposited which indicated community buy-in. However, bureaucratic delays in the municipality meant that it took close to one year to procure and appoint contractors. With starting dates constantly shifting, community members grew doubtful and began pressurising and accusing their leaders of relaying false information about the start of the project. The community's uncertainties continued to grow amidst pre-election politicking between various groups within and outside the settlement. When the city eventually indicated its readiness to implement, it once again encountered a seemingly divided community. The project is currently on hold while the SA SDI Alliance mediates the situation with a disillusioned and fractured community.

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IMPACT, VALUE AND CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED IN MASILUNGE

As it stands, the upgrading of Masilunge was planned and prepared within the Cape Town City Fund framework, which in its current iteration, operates outside of city structures. The disjuncture between city processes and the pace of community preparation in Masilunge is evident. It indicates the inadequacy of current finance instruments for upgrading which are not flexible enough to adapt to the processes of project preparation and social facilitation in informal settlement communities, thereby disengaging from a local space of deliberation and negotiation around projects. While tools such as the UISP intend to support community-led action, their rigidity can have the opposite effect.

The case of Masilunge illustrates particular and general challenges related to upgrading:

- ✦ Party political frictions during election years often extend the time required to mobilise an entire community for upgrading.
- ✦ The time for sufficiently mobilising a community may extend beyond annually allocated project budgets. This is particularly the case when party political frictions arise (e.g. upgrading versus housing), or more innovation around housing typologies is required (e.g. due to high density in urban and infill settlements).
- ✦ At times, city preparation and procurement processes stretch project timeframes beyond the designated one year allocation period.

For municipalities, a central concern relates to finding avenues to increasing capacity to deliver at scale and to consider how multi-year funding can be made available for project implementation.

- ✦ When a project is delayed (due to, for example, transcending budget time frames) it is twice as difficult to restart and remobilise the community.

Household level engagement is critical for community buy-in and mobilisation, which enable meaningful participation to take root. How can a co-finance facility then activate people-led in situ informal settlement upgrading?

- ✦ Community saving is a valuable mobilising tool and enabler for meaningful participation.
- ✦ Saving is an indicator of household buy-in at settlement level.
- ✦ A co-finance mechanism that is institutionalised in local government but not subject to its bureaucratic process can enable flexible timeframes for project budget allocations that are not constrained by annual provincial or municipal allocations
- ✦ Ring-fencing budgets or categorising them in multi-year allocations (as currently occurs with contractor procurement approaches) enables greater synergy between city and community processes.
- ✦ Similarly to CODI, a co-finance facility has the potential to locate poor people at the heart of upgrading interventions. Where urban poor communities shift from beneficiaries to activated citizens that identify, plan and implement development priorities, informal settlement upgrading becomes more nuanced, responsive and participatory.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REPLICATING AND EXPANDING UPGRADING

While the practice of co-finance is not new, the institutionalisation of co-finance facilities in government structures is rare. In South African metros, an institutionalised City Fund would need to be underscored by the values of participation and meaningful citizen engagement and by their meaningful implementation in formal avenues of engagement such as partnership settings, collaborative planning, project preparation and implementation. Due to its collaborative character, a City Fund would be highly responsive to co-decided outcomes. This means that it would need to be established under the auspices of local government but operate beyond the constraints of municipal bureaucracy while maintaining high levels of financial accountability. Such a scenario would contribute towards enhancing the space between informal settlement communities, intermediaries, local government and other relevant parties to discuss, deliberate and negotiate priorities. While particulars around implementation, legalities and administration require further expansion and research on best-practice, the following presents closing remarks for a variety of actors in the upgrading space.

For municipalities, a central concern relates to finding avenues to increasing capacity to deliver at scale and to consider how multi-year funding can be made available for project implementation. For National Government and Treasury, a key question relates to how USDG funding can be extended to community facilities and amenities as well as medium or high density incremental informal settlement upgrading. Furthermore, the discourse around participation needs to be interrogated and reassembled in a manner that reorients the understanding of informal settlement upgrading from

an infrastructure driven approach, to a responsive, people-led approach.

CONCLUSION

The experience outlined in this paper is that innovation and meaningful participation occurs only when community members become significant actors in the upgrading process. For social movements such as ISN and FEDUP, as well as intermediary NGOs like CORC, the building of strong and well-organised social movements is imperative to upscale co-finance approaches to upgrading. As such, participating communities require accessible, user-friendly information about funding mechanisms and a dedicated capacity building component that includes the development of savings and data collection to build an organised community movement.

In a country that is full of shacks and toilets, in which developers and government do not seem to be listening and in a country in which the pain of living in an informal settlement is echoed in the voices of those who sing *Izwe Lakhiti*, it seems the concept and practice of local democratic space is rarely attainable. This is reflected in the disparity between the ideal of *participation* and municipal inability to implement *participatory* informal settlement upgrading. The shortfall in implementing the community-centred UISP is partially due to official finance tools and systems that are unable to establish a space of commonality, negotiation and joint prioritisation between government and community processes. The value of a co-finance facility for informal settlement upgrading, then, lies in the tangible possibility of co-production between local government and strongly organised urban poor communities.

(RE)CLAIMING LOCAL DEMOCRATIC SPACE

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NOTES

- ¹ FEDUP and ISN are two poor people's movements that together with the Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC) and uTshani Fund form the South African Alliance of Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SA SDI Alliance).
- ² Original in isiZulu: Izwe Lakhiti, wemadoda seligcwele imijondolo. Natal koloni, eminye se Natal, eminy'ise koloni seligcwele imijondolo. Izwe Lakhiti wemadoda seligcwele imijondolo. Gauteng, Free Stata, eminye se Gauteng, eminye se Free Stata, seligcwele imijondolo. Ama developa Ama developa madoda asakela amatoileti. Sifunani ke tina. Sifuna izindlu sifuna izikolo asiwafuni amatoileti. Kubuhlungu ukuhlalemjondolo. See CORC (2014).
- ³ For example, it is common that municipal officials inappropriately report relocations to Greenfield sites as UISP projects (Fieuw 2015)
- ⁴ Other tools include Community-Based Data Collection, Horizontal Learning Exchanges, Women-led initiatives, Partnership Building across different tiers of government and incremental approaches to housing, upgrading and livelihoods (SDI 2015)
- ⁵ Interview with Nkokheli Ncambele, ISN Coordinator for the Western Cape, 4 May 2016, Cape Town
- ⁶ Interview with Nkokheli Ncambele, ISN Coordinator for the Western Cape, 4 May 2016, Cape Town
- ⁷ Capacitation includes introducing the network and its core activities to new communities (mobilisation), building saving schemes, profiling and enumerations (settlement-specific data collection), spatial mapping, community-based planning and learning exchanges (CORC and uTshani 2014: 24)
- ⁸ Interview with Moegsien Hendricks, CORC Technical and City Fund Manager, 24 April 2016, Cape Town