



## Integrated Land Management Institute

# INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

## Background

Namibia is moving towards an urbanised country. This is illustrated by the fact that at independence Namibia was only 28% urbanized by 2011 urbanization has already grown to 42% and current projections are that by 2020 urbanization would be 66% and more than 70% by 2030. As the urban population is growing the need for serviced land and housing is also growing. As Namibia has failed to respond through appropriate strategies to facilitate this change in the human geography of the country it resulted in the growth of poorly serviced informal settlements. These settlements are often far from jobs, services and social and economic amenities thus further increasing poverty level in the urban areas.

## What is an Informal Settlement:

The international description of "slums" are mostly used to describe informal settlements. The UN-Habitat (State of the Cities 2007/2008) define it on a household level as a group of individuals living under the same roof in an urban area who lack one or more of the following:

1. Durable housing of a permanent nature that protects against extreme climate conditions.
2. Sufficient living space which means not more than three people sharing the same room.
3. Easy access to safe water in sufficient amounts at an affordable price.
4. Access to adequate sanitation in the form of a private or public toilet shared by a reasonable number of people.
5. Security of tenure that prevents forced evictions.
6. The importance of defining what an informal settlement is because for government does not stipulate in their national documents what an 'informal settlement' is, although some local authorities have definitions and categories for them in their legislation.
7. The informal sector in Namibia is important because according to the latest Namibia Labour Force Survey, 2/3 of those who are considered to be employed find themselves within the 'informal sector' (NSA, 2016).

## The Scale of Informal Settlement

### Formation in Namibia

Informal settlement formation is mainly a post-independence phenomenon, especially in the urban centres outside of the communal areas. A few towns like Otjiwarongo and Okahandja (on a private farm) tolerated the formation of informal settlements, but by and large urban movements were controlled and the right to land and construction of their own houses in these urban areas was limited to white households.

This informal settlement picture changed after independence and sometimes came about through single quarters upgrading projects, where households were relocated. About 70% of urban dwellers are living in informal settlements or structures and recent informal settlement and back yard profiles (by Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia and informal settlement communities) indicate that 228,423 shacks in 308 informal settlement. The majority of the inhabitants form part of the 89% of the population that cannot afford commercial market related land and shelter solutions.

## Policies and Strategies regarding Informal Settlements

There is not a specific strategy targeting informal settlements on the national level, but the National Housing Policy (2009) recognised it as a key challenge to create an enabling environment for settlement upgrading by communities under the People's Housing Process:

*"for a sustainable development approach, which would institutionalize the involvement of low-income communities in planning and land management for both informal settlement upgrading and new block developments (community land tenure and institutionalizing the registration of the participating households), ensuring the availability of affordable land for shelter development with bulk infrastructure, recognizing the practice of incremental installation of individual services and construction of houses within the framework of appropriate standards, facilitating development*

*funding in the form of soft loans for shelter development and grants to local and regional authorities for the installation of bulk infrastructure and ensuring affordability with special service and revenue tariff structures.*

Furthermore a commitment is made in the policy that

*"The Government, in partnership with other role players, is committed to upgrade 75% of the informal settlements to formal townships by the year 2030. The attainment of this goal requires the mobilization of public, private and community resources and energy within the context of public, private and people partnership."*

Financing and implementation plans at a national level did not reach the required scale: A component of the Build Together Program facilitates finances for upgrading services in informal settlements. This used to be very small and only provide finance for improving basic communal services.

Legally the Flexible Land Tenure Act of 2012 targets the security of tenure for informal settlement communities and low-income groups. The regulations have been approved and pilot projects in Windhoek, Oshakati and Gobabis are under way.

## What was Implemented? Local Authority Initiatives

On local authority level various initiatives are being implemented. The City of Windhoek has a Development and Upgrading Strategy (1999). The city implemented registration of households, identifying and relocating households in dangerous areas, and re-block and install services in informal settlements. The security of tenure for these inhabitants have not been achieved, although leasehold agreements for some shack dwellers are in place. Otjiwarongo Municipality also started to settle households in planned areas. Support from Denmark (Ibis) and Luxembourg (Lux Development) assisted Oshakati (OSHIP, by Ibis), Rundu and Katima Mulilo (Lux Development) to implement town-scale upgrading work.

## Involving the Communities: From CLIP to Upgrading

1. Greenwell C: The Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia collected informal settlement information and has been doing mapping since 1999. In 2004 the City of Windhoek agreed for the Greenwell Matongo C community to plan and upgrade their community following a settlement enumeration. A comprehensive agreement was signed and the community managed with the support of Namibia Housing Action Group to plan their area and install bulk infrastructure. When allocation procedures started the City of Windhoek got involved. Although the re-blocking was done, blocks of land were registered and savings continued. However, the outstanding water bill appeared to prevent the sales agreements with the community.
2. The lack of data regarding informal settlements was a main challenge to the government. Therefore, in 2006 the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia with Namibia Housing Action Group agreed with the then Ministry of Regional, Local Government and Housing to do a national profile of informal settlements. The outcome of these profiles were combined and then it was found that there were already estimate that there were 134,800 households living in 235 informal settlements.
3. In 2012 Gobabis Municipality agreed to do a bottom up upgrading, following a city wide enumeration and a feedback session in Freedom Square in Gobabis. The area was mapped and a planning studio conducted with NUST. The layout was prepared, a 1,000 household re-blocking was done, the community installed their water lines and is currently installing their sewer lines. From the previous lessons learned, this upgrading is taking a partnership approach.
4. This has lead to a collaboration between stakeholders to work on a strategy that can be scaled up that contain the following: Focusing on basic services and security of tenure for the majority of the urban dwellers through:
  - Strengthen and Scale Up Community Land Information Program (CLIP) and other land related information systems
  - Participatory Planning for Informal Settlement Upgrading and green field site development through Inclusive Citywide Planning .

## Contact

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- Supporting community initiatives for installing services
- Secure tenure for households in informal settlements
- Building capacity to scale up delivery
- Learning by doing and feed into a national strategy and plan to ensure secure tenure and basic services for all: Fast Track land Availability (Learning from Informal Land Developers)

Learning is through practice and implementation and involve all the stakeholders in the process

For further information:

Choices in Freedom Square: Bottom up Planning in Gobabis  
[https://youtu.be/l1Xy\\_LSq7Js](https://youtu.be/l1Xy_LSq7Js)

Planning Studios  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VajgCsABKWI>

Document  
[http://sdfn.weebly.com/uploads/2/0/9/0/20903024/freedom\\_square\\_report\\_clip2.pdf](http://sdfn.weebly.com/uploads/2/0/9/0/20903024/freedom_square_report_clip2.pdf)

Community driven sanitation video (greenfields)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FEFuAiqsPal>

## References:

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UN-Habitat. State of the World Cities 2007/2008. Retrieved from : [http://mirror.unhabitat.org/documents/media\\_centre/sowcr2006/SOWCR%205.pdf](http://mirror.unhabitat.org/documents/media_centre/sowcr2006/SOWCR%205.pdf)

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