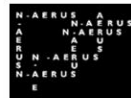






## With the Support of:



Global Platform for the Right to the City  
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Plateforme Globale pour le Droit à la Ville





## 1 Background

### 1.1 Informal settlements, upgrading approaches and global agendas

Despite important efforts, informal settlements remain a major challenge across the world. After a decrease between 2000-2014, the number of people living in this type of settlement grew. Currently, it is estimated that around one billion people reside in this type of settlements, the bulk of which are located in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (370 million), Sub-Saharan Africa (238 million), Central and South Asia (221 million), and Latin America and the Caribbean (109 million) (UN-HABITAT, 2020; United Nations, 2018).

It is important to highlight that this data helps to get a general overview of the challenge; however, it does not give a full understanding of it. There is a lack of more reliable and accurate data as well as consensus on terminology to better understand the magnitude and complexity of challenges around slums / informal settlements<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, important to understand and make visible the contribution of informal settlements to cities and society, including their value for the micro and macroeconomy. Therefore, it is vital to find ways to produce data, involving not only national governments and agencies but also local governmental actors and civil society. Furthermore, is essential to articulate different mapping traditions, including demographic statistics and community mapping and data production.

In the past decades, upgrading programmes and projects have been recognized and promoted as a suitable response for addressing the issues around informal settlements. The New Urban Agenda (NUA) places housing at the centre and highlights the need for mapping and analyzing informal settlements, as well as establishing adequate policies that promote their integration to the city, leaving no one behind. Issues such as participatory multi-level governance, coordination of public policies, city-wide planning, disaster risk management, and resilience, are also fundamental aspects of the NUA (United Nations, 2016). In addition, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) promote settlements upgrading. Goal 11, focuses on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; and specifically, target 11.1 seeks to “ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums” (United Nations, 2015).

### 1.2 COVID-19 crisis

Currently, the challenge around informal settlements is intertwined with the Covid-19 crisis. The unfolding of the COVID-19 pandemic and its specific geographic development within city regions has brought to the forefront the socio-economic cracks of current urbanization patterns. Poor neighbourhoods and particularly dense informal settlements are disproportionately at risk of becoming contamination vectors.

The current emergency and its impacts are and will particularly continue to affect urban areas, and disproportionately affect inhabitants living in precarious settlements, and those belonging to vulnerable groups, including the elderly, youth, and women, which tend face an overload of work linked to care activities and high levels of gender violence. However, it is important to acknowledge in the context of the current crisis, collaborative responses have emerged, showing possible alternatives and ways to move forward.

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<sup>1</sup> One important task of the Global Community of Practice is going to be on elaborating operational definition of terms. In this concept note we use different terms interchangeably.



This moment of crisis is also an opportunity to re-discuss the fundamentals of cities and the benefits of urban development: What cities do we want to live in? And how can we best achieve them? In a similar vein, the global Community of Practice aims at launching a broader discussion on informal settlements and upgrading initiatives, as well as their larger role in urban development and in the quality of life of inhabitants.

## 2 Discussions across regions

During the year 2020, several events (debate as well as outreach) were organized and knowledge products elaborated focusing on informal and precarious settlements.

### 2.1 Latin America and the Caribbean

In Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) during 2020, discussions on informal settlements and upgrading approaches were fostered by the Housing Laboratory (LAVs)<sup>2</sup> of the Urban Housing Practitioners Hub (UHPH).

Throughout the discussions it was recognized that upgrading approaches continue in force in the region, seeking the integration of informal settlements into the city; and that the bulk of upgrading experiences tend to include investments in infrastructure and programs and projects for addressing social issues; and adopt a city-wide approach, considering wider urban land planning processes, including the scale of the city-region which in the context of the climate crisis and disaster risk is of major relevance.

Furthermore, several LAC countries have incorporated the “social function of the land” or the “right to the city” in their national legal frameworks, which has permitted to intervene in “land with non-clear ownership, public land and even private or environmentally protected areas” (Rossbach et al., 2021).

More recently, upgrading experiences have tended to build on territorial and multiscale alliances in order to address more complex challenges in LAC cities including the Covid-19 crisis, which has revealed that the co-production of knowledge and responses (between state and civil society) result in more relevant and effective interventions and solutions (UHPH, 2020c).

Moreover, multi-scalar and sectorial arrangements are being promoted in precarious settlements to provide urban services and improve the economy (UHPH, 2020b). Lastly, a trend is emerging around the integration of a green perspective for housing construction, urban infrastructure, and other productive sectors.

Lastly, the UHPH publication “State of the art of housing and habitat in LAC” (UHPH, 2020a) stresses the importance of co-considering several elements in slum upgrading interventions (Table 2).

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<sup>2</sup> LAVs are “workshops where the research and practice of different sectors (public, private, social, academic, among others) and scales (subnational, national, regional) converge to discuss and analyse knowledge and experiences regarding issues related to housing and habitat in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)” (UHPH, n.d.)



*Table 2 Key messages upgrading interventions*

- Address structural causes of informality, access to land, and urban inequality for successful and long-lasting results. Specifically, it seems key to analyse land markets characteristics and dynamics.
- Follow up of upgrading interventions as urban and social integration are medium term results that can only be achieved through maintenance.
- Integrate an environmental perspective and climate-related actions into the upgrading interventions.
- Consider the development of policies, land prices and possible displacement dynamics related to slum upgrading.
- Develop strong social components as part of resettlement and relocation processes, recognising the right to the city.
- Evaluate scope and impact of upgrading regarding the NUA and SDGs in order to scale interventions at city and national levels.
- Articulate upgrading programmes and projects with national urban and territorial policies to guarantee long-term processes.
- Define with accuracy slum upgrading investments, costs, and financing models.

Source: UHPH (2020a)

Discussions in the LAC region fuelled a collaboration among different institutions<sup>3</sup> that resulted in the elaboration of the “Decalogue for Participatory Slum Upgrading”, which is a call for neighbourhood upgrading that articulates territorial governance, public policy, infrastructure provision, territorial planning, political recognition, social diversity, solidarity economy, knowledge dialogue, collective memory, and climate justice.

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<sup>3</sup> Cities Alliance, Habitat for Humanity, TECHO, Habitat International Coalition, COINVITE, UCLG Committee, RIVHA, UHPH, DPU-Bartlett UCL, Global Platform for the Right to the City and UN-Habitat



Figure 2 Decalogue for participatory slum upgrading

# DECALOGUE FOR PARTICIPATORY SLUM UPGRADING

## Roadmap for Latin America and the Caribbean



<h3>1. TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE</h3> <p>Slum upgrading is a long term and multi stakeholder political commitment to guarantee the right to the city of the diverse 'barrios populares' impacting positively the city as a whole.</p>  <p>Right to the City Components</p> <p>POSITIVE SOCIAL FUNCTION</p>	<h3>2. PUBLIC POLICY</h3> <p>Slum Upgrading should be part of housing and public health policies committed to implement the social and ecological function of property and prevent evictions.</p>  <p>Right to the City Components</p> <p>POSITIVE SOCIAL FUNCTION</p>
<h3>3. INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION</h3> <p>Slum upgrading needs to secure universal access to quality essential public utilities, health services, digital connection and social facilities under public/community management.</p>  <p>Right to the City Components</p> <p>QUALITY PUBLIC SPACES AND SERVICES</p>	<h3>4. TERRITORIAL PLANNING</h3> <p>Slum upgrading requires to have a territorial and multi scalar approach, led by inhabitants in a multilevel inter organisational alliance.</p>  <p>Right to the City Components</p> <p>EMERGING POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS</p>
<h3>5. POLITICAL RECOGNITION</h3> <p>Slum upgrading must promote human rights protection to achieve a city free of discrimination and committed to avoid the stigmatization of 'barrios populares'.</p>  <p>Right to the City Components</p> <p>NO DISCRIMINATION</p>	<h3>6. SOCIAL DIVERSITY</h3> <p>Slum upgrading should focus on care with an intersectional approach that promotes the equitable participation of women, girls, LGBTQIA+, migrants, and racialized population in decisions about the territory.</p>  <p>Right to the City Components</p> <p>GENDER EQUALITY</p>
<h3>7. SOLIDARITY ECONOMY</h3> <p>Slum Upgrading programs that promote a green productive reactivation that supports food sovereignty and the popular, solidarity and care economy.</p>  <p>Right to the City Components</p> <p>POPULAR AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMY</p>	<h3>8. KNOWLEDGE DIALOGUE</h3> <p>Slum upgrading should be community centred, negotiated, and co-produced based on protected territorial data and local knowledge to coordinate effective interventions.</p>  <p>Right to the City Components</p> <p>COLLECTIVE CITIZENSHIP</p>
<h3>9. COLLECTIVE MEMORY</h3> <p>Slum upgrading must strengthen a culture of collective care and human security drawing from inhabitants' collective memory and the psico-social support to community leaders.</p>  <p>Right to the City Components</p> <p>INCLUSIVE CITIZENSHIP</p>	<h3>10. CLIMATE JUSTICE</h3> <p>Slum upgrading needs to work in tandem with climate justice actions, risk reduction efforts and strength resilience from an ecofeminist and intergenerational approach.</p>  <p>Right to the City Components</p> <p>INCLUSIVE SOCIAL-URBAN LIVELIHOODS</p>

Coalition



Source: Decalogue for Participatory Slum Upgrading (2020)

## 2.2 Africa and Asia

Building on the discussion in LAC and seeking to broaden the scope and capture slum upgrading challenges and solutions in different world regions, two Urban Thinkers Campus (UTC) were organized to learn from promising examples of slum upgrading in Africa and Asia. Specifically, insights from Kenya, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Thailand were presented and discussed. (*Slum Upgrading in Asian Countries Learning Globally from Local Best Practices*, 2020; *Slum Upgrading in Sub Saharan Africa Learning Globally from Local Practices on City-Wide Strategies to Address Informality*, 2020).

During the UTCs in Africa and Asia participants predominantly recognised:

UTC Africa	UTC Asia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the magnitude of the challenge of slums, which is expected to increase due to Covid-19 crisis effects, including poverty and inequality.</li> <li>the complexity of the challenge of implementing comprehensive upgrading approaches, and the limited results and coverage of current slum upgrading interventions.</li> <li>the role of the COVID-19 crisis as an event that has exposed poverty, inequality, and the digital divide, as well as an opportunity for change and action.</li> <li>the vital role of community participation in upgrading processes.</li> <li>the need for translating the NUA and SDGs into subnational policies regulations and interventions, institutionalising slum upgrading.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the challenge of slum upgrading and ambitions in a context of structural inequality that has been exposed by Covid-19 and is expected to continue in the following years.</li> <li>the importance of scaling up, upgrading interventions, and developing at the same time preventing actions.</li> <li>the need for participation and collaboration across sectors.</li> <li>the important role of develop land and access mechanisms; and</li> <li>the importance of recognising slum communities.</li> </ul>

In addition, through the UTC the following key challenges emergent:

UTC Africa: land management, rigid planning norms and regulations, ambiguous policies, community participation, funding, coordination among actors, operation and maintenance, future increase of slum population due to urbanisation and Covid-19 crisis, and lack of or inadequate data.

UTC Asia: fully acceptance of slum upgrading as solution vis a vis resettlement options; lack of recognition of the right to the city for slum dwellers and recognition civil society participation; low capacity of local governments to form partnerships and deliver public services (institutional capacity); community participation and community database; weak city governance and civil society participation in planning processes; weak coordination and capital spending in infrastructure, limited political will and commitment; lack of preventing actions vis a vis slums



development; financing and loan facilities; and inadequate policy frameworks and enabling environment.

Lastly, the following alternatives and approaches emerged

#### UTC Africa

- a) incremental and affordable approaches, finding strategic entry points, prioritising interventions, and developing diverse solutions and processes.
- b) learning platform strategies, gender-sensitive and inclusive approaches (slum dwellers as equal partners), institutionalisation of co-production and participation processes (including private sector)
- c) City-wide slum upgrading interventions, influencing city-wide planning and not just developing more interventions.
- d) fostering slum upgrading interventions together with housing policies (housing production).

#### UTC Asia

- a) integrated approaches; for instance: basic infrastructure, housing provision, land, housing finance, spatial planning, social economy
- b) recognition of the contribution and value of citizens living in slums and with rights to services
- c) Develop slum upgrading approaches together with alternatives to informality
- d) Address legacies of cities that contribute to the development of slums.
- e) Finding a plurality of modes for accessing land (not in the periphery of cities that are far from everything). It is vital to find ways to make land available and accessible to be funded

### 2.3 Preparatory process for the Global Session

In preparation for the Global session on settlements upgrading, two meetings were organized in April 2021. Among others, during the preparatory sessions, the importance of adopting a programmatic approach and exploring alternatives housing solutions were acknowledged. With regards to this last point, it was stressed that traditional housing policies are oftentimes not sufficient; consequently, novel ways are needed to generate alternatives policy and program. During the session, it was highlighted that adopting an integrated and feminist perspective, articulating an intersectional approach and focusing on care are important considerations. Lastly, there was a call to recognise and make visible informal areas actors, capacities, and contributions.

In addition, during the preparatory sessions the following elements emerged as important to discuss in the establishment of a global community of practice:

- Reflect on the conceptualization and terminology of “slum” and “slum upgrading”, and novel ways to produce data about informal settlements.
- Determine entry points or articulations with other themes (such as climate change or health) to mobilize stakeholders and resources around upgrading approaches
- Find ways to address the effects and implications of the COVID-19 crisis informal settlements, considering the opportunities and alternatives this crisis has also fostered.





### 3 Objective

The events and activities in Africa, Asia and ALC contributed to share knowledge around informal settlements and upgrading approaches, as well as to foster dialogue among actors and institutions across regions, resulting in the identification of trends and lines for action and research. Building on the above, the aim of this global session is to gradually establish a community of practice across the different world regions, articulating situated knowledge, practices and stakeholders with global discussions and agendas. Accordingly, the objectives of this session are (i) to validate and share key messages emanating from the discussions with various institutional partners in different world regions; (ii) explore the relevance and specific ways in which the global community of practice can impactfully operate; (iii) establish concrete next steps within and between regions and sectors to support the development of the global community of practice focused on comprehensive slum upgrading.

### Agenda

#### INTRODUCTION 15:55 – 16:00

- By Hector Becerril (CONACYT, RIVHA)

#### VIDEO 16:00 – 16:05

#### DIALOGUE 16:05 – 16:40

- Moderated by Hector Becerril

Participants:

1. **Lorena Zarate**, Global Platform for the Right to the City
2. **Juan Pablo Duhalde**, Techo
3. **Pablo Vitale**, ACIJ - Caminos de la Villa
4. **Carolina Gasparini Barbosa Heller**, Development and Housing Company of Belo Horizonte – Urbel
5. **Andrea Fernández Barrantes**, Ministry of Housing and Human Settlements of Costa Rica (MIVAH)
6. **Catalina Ortiz**, Development Planning Unit - University College London

#### CLOSING REMARKS AND NETWORKING 16:40 – 17:15

- By TBC

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