

**A LEARNING-BY-DOING APPROACH TO  
ACTIVE URBAN CITIZENSHIP IN UGANDA**

# **THE TOOLKIT**



A Learning-by-Doing Approach to Active Urban Citizenship in Uganda: The Toolkit

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## Contents

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### 1. Urban Citizenship in Uganda

- 1.1 Active Citizenship in Communities of the Urban Poor
- 1.2 The National Slum Dwellers Federation of Uganda (NSDFU)
- 1.3 ACTogether, Uganda
- 1.4 Transforming Settlements of the Urban Poor
- 1.5 Active Citizenship: A Learning-by-Doing Approach

### 2. The Toolkit

TOOL ONE	Enumeration and mapping
TOOL TWO	Partnerships for service provision
TOOL THREE	Community savings
TOOL FOUR	Forums for inclusive planning
TOOL FIVE	Community finance

### 3. Conclusion: “We’re not here for begging.”

## 1.1 Active Citizenship in Communities of the Urban Poor ---

Beyond the legal recognition of one's membership in society and the conferment of rights and responsibilities, active citizenship is the very essence of democratic governance and equitable development. The word citizenship itself has urban origins, derived – as it was – from the Latin word for city. And, while its implications have since expanded beyond urban spaces, its centrality to urban development debates persists. Indeed, as the world becomes predominately urban, debates surrounding citizenship can be expected to acquire greater urban significance than ever.

There is tremendous consensus in government, professional, and academic circles that an active and engaged citizenry should simultaneously strengthen and be supported by a responsive and accountable government. When such mutually reinforcing phenomena are at play, cities can move toward inclusive development and efficient growth. Critically, they will also be better positioned to combat the disillusionment and instability so prevalent in today's cities – particularly those in the Global South.

Despite widespread agreement on the value of active citizenship, the methods for promoting and facilitating it – particularly in communities of the urban poor – are less than clear. More often than not, governments struggle to genuinely engage their citizens, while citizens, on the other hand, frequently fail to understand and access the mechanisms through which citizenship can be exercised.

**Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI)** and its member urban poor federations in over 33 countries have developed a basket of tried and tested tools that address this longstanding challenge. Grounded in over 15 years of experience mobilizing communities, these tools allow organized communities of the urban poor to ensure participation in the democratic sphere is authentic, results-oriented, and inclusive of the most vulnerable. The tools – which national federations adapt to fit local realities – are utilized as part of what SDI has termed a **Learning-by-Doing Approach**, in which the urban poor engage and assemble their community members through a didactic process of practice, experimentation, and participation.

Critically, this is not simply a bottom-up pursuit of citizenship that is independent of the state. On the contrary, SDI federations persistently seek to engage local government in their efforts so that mutual and complementary rights and responsibilities are realized. SDI's experiences highlight the fact that active and effective citizenship is not a destination to be reached, but an ongoing process that requires persistent organization at the community-level.

**The purpose of this booklet is to introduce SDI's Learning-by-Doing Approach. To do so it will focus on the approach's application in Uganda, where the government and donor partners have recognized the methodology's strength and incorporated it into national slum upgrading programs. The booklet will highlight five tools that have been successfully deployed by the NSDFU.**

## 1.2 The National Slum Dwellers Federation Uganda (NSDFU)

The National Slum Dwellers Federation of Uganda (NSDFU) is a member of the Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI) network and currently boasts approximately 38,000 members in six urban centers across the country. Aside from Kampala, the Federation is active in the five secondary cities participating in the Ugandan Government's *Transforming Settlements of the Urban Poor Program* (TSUPU). The Federation consists of 477 community groups that save daily and meet at least once per week to discuss community issues and coordinate programs and projects to build upon their strengths and address their concerns. The savings schemes are networked at the regional and national level with their fellow savers. In addition, the groups are networked internationally with savers in over thirty countries.

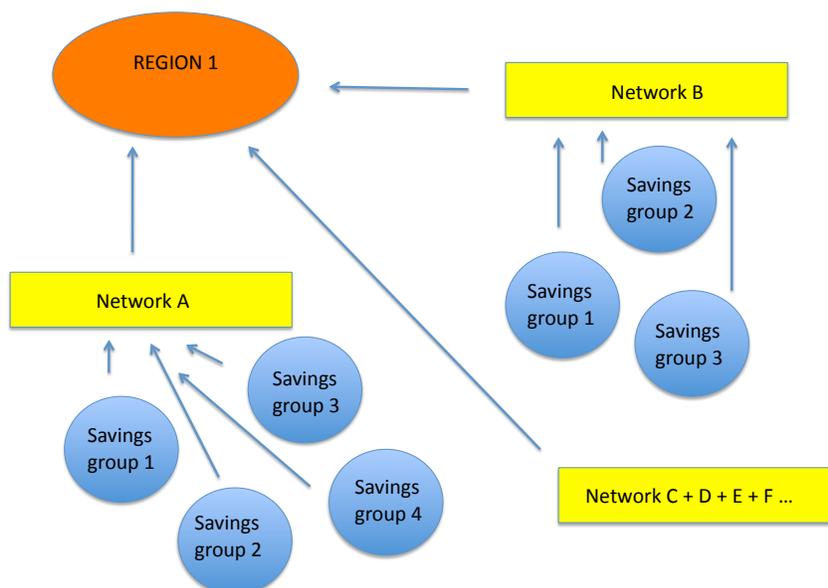


The NSDFU has mobilized savings schemes in Kampala (including Wakiso), Arua, Jinja, Kabale, Mbale, and Mbarara.

Kampala: 150 schemes  
Arua: 106 schemes  
Jinja: 48 schemes  
Kabale: 40 schemes  
Mbale: 68 schemes  
Mbarara: 65 schemes

As of December 2012

In each city (or 'region' of the federation) savings groups are networked as shown in the diagram below. Network and regional meeting take place monthly for planning and accounting purposes. This is essential for building an self governing urban poor organization. Regional representatives meet bimonthly at the National Executive Council (NEC) meeting.



### **1.3 ACTogether, Uganda**

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ACTogether is the national support NGO charged with providing technical and financial assistance to the National Slum Dwellers Federation of Uganda (NSDFU). ACTogether, established in 2006, facilitates processes that develop organizational capacity at the local level and promote pro-poor policy and practice in Uganda's urban development arena. ACTogether strives to create inclusive cities with united and empowered communities of the urban poor who have the capacity to voice, promote, and negotiate for their collective interests.

In partnership with organized communities of the urban poor, ACTogether works to increase access to secure tenure, adequate shelter, basic services, information, and many of the other building blocks required for healthy communities. The primary strategy for achieving these aims is to support the development of a strong and active urban poor federation. Support takes the form of resource mobilization, partnership support, technical assistance, capacity-building, leadership and management support, outreach, advocacy, research and documentation.

### **1.4 Transforming Settlements of the Urban Poor**

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The Transforming Settlements of the Urban Poor in Uganda (TSUPU) programme is a partnership initiative undertaken by the Government of Uganda supported by partners in Cities Alliance. It aims to align urban development efforts at the national government, local government, and community level in order to promote inclusive and sustainable urban development. This national-level programme has explicitly recognized the value of SDI's Learning-by-Doing methodology to active citizenship and incorporated it as a central component of the TSUPU implementation strategy. The recognition afforded the methodology as part of the program has enabled the NSDFU to scale up the approach and institutionalize productive partnerships to promote sustainable citizen engagement.

TSUPU's specific objectives are to:

- a) Develop a national urban policy that will guide sustainable urban development in Uganda, ensure the empowerment of local governments, and reinforce the importance of active community participation.
- b) Build the capacity of local governments to strategically manage urbanization.
- c) Empower organizations of the urban poor to actively engage in local development.**
- d) Focus on secondary cities (Arua, Jinja, Kabale, Mbale, and Mbarara)

## 1.5 Active Citizenship: A Learning-by-Doing Approach

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The third aim of TSUPU, to “empower organizations of the urban poor to actively engage in local development,” has been the principal focus of the NSDFU and its support-NGO, ACTogether. This aim is consistent with the aims of slum dweller federations throughout the SDI-network and the Government program has provided space for the NSDFU to expand its work in this area. For the NSDFU, a Learning-by-Doing Approach, which emphasizes the belief that practice, experimentation, and participation are the best vehicles for learning in communities of the urban poor, constitutes the most efficient and effective strategy for promoting active and engaged citizenship.

Experience has shown that learning in workshops and training seminars reaches few in urban poor communities and is rarely internalized and operationalized as envisioned. Moreover, such an approach fails to appreciate the interconnectedness of the components of citizenship and the way it is shaped by the experiences of the community itself. In workshops, the knowledge to be imparted comes from outside of the community and is often less than relevant to, or cognizant of, local dynamics. Conversely, when communities interact with civic processes using Learning-by-Doing methodologies, the process is inherently relevant to community dynamics, and the community is able to refine, internalize, and mold the process to suit their local realities. The approach has proven to encourage participation and civic engagement of a higher order.

***Describing a Learning-by-Doing methodology and packaging it into a neat toolkit is not an easy task and, in fact, is contrary to the learning approach of SDI. This toolkit, therefore, should be seen as a supplement to the peer-to-peer exchange of the federations. Each tool is outlined briefly, followed by a simple Q&A, followed by insights from NSDFU members based on their experiences.***

The following six tools comprise the community toolkit:

TOOL ONE	Enumeration and mapping
TOOL TWO	Partnerships for service provision
TOOL THREE	Community savings
TOOL FOUR	Forums for inclusive planning
TOOL FIVE	Community finance
TOOL SIX	Peer-to-peer exchange



A key tool for promoting active citizenship in communities of the urban poor is enumeration and mapping. This well-established SDI tool involves slum dwellers collecting and analysing data from their settlements, often at city-wide scale. To collect the data communities formulate and administer their own enumeration forms (household questionnaires). The uniquely rich information gathered by slum dweller federations is a powerful tool for communities pursuing active citizenship. It fosters an accurate understanding of the local environment, facilitates more effective and targeted community negotiation for services, and empowers communities to engage other urban development stakeholders as equals with invaluable information to contribute. It should also be noted that enumeration and mapping are important vehicles for building community cohesion and the capacity for collective action in slum settlements.

### **What kind of information does the NSDFU collect?**

Enumerations are essentially community-conducted censuses that collect data on urban attributes such as: a) physical shelter characteristics; b) land tenure arrangements; c) occupant information; d) commercial spaces; e) household income and expenditures; and f) available services.

### **How does enumeration promote active citizenship?**

Information is power. Community participation is much more meaningful when it is informed. During enumeration communities gather information government does not have and it helps to level the playing field when the two parties come together. Both parties can discuss from a position of authority. When communities gather information for themselves they trust that the information is accurate and they have ownership of it.

### **Why does the NSDFU go from house to house? Wouldn't it be easier and cheaper to do a sample survey?**

Yes, it would be cheaper and easier, but the NSDFU realized that conditions can vary tremendously from one settlement to another within the same city. To plan effectively the unique characteristics of each slum settlement must be understood.

### **Has the NSDFU done any enumerations?**

Yes. The NSDFU has completed 5 city-wide slum enumerations. These were completed in Jinja, Arua, Mbale, Mbarara, and Kabale. The reports have been launched and endorsed by the municipalities. The federation has also conducted settlement enumerations and profiling in: Kisenyi I, II, and III; Bwaise; Kinawataka; and Kireka.

### **How is the enumeration information being used?**

NSDFU has used the information to plan slum-upgrading projects in each of the five municipalities and prioritize others for 2013. They have taken the information to the Municipal Development Forums to lobby for Community Upgrading Funds and improved services. They have used it to negotiate with officials in the municipal planning and budgeting committees of the municipalities and even negotiate seats for themselves on these committees. The information is vital to the negotiations the federation has to secure land tenure for members.

### **What does land tenure have to do with citizenship?**

Secure land tenure is critical to exercising ones rights and responsibilities as a citizen. When slum dwellers live in fear of eviction their sense of belonging to a place is compromised and hence their incentive to participate is low. Slum dwellers are often considered illegal squatters, thus not entitled to the citizenship rights of other urban residents. In actual fact many slum dwellers have valid claims to the land upon which they reside, but they need to be organized and informed enough to know this and know how to defend their right to the city.

### **Why does the federation engage other stakeholders in the enumeration if they can do it themselves?**

Engaging other urban development stakeholders in the enumeration process helps to build partnerships between organized communities and actors such as government, academia, and NGOs. When the federation invites others to participate they are inviting them to witness first-hand the power of the urban poor to act as central players in the upgrading of informal settlements.

*In communities we know the number of settlements, services and origins of the people. We know how they spend their money and how they would like to develop their areas. You cannot plan from the office but if you go to the ground and speak to people and learn from them it can help you plan better.*

Katana Goretti, Treasurer of Ugandan Federation



*I have also been on the enumeration team. The enumeration report has enabled us to come up with many projects: a sanitation unit in Masese, street lighting in Masese, a sanitation unit at Ripon, a stone-pitched drain in Rubaga, street lighting in Mpumudde, and electricity extension to Kawama. It has also helped us to make other proposals which are there. It has also enabled me to partner with our municipality and sit on the Municipal Development Forum executive committee. Here we can encourage even other communities to come up with projects and proposals. Our enumerations have also helped us to fight eviction in Kikaramoja. Through our efforts, we have also managed to move from the municipality to go to the neighboring town councils.*



Edith Samia, NSDFU member, Jinja

*We conducted citywide profiles in 2010 and enumerations last year. These exercises have helped us in identifying what we really need in our slums. We have a project under construction - a sanitation unit in Kizungu settlement. This will improve some of the sanitation challenges we identified. It has also helped mobilize many more people in the federation and we feel the future is bright for the federation.*



Sarah Nyamwiza, NSDFU member, Mbarara

*All the Mbale settlements have been profiled and enumerated. The exercise of enumerations was good and helped us mobilize more people into the federation and get information we need to plan. In some areas we were chased while doing the enumerations with accusations over the stealing of land, but we keep mobilizing people so that they can understand us. Then they want to join the federation. The enumeration data has helped us while approaching our Council for services because now we know our communities so well and we know what lacks. For example, from our enumeration reports we were able to see the need of a toilet in Mission Cell, which is now an ongoing project*



Mutuba Issa, NSDFU member, Mbale



Service provision has become an increasingly urgent challenge in cities throughout the developing world. In slums this challenge is most acute and there is growing consensus that the solution is beyond the capacity of any one actor: whether community, government, or the private sector. The sheer number of those living without services requires creative partnerships be sought. Throughout the SDI network, partnerships between organized communities and local authorities have proven to be an effective tool for delivering services that are better targeted, better managed, more sustainable and less expensive than purely state-managed initiatives. Such partnerships represent mutual acknowledgement of rights and responsibilities and as each party learns to trust the other experimentation and innovation grow, along with a more meaningful citizenship experience for the urban poor.

### **What is the difference between partnering with an 'organized community' and a regular community?**

Of course most communities are organized in some fashion, but in order to maximize the authenticity of a partnership with communities they must be organized to be able to gather information, form a collective agenda, and negotiate with the relevant stakeholders. If they are not organized or equipped with some simple knowledge and tools they can easily be manipulated into the agenda of others. When organized, communities can defend their own agenda and the role they should play to fulfill it.

### **How can partnerships between organized communities and government promote active citizenship?**

Citizenship involves communities and government knowing their respective rights and responsibilities. Government has the duty to provide services, but communities also have a duty to maintain their environment and public facilities in a manner that promotes sustainability. When communities and government partner with each other they can make their interventions more sustainable and scaleable because the responsibility for design, implementation, and maintenance is shared.

### Is the NSDFU partnering with government to increase service provision?

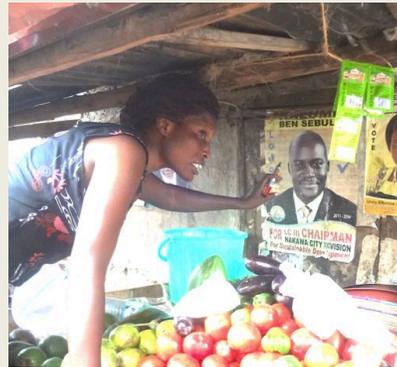
Yes. The NSDFU has partnered with government to construct sanitation units (with bathrooms, toilets and community halls) in Nakawa, Jinja, Mbarara, Kawempe, and Mbale. In most cases the municipality has provided land for the project and technical support. In Arua the NSDFU partnered with the municipal council to extend water access to 3 slum settlements. As part of the TSUPU financed Community Upgrading Fund, the NSDFU also negotiated for drain construction, water springs, and malaria channel de-silting projects.

### How can partnering with communities help to better target service provision?

The enumeration tool enables communities to determine those in most need of services and the types of services they are most in need of. The enumeration can also reveal the capacity to pay for services where this is relevant. There are countless examples of services that were extended to communities that were not prioritized by the local population and were thus not maintained and quickly fell into disrepair.

*Some partners treat us as backwards. They think we don't have ideas. But, when we come up with our enumerations we are doing better than them because we know what is happening in the community and what we need. We can't wait for government to do everything. Many NGOs in the community come with their funding and they have to do certain things. Many times they come for a short time, one or two years, and do what they had funding for and then leave.*

Anyango Goretti, NSDFU member Nakawa



*Unless communities partner with government, program implementation is very poor. In partnerships, you realize that every stakeholder has a key role to play. One must make sure that he or she fulfills his or her role," she explains. "The right partner is one who sees and accents the way that you are, one who embraces the activities that you do – so that you move together. One also respects the way that you do your thing, and one does not impose.*

Sarah Nandudu, Vice Chairperson NSDFU





Savings is the most fundamental tool in the SDI tool-box. It is the elemental organizing and mobilisation strategy in each and every member federation. National federations are comprised of hundreds, sometimes thousands of savings groups, which save daily and meet weekly to not only review their collective account and audit their savings, but also to exchange ideas and advice, and debate strategies for improving life and livelihoods in their settlement. It is in these savings groups that the seeds of a collective experience of citizenship are sown. Thus, savings must be acknowledged as a tool for far more than the mobilization of financial resources. Federation savings build trust, collective responsibility, and management capacity in communities of the urban poor.

### **How do federation savings groups manage slum dwellers' savings?**

In each savings group in Uganda there is a collector and a treasurer. The collector is responsible for the door-to-door collection of the daily savings of members. NSDFU members save at least 100 shillings per day. The monies collected are recorded both in the *collector's book* and in the individual's *savings book*. The collector is then responsible for giving these funds to the treasurer. The treasurer records all transactions in the *treasurer's book*. The treasurer is also responsible for banking the savings, which is typically also done on a daily basis. The treasurer must keep all bank receipts and present these to the group at weekly meetings.

Women constitute the majority of collectors and treasurers. While men are not excluded from these roles women have proven to be well-suited to these roles owing to their intimate knowledge of the community. In each savings group there is also an auditing committee that is responsible for auditing on a weekly basis to reconcile the collection and withdrawal records of the collector and treasurer. All financial transactions and loan approvals will be noted in the group's meeting minutes, recorded by the group secretary.

### **How does savings promote active citizenship?**

Active citizenship is about more than an invitation to a workshop or forum to air your concerns. It is about being informed enough to participate in decision making. For the urban poor, information is often unavailable and becoming informed as an individual often carries less influence than an informed collective. Daily savings brings communities together to become informed as a critical mass in order to address the power imbalances that often inhibit participatory governance. Federation savings groups see savings as uniting the community and build collective capacity to address larger issues, issues that impact upon more than simply the members of a particular group. Traditional savings associations work to the benefit of the members of the group, whereas savings groups in the federation use these groups as the building blocks of community institutions that enable them to address and invest resources in issues that affect the entire community/city and stretch beyond those of livelihoods alone.

### **Does the NSDFU save?**

Yes. Members of the NSDFU save daily. They save at least 100 shillings per day to their savings group and 100 shillings per day to the national federation urban poor fund, SUUBI. Members can take small loans from their savings groups as individuals and larger loans from SUUBI as a group for upgrading projects. As of December 2012, the federation had 924 million shillings on their daily savings accounts and 74 million on their SUUBI account. The SUUBI funds are used to leverage funds and other resources for community-driven slum upgrading initiatives from partners in government, the donor world, and private sector.

### **How are NSDFU savings used as leverage?**

The savings of the federation demonstrate slums communities' commitment to fulfilling their responsibility as citizens. Communities in the federation save to a national fund called SUUBI, which facilitates slum upgrading projects. Federation members cannot take loans from this fund as individuals, so a desire to uplift the communities they live in is the principle motivator for saving to this fund. This commitment and the organizational capacity of the federation is a powerful indicator of the safety of the investment in federation projects, which serves to attract/leverage resources from those seeking to make a sustainable impact on urban poverty.

### **What support has NSDFU been able to leverage?**

For the reasons outlined in the answer to the previous question, many actors have decided to support the collective agenda of the NSDFU. The Government of Uganda has deemed the federation the key community mobilizer in the *Transforming Settlements of the Urban Poor in Uganda* (TSUPU) program, municipalities have contributed land for federation upgrading projects in Jinja, Mbale, Arua, Kabale, Mbarara, Nakawa, and Kawempe, donors such as SELAVIP, Cities Alliance, and UN-HABITAT have brought resources to the federation agenda, as has advertising giant BBH from the UK.

*In my savings group I am the chairperson of the negotiation committee. This means that when we need to buy things, I can help to negotiate the price and also when we need to negotiate with council I can spearhead this process. At the region I am also on the negotiation committee. We work very closely with Jinja Municipal Council and the negotiation team is very active. When it comes to TSUPU [Transforming Settlements of the Urban Poor in Uganda], I am on the CUF [Community Upgrading Fund] advisory board. I have also been charged with assisting groups to write proposals for the CUF. I have learned how to solve problems with my community. And, mostly, I have learned how to save. Even if you have 100 shillings, you can save your little money. My community has also learned to solve problems for itself.*



Joseph Sserunjogi, NSDFU member  
Jinja

*By right now, we have almost 500 savings groups in the country. We have 62 networks. Women are more than men. The total membership is close to 38,000 and about 70 percent of these members are women. And they have done a very good job in all regions in which they are. They have shown the authority as slum dwellers, by initiating their projects to address their prioritized problems. Now with the federation people are much better at addressing their problems. They are much better at starting income generating projects and standing for themselves. They have gone so far at negotiating with local authorities – especially for land. You know me at first I was a mere person, I had no idea of savings. But savings has made me somebody else in the city of Kampala. I have created so many friends and I know how to solve my own problems without going here and there to cry.*



Hassan Kiberu, NSDFU Chairperson



Inclusive urban planning requires two key ingredients: 1) spaces for engagement between all urban development stakeholders – especially the urban poor; and 2) organizational capacity within communities of the urban poor so that their voices can be most efficiently and effectively communicated. This tool involves SDI member federations institutionalizing such spaces in order to institutionalize inclusive urban planning and active citizenship. These spaces take many forms, but the most promising in Uganda have been the settlement and municipal development forums.

### **What is a Municipal Development Forum?**

Municipal Development Forums provide the space for all urban development stakeholders to come together and plan for urban development. The municipal forums in Uganda are hosted by the Municipal Council, but they are governed by an executive comprised of representatives from slum dweller organizations, NGOs, academia, the private sector, and the municipal council.

### **What is a Settlement-Level Development Forum?**

As discussed earlier, each settlement within a given city has a unique set of characteristics. For an organized community of the urban poor to be truly representative of its people it has to bring ideas, aspirations, and concerns from the settlement level to the city, national, and international stage. At settlement level forums communities can discuss the most pressing concerns to their local community and these ideas can be communicated to the municipal level forum.

### **Does the NSDFU participate in the Municipal Development Forums?**

Yes. The NSDFU has committees that specifically focus on the forums and these committees work closely with the federation's enumeration committees and the negotiation committees to prepare for forums. Additionally, the federation is represented on the executive of each forum and the forum president is presently a NSDFU member in three municipalities. These forums are expected to be a key vehicle for prioritizing future investment in Ugandan cities and ensuring urban investment is transparent and accountable to the urban majority.

## How do forums promote inclusive planning and better governance?

The forums promote institutional strengthening on a number of fronts: on the one hand, communities enhance their capacity to articulate their priorities and negotiate within formalized structures; while on the other hand, the capacity of municipal governments to respond to their citizens will increase the relevance of management and planning systems, contribute to more effective and efficient development projects, and strengthen overall governance. Beyond mere project cooperation, the forums aim to institutionalize the role of communities in inclusive and sustainable urban development.

*As far as MDFs are concerned – one of the achievements is that the community – especially federation – have their voices heard in these forums and in fact in most cases we dominate. Because, we know our problems from the ground and we have our enumeration data to identify problems and support the projects we come up with. We have also managed to mobilize ward/settlement forums so we can discuss our problems and prepare to be as strong as we can for the MDF. We don't do this alone. We involve ward leaders, then we find that when we come to the planning process our voices are now being included. In Mbale our priorities are now reflected in the municipality's 5-year development plan. The forum was a key part of that achievement. Federation has become the champion of the forum. Actually as federation we are ready to mobilize forums in 9 new municipalities that have been brought on board in TSUPU. We are now specialized at this task!*

Semanda Twaha Bin Musa, NSDFU leader Mbale



*Municipalities should support such an endeavor by slum dwellers to improve their settlements. They should provide opportunities for people living in slums by providing services and approving the plans communities make for upgrading. We now see slum dwellers in forums and at council making informed demands – something we never saw before. I congratulate NSDFU on a fruitful 10 years and wish them a wonderful celebration. Urban governance is about inclusiveness. It is about including all stakeholders.*

Town Clerk of Kawempe, Francis Barabanawe



Formation of community development/urban poor funds at the national and/or municipal level is a potent tool for promoting active and productive citizenship in communities of the urban poor. SDI promotes funds that use fixed contributions from slum dweller federation members to leverage resources from the state and donors. Loans from such funds are used to capitalize development and/or livelihood projects prioritized by organized communities and often planned in partnership with local authorities. Community-managed urban poor funds are a powerful tool for correcting the power imbalances that exclude the urban majority from the development agenda formulation and implementation process.

### **What is an urban poor fund?**

Urban poor funds are a tool for financing community-driven development. They provide simple but structured access to development credit. The over-arching finance facility is located *outside* the existing formal financial framework, to offer community-based organizations (CBOs) finance and other forms of support for community-based development processes, on terms and via institutional arrangements designed around their own needs and practices — not those of the state or the private sector. This capacity building seeks to *enhance* the capacity of poor communities to address their own developmental needs on a sustainable basis.

### **How is an urban poor fund different from microfinance?**

Urban poor funds differ from microfinance institutions because they are designed and managed by the urban poor themselves. The finance is much more flexible when it comes from an urban poor fund than a microfinance institution, interest rates are lower, and repayments and loan conditions designed and monitored by the urban poor. Many microfinance institutions show a tendency to drift toward providing services for a low-risk client base. The poorest slum dwellers are thereby excluded and it is this base that SDI federations target.

### **The slum dwellers are poor, why should they take loans rather than get a grant?**

SDI has witnessed the way development grants often foster dependency, nepotism, and wastage which counters rather than strengthens a sense of citizenship in communities of the urban poor. Urban poor funds rely on community-based finance-management systems that *build communities*. The process and experience of accepting, designing, and managing community savings and credit schemes qualitatively improves existing networks, relationships, and common bonds, improving the social asset base, often dramatically. Additionally, grants can only be given to a few and are unreliable and unsustainable in the long-term.

### **Does the NSDFU have an urban poor fund?**

Yes. The in 2010 the federation in Uganda established a national urban poor fund called SUUBI (which means hope in Luganda). The federation also established a city-fund in Kampala called the Kampala Community Development Fund (KCDF). In Jinja, Mbale, Mbarara, Arua and Kabale the federation participated in the design and management of the Community Upgrading Fund (CUF). These funds have extended loans for housing projects, livelihood projects, slum upgrading projects and more.

*According to what I have seen with the NSDFU we have tried to achieve something. I myself, I was green about the federation, but when I joined they accepted me and asked me to be a facilitator for SUUBI. Before I became that, I was a farmer. I joined the Kawama Savings Group. I was doing good sensitization in SUUBI. At the beginning it was not simple, but eventually members picked interest. Now we have achieved a lot. So far in Jinja where I come from, for example, we have received about 300 million. My group in Kawama has constructed 6 houses and the second building of 30 units is at the ground floor. Also, the Rubaga Sanitation Unit project got a loan from Suubi and also the BAMU livelihood project. Other regions are also benefiting from the SUUBI and are taking loans for livelihoods and slum upgrading projects.*

Masolo Twaib, NSDFU member, Jinja





A key tool supporting the Learning-by-Doing process, and all of the tools presented in this booklet, is peer-to-peer exchange. SDI member federations conduct community-to-community exchanges in order for the knowledge acquired and lessons learned in one savings scheme to be shared amongst others for whom that knowledge is relevant. Exchanges take place at the local, regional, national, and even international level. On such exchanges, the visiting community participates in the activities of the host so that Learning-by-Doing is maximized. Partners from government are often invited on exchange with communities so that relationships are strengthened as both parties learn together and, in many cases, witness the fruits of such partnership in other localities.

### **Why is peer-to-peer exchange useful to building active citizenship in communities of the urban poor?**

When professionals enter slum settlements to teach, community knowledge is often undermined and the agency taken from the local to the professional. Even the most participatory approaches generally seek to ensure the acquiescence of the group to the ideas suggested by the "experts."

When communities are empowered to generate (through enumeration) and share (through exchange) information they can truly take charge of their own agenda. In addition, communities can take partners in municipal council on exchange to see the fruits of partnership in other cities or countries.

### **How does learning take place on an exchange?**

Communities in the federation propose exchanges to settlements, cities, or countries that have experiences they want to learn from. They submit a request for an exchange stating what they want to learn, why they think the exchange will help them, who they think should go on the exchange and what they will do to use the information gathered on the exchange when they come back. While on exchange communities learn-by-doing. They will, for instance, participate in the construction of houses, take part in a municipal forum, conduct an enumeration, or plan for an upgrading project in conjunction with their peers in another area. This learning-by-doing approach has proven to be a very effective means of transferring knowledge from one poor community to the next.

### Does the NSDFU use exchange and, if so, how has it helped them?

Yes. Since its inception the NSDFU – like all federations in the SDI network – has used exchange at the local, regional, national, and international level. The NSFU groups conduct regular exchanges between settlements and savings groups with heavy emphasis on savings and loans and income generating projects. At the national level exchanges have focused on project management and negotiation with government, while at the international level exchanges have, more recently, focused on the building of an urban poor fund and working toward city-wide slum upgrading. These exchanges have, for example: seen certain income generating activities like mushroom growing and candle making spread rapidly throughout the groups in the federation; have greatly strengthened the NSDFU's participation in Municipal Development Forums; and taught the NSDFU to construct using interlocking bricks and laadis.

### How does exchange build an urban poor movement?

When savings groups begin they will often focus solely on livelihood issues, but with time and greater exposure to federation tools through exchange, communities begin to formulate an urban agenda that looks beyond group members and toward transforming the settlements in which they live.

*I didn't know that I, as a community person, could learn and then teach others. As I talk, I am an engineer from the community! I didn't expect to have that idea. I went on an exchange to Tanzania in 2011 on July 12<sup>th</sup>. The exchange was for 2 weeks. We met with the National Housing from Tanzania. We found our friends from Arusha, Dodoma, and Dar es Salaam [federation members]. For communities we believe that we learn by doing, practically. We learned how to make tiles, interlocking bricks, and building. I myself had a chance to learn all those things and then we showed the housing officials what we had learned. I was selected to do the demonstration in front of the officials. I was very much pleased that what I have learned I have put it practice and done it successfully. When we came back we had to bring the idea back to our country. We had to call for a meeting and explain to our people and then we went to Jinja to teach practically. As I talk now we are using interlocking bricks now on our own housing project. We have a task to take people to each region and train them practically.*

Sarah Kiyimba Nambozo, NSDFU member, Mbale



## **“We’re Not Here for Begging”**

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The tools outlined in this toolkit are fundamental to the building of an active citizenry. The urban poor constitute the majority of the population in developing cities and their authentic participation in the development of those cities is essential. In Uganda, the National Slum Dwellers Federation of Uganda has used these tools to mobilize close to 500 savings schemes, start a housing project, negotiate for over 34,000 square meters of land for upgrading projects, construct sanitation units, community halls and water projects, secure 10 MOUs with government, conduct 5 city-wide enumerations, and establish a national Urban Poor Fund.

Each of these achievements was possible thanks to a learning-by-doing methodology, operationalized through the use of the tools outlined here. The tools have empowered and capacitated communities to know their rights and responsibilities as citizens and generate strategies for collectively fulfilling them.

“We’re not here for begging,” says Federation Chairman Hassan Kiberu. Using a Ugandan proverb Hassan captures the rights and responsibility concept eloquently. **“If you don’t help your neighbor to peel and pick the bananas: you do not go and ask him for juice.”** The Federation continues to peel and pick its bananas as active citizens of Uganda.



*Federation members wave their saving books in the air. December 2012*





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