Maximising Use Value

Action Guide for Informal Areas

Editorial

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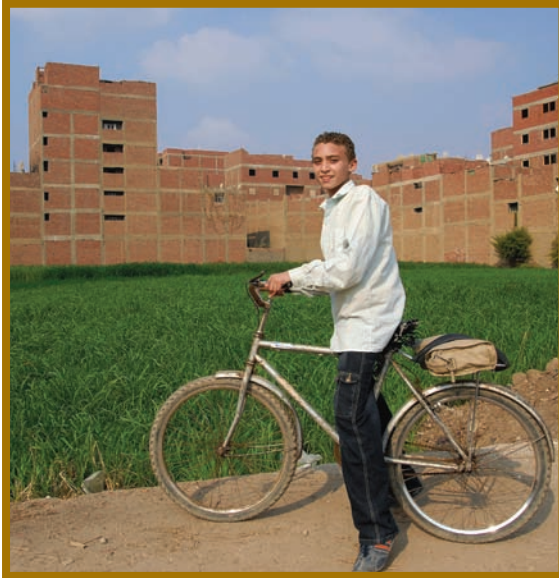
Every object or place has two values: an exchange *asset* value and a *use* value that is evident only when it is used. Residents in informal areas economise their limited efforts and they lack resources. Therefore, they maximise the utility of what they can manage and appropriate in terms of spaces, resources and services (use value). As a result, the urban and physical environments of informal areas have the advantage of being suited to the needs of their residents.

Acknowledging this fact, this *Action Guide* aims to guide the interventions of local government in upgrading informal areas towards complementing residents' efforts, nurturing the community self-help initiatives and maximising the perceived value in their neighbourhoods.

Introduction

This *Action Guide* addresses concerns of the local government in Greater Cairo when dealing with informal areas. It demonstrates that there are positive practices of local communities as well as potentials resulting from the urban fabric of such areas. These potentials counterbalance the problems that the local government is facing and minimise required interventions from authorities. The *Action Guide* proposes some practical actions to be taken by local government, that capitalise on the above mentioned advantages, highlighting the benefits for both the local government and the local community.

The *Action Guide* targets decision-makers at the three levels of governance (national, regional and local) and supports constructive interactions between them. It is also informative to the national government on local government operations and daily challenges, leading to appropriate support and empowerment to ensure effectiveness of the local government. For governors and governorate administration, the *Action Guide* outlines the direction of strategies that improve informal areas through partnership with local stakeholders. For district chiefs and their administrations, the *Guide* points out practical actions that yield direct positive impact on local conditions. Finally, the *Action Guide* promotes a participatory approach towards integrated upgrading of informal areas.

The common factor among the recommended actions is to give due attention to good planning of public spaces and local services. This should happen in consultation with local stakeholders and users, men and women, to develop their sense of ownership and their contribution to the operation and maintenance of local amenities. Local administration can use the *Action Guide* in a flexible manner to *enable* and *regulate* residents' activities and actions in a way that maximises their usefulness to the local community while mitigating their negative impact. Using this *Action Guide* thus contributes to practicing good governance.

How to Read the Guide

× This section lists challenges the local government is facing when dealing with informal areas in relation to one topic. These challenges are expressed in the way perceived by local government officials.

× Each topic is outlined on two pages.

✓ The conditions and built environment of informal areas sometimes offer ways of dealing with local challenges or at least helping local communities to cope with them. This section presents the positive practices of local communities, as well as the potentials resulting from the urban fabric of informal areas, hence offering a balanced view of the reality of living in informal areas.

Goal: Which goal to achieve?

"TO DO" Actions by Local Government

☐ This page always complements the opposite page; together they tackle one issue that local government has to consider when managing informal areas properly.

☐ The page presents practical actions to be taken by the local government whether on governorate or district level. These actions capitalise on the advantages and help the local government to overcome the challenges both mentioned on the opposite page.

☐ To highlight the legitimacy of the proposed actions, the box on the right demonstrates the benefits of applying the actions to both the local government and the local communities in informal areas.

Benefits

For Local Government

For Community

Street Vendors

×   Obstruction of vehicular street traffic due to uncontrolled presence of vendors on streets.

×   Obstruction of pedestrian movement due to uncontrolled presence of vendors on sidewalks.

×   Hunting down street vendors periodically.


Practices & Potentials

✓   Street vendors locate themselves where there is a demand and a high concentration of pedestrian movement to gain maximum exposure (e.g. neighbourhood entry points).

✓   Street vendors compliment what is offered by shops and offer it at low prices.

✓   Shop owners often support street vendors especially when they trade in complementary items.

Goal: Create economically lively markets

To overcome circulation obstruction:

☐ Regulate, license and organise street vendors in certain fixed locations of high demand, ensuring their economic viability.

☐ Design sidewalks to accommodate street vendors in the section of the sidewalk adjacent to the road (section C in diagram below), so as not to disturb pedestrian movement (section B) or shop extensions (section A).

Sidewalk cross-section   **Plan diagram of sidewalk**
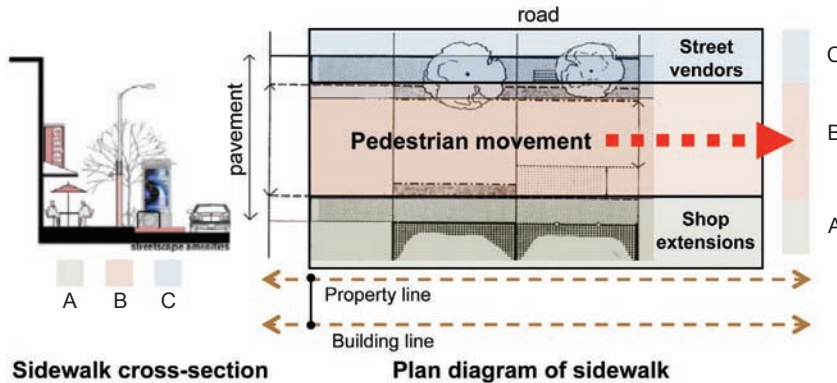
Benefits

For Local Government

Organised, yet lively, main streets with a civilised appearance.

Save the hassle of hunting down street vendors.

For Community

for Residents

Saving time, effort and money.

for Vendors

Economic prosperity.

Security.

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Garbage Collection

× Presence of garbage piles in streets.

× Discard of waste in water streams (Nile, drainage systems, canals etc.).

× Accumulation of garbage around markets, below bridges, unvisited areas etc.

Practices & Potentials

✓ Residents carry their garbage bags to garbage points on the main circulation streets.

✓ In some informal areas, resident participation in street cleaning accounts for around half of the total cleaning efforts exerted.

✓ Participation of commercial shops in street cleaning can amount to around one third of the total cleaning efforts exerted.

✓ NGOs participate in garbage collection.

✓ Active informal garbage collection sector.

Goal: Achieve garbage-free streets

- ☐ Develop a concrete plan determining clearly collection routes and time schedules as a basis for an integrated community-based solid waste management system.

- ☐ Acknowledge and facilitate community participation in garbage collection.

- ☐ Encourage community participation in monitoring the effectiveness of collection services.

- ☐ Focus district efforts on the efficient garbage collection from main streets.

- ☐ Locate collective garbage bins along main streets at frequent intervals with the required capacity.

- ☐ Secure more street cleaners on public holidays to maintain street cleanliness.

- ☐ Promote source segregation at homes.

Meet midway

Local Government ⸺✕⸺ **Civil Society**
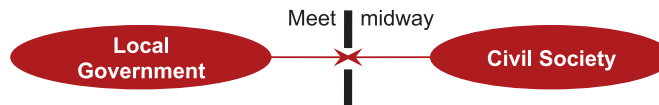
Benefits

For Local Government

Less burden on local government.

Improved efficiency of service delivery.

Less complaints from the community.

Improved image of district to outsiders and central government.

For Community

Community pride.

Raising the level of cleanliness and aesthetic appreciation of community members.

Positive impact on health.

Better living conditions.

Mass Transportation Stops

- × Uncontrolled crowdedness causes chaotic image at district entry point.
- × Transportation stops attract vendors, whose cars cause street congestion and obstruct traffic.
- × Litter accumulation point because of presence of crowds of people.
- × Sexual harassment of women and girls related to concentration of men (e.g. drivers, vendors).

Practices & Potentials

parking/loading microbuses

- ✓ Informal mass transit stops are created in key locations along main circulation routes close to district entry points and are easily accessible by foot.
- ✓ Selective shopping opportunities are right there: items to buy on the way home (like fruits and vegetables) or small items to buy on your way out of the district for leisure (e.g. sunglasses or mobile phone accessories etc.).

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Goal: Satisfy the mobility needs of the community

☐ Dedicate space for mass transit stops at district entrances (an estimated area of 1.500 - 3.000 m^2) with a separate lane for each destination.

☐ Provide shaded waiting/seating areas along the different lanes made of durable material.

☐ Provide waste bins at each waiting area.

☐ Dedicate and manage adjacent space for 8-12 street vending carts (along the route from mass transportation stops to main circulation streets in the area).

☐ Regulate and license informal mass transportation vehicles that are safe to use.

☐ Make available traffic management and policing at mass transportation stops.

☐ Incorporate maintenance and cleaning of mass transportation stops within the responsibilities of the local government unit concerned with their management.

Benefits

For Local Government

Avoid problems and fights at congested unplanned mass transportation stops.

Save the effort of chasing away street vendors.

Generate income through renting transport stops and vending spaces.

For Community

for Residents

Convenience of not walking too far.

Convenience to shop on the way home.

for Vendors

Guarantee a large number of potential shoppers.

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Traffic

× Traffic congestion (causing pollution, noise, delays etc.).

× Accidents caused by vehicles (e.g. microbuses and *Tuk-tuks*).

Practices & Potentials

✓ Residential streets discourage access by vehicular traffic, hence provide privacy and quietness.

✓ Low vehicular traffic compared to the population size.

✓ Walking is the most common way to move around within the district: the majority the residents walk to work, school and to go shopping.

✓ Shopping needs are all situated within the district and within walking distance.

✓ Congested vehicular traffic reduces the possibilities of fatal car accidents.

✓ Heavy traffic is restricted to main commercial streets reducing noise, air pollution and lack of privacy of dwellings.

Moving in the district

2% 4%

35%

4%

55%

- on foot
- minibus
- bus
- taxi
- private car

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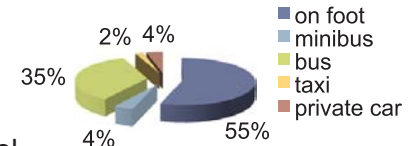
Goal: Improve mobility and living conditions in residential areas

☐ Sustain restriction of vehicular access into residential streets to encourage walking.

☐ Do practical and efficient traffic/road planning in consultation with microbus drivers and residents.

☐ Provide good quality means of mass transportation along all main vehicular traffic routes connecting significant nodes in the area (e.g. market entry points or service clusters).

☐ Sustain walkability through providing paved sidewalks along main streets.

☐ Sustain walkability by providing safe and frequent crossing points of all barriers: including vehicular main streets, waterways or railroad tracks.

☐ Pedestrian road crossings should be kept at street level while roads should be lowered (vehicular underpasses).

☐ Encourage use of non-motorised means of transportation such as bicycles by providing *ramped* pedestrian bridges at barrier crossings (tracks, waterways etc.).

Benefits

For Local Government

Less accidents.

Better emergency access.

Less resident complaints.

Less energy consumption.

For Community

More safe mobility to vulnerable population groups like children, women, elderly, handicaps, hence increasing their independence.

Less air pollution, less allergies.

Less transportation expenses.

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Food Markets

× No use of poorly located food markets.
× Accumulation of organic waste around them.
× Obstruction of vehicular traffic through informal markets.

Practices & Potentials

✓ Routes to and from self-organised food markets are safe from heavy vehicular traffic and accessible by foot from most residential streets.
✓ Buy fresh produce when needed without having to take vehicular means of transportation.
✓ Children go unaccompanied to buy daily food items which reinforces the safety of the neighbourhood.

Goal: Make available fresh produce within the district

☐ Locate food markets (fresh produce) along main pedestrian circulation routes within the neighbourhood preferably on the way to and from mass transportation stops.

☐ Locate neighbourhood service facilities such as the post office, internet cafés, barber shops, stationary shops etc. close to existing food shopping streets to make the neighbourhood a shopping street or "market street".

☐ Restrict vehicular access into those streets; they should be pedestrian streets with controlled access only to service and supply delivery vehicles.

☐ Provide parking for one delivery or service truck every 8-12 shops on either side of the street.

☐ Food shopping streets should be directly connected to many residential streets to sustain safe access on foot to a large portion of the population, uninterrupted by main vehicular streets.

☐ Pave entire street width (from building line to building line) to allow maximum access to pedestrian shoppers and easier cleaning.

Benefits

For Local Government

Trouble free operated markets.

Attractive service that may gain in popularity and grow to become one of the economic resources of the district.

For Community

Residents shop for all food items and frequent daily needs on foot along safe and continuous routes (stationary, photocopy, post office, internet cafés, repair shops etc.).

Distribution of Shops

× Inadequate and unclear regulations to control shop and workshop licensure.

× New residential buildings always reserve the ground floor for commercial use leading to haphazard and ad hoc emergence of shops.

× 'Mixed use' is negatively perceived by planners and many officials.

Practices & Potentials

✓ Distribution of commercial shops and workshops according to their catchment area, e.g. the number of customers they serve and how far these come from.

✓ Location of shop types that are vehicle dependent (appliance sales, car repair etc.), that serve a large number of clients and are used seasonally on main <u>vehicular</u> circulation routes (as these shops may attract clients from outside the district).

✓ Location of shops that fulfill everyday needs and services of residents (food items, barber, stationeries, ironer etc.) along main <u>pedestrian</u> circulation routes.

✓ Shops in residential streets are few and do not attract clients from outside the street.

✓ All residents buy their needed products within the district.

Goal: Regulate and monitor commercial activities effectively

☐ Regulate through licensure the distribution of commercial shops and workshops according to their catchment area.

☐ Locate shops types that are vehicle dependent (e.g. appliance sales, car repair etc.), that serve large numbers of clients and that are used seasonally on main <u>vehicular</u> circulation routes. These shops may attract clients from outside the district which is undesirable in inner-neighbourhood streets.

☐ Locate shops that fulfill daily needs and services of residents (food items, barber, stationeries, ironer etc.) along inner main <u>pedestrian</u> circulation routes.

☐ Do not widen residential streets to avoid attracting commercial businesses that would bring clients from outside the district.

Benefits

For Local Government

Commercial use distribution that minimises car-dependence decreasing the demand for parking and creating less traffic problems and congestion.

Concentrate monitoring efforts on specific locations.

For Community

for Residents

Saves time, money and effort.

Safe and easy pedestrian access to main commercial streets from residential streets.

for Shop Owners

Critical mass or concentration of shoppers.

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Playgrounds

× Lack of playgrounds and sports facilities for young boys and girls.

× Playgrounds and open space for leisure activities are given least priority in funding and land allocation.

× Youth centers are dominated by young males from 13 to 20+.

× Children playing in the street are sometimes the cause of nuisance to surrounding neighbors.

× Poor conditions of current playgrounds and playground areas adopted by the community.

Practices & Potentials

✓ Girls who have never played sports have been allowed to go to school premises for such activities after school hours because of the presence of supervision.

✓ Young men appropriate open spaces as football fields; they level it, clean it and sometimes add lighting so it can be used as a playground.

✓ Children's playgrounds and women gym facilities are priority demands in popular districts and informal areas.

Goal: Provide playgrounds

☐ Get approval from Ministry of Education to utilise public school playgrounds after school hours, operated and supervised either by the school administration or by a local NGO.

☐ Encourage schools to offer their outdoor school grounds and theaters for rent to private community activities (weddings, engagements, birthdays etc.), thus creating potential for income generation to support school upgrading.

☐ Support youth initiatives in appropriating open spaces as football fields, even on temporary basis, as long as it does not cause a nuisance to surrounding facilities or homes.

☐ Promote private sector sponsorship of upgrading youth centers, facilities and playgrounds.

Benefits

For Local Government

Provision of open space and playgrounds without the burden of managing them e.g. security, maintenance etc.

For Community

Sports facilities for both sexes of all ages.

Positive utilization of leisure time for youth .

Affordable venues to celebrate special occasions within the neighbourhood.

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Community Centers

× Community centers are often reduced to a large indoor space rented out for weddings and engagement parties only.

× Social facilities, such as youth centers or social clubs, are manipulated by local political leaders so that it is not attracting all on an equitable basis.

× Youth centers are used only by male youth (15 to 25) excluding girls of all ages and often younger boys.

Practices & Potentials

✓ Existing elementary school grounds have been successfully used to operate as community centers after school hours.

✓ Girls who have never gone out of home for any extra-curricular activity (performing arts, crafts, computer, music etc.) have been allowed to go to school premises for such activities after school hours because of the presence of professional supervision.

✓ Some private schools rent their open space to host community events such as weddings, birthday parties or sport events.

Goal: Facilitate social, leisure and cultural activities of the community

- ☐ Coordinate with the Education Directorate and school boards to allow supervised access to school facilities such as library, computer lab and indoor playrooms after school hours.

- ☐ Regulate evening activities in schools functioning as community centers to avoid that noise and inconveniences are disturbing residents.

- ☐ Participate in the planning of school locations to ensure that they are safely accessible on foot.

- ☐ Provide female staff as supervisors and trainers in community and youth centers to encourage girls to get access to those facilities.

- ☐ Provide playgrounds for games, other than football which is almost exclusively played by boys, e.g. playgrounds for basket or volley ball.

- ☐ Allow the utilization of public building rooftops as community centers for evening activities and outings.

- ☐ Coordinate with Ministry of Youth and Sports to operate youth centers for social development purposes; raising awareness and addressing the needs (and shortcomings) of both sexes.

Benefits

For Local Government

Provision of lacking services despite scarce resources.

Achieving equity and equality among community members (gender, age).

Less street fights of youth and children.

For Community

Afford recreational activities for the entire family within their own district.

Empowering women and girls to use leisure and sports facilities.

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Parks and Green Spaces

× No public green space in informal areas.
× High building and population density.
× Lack of space for leisure activities.
× Lack of green spaces negatively impacts on environmental conditions in the area.

Practices & Potentials

✓ A few green land pockets used for agriculture still exist in informal areas.
✓ Informal areas include primarily village cores and many residents originate from farmer families.
✓ Several irrigation canals still run through informal areas.
✓ Plant nurseries along irrigation canals and rivers are successful commercial projects providing visual greens along main streets.
✓ The few parks outside informal areas are heavily frequented on public holidays and used as family picnic areas.

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Goal: Provide open and green spaces in the dense urban fabric

☐ Introduce the concept of "urban agriculture" by buying and then managing or contracting out agricultural plots to provide the district with fresh produce → a *new* income generating activity.

☐ Preserve, manage and service the irrigation canals as leisure spaces for the community by providing seating, walking tracks and appointing supervision.

☐ Rent out sections of canal banks as plant nurseries while maintaining public access along them → a *new* income generating activity.

☐ Divide the responsibility between the district and the Cleaning and Beautification Authority of the governorate to clean and maintain green spaces regularly.

☐ Plan and manage commercial activities adjacent to parks and public greens to afford natural surveillance, particularly at night.

Benefits

**For
Local
Government**

Income generation through dual functions of public parks (leisure and production).

Contributes to environmental improvement.

**For
Community**

Inexpensive leisure opportunities within walking distance.

Job opportunity in farming "urban agricultural" plots.

Dual function of public parks ensures users' safety through natural surveillance.

Street Greens

× Public greens are often abused by misuse (grazing sheep, kids playing football, littering).

× Maintaining public lawns in arid weather is a burden on the district.

✓ Community members and organisations plant and water trees in residential streets.

✓ Cultural norms and a strong sense of community safeguards against the abuse of privately planted greens: Community members do not abuse what they feel belongs to them or their neighbours.

✓ Trees are more valued by the community than green lawns for practical reasons: they provide shade, are easier to maintain, take up less valuable ground space and are more visible as an aesthetic element and lead to improvement of environmental conditions.

Goal: **Beautify districts**

☐ Reward the community initiatives that are greening streets and public spaces by offering technical support in the form of horticultural know-how and elements (trees, seedlings).

☐ Regulate the location of private trees in public space to avoid obstruction of the public right-of-way (pedestrian or vehicular), yet be considerate of community values and needs.

☐ Focus local government efforts on the greening of public space in locations that are out-of-reach to community appropriation practices, e.g. along the most public vehicular streets accessing the area.

Benefits

**For
Local
Government**

Provision of green landscape without the burden of maintaining it.

Adopt activities that are appreciated by the local community.

**For
Community**

Beautification of public streets and spaces.

Occasional shading of streets and public spaces.

Culturally revered act of goodness.

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Safety

× Existence of some unlighted, deserted areas and streets.
× Weak police presence especially around the peripheral edges of informal areas.
× Few specific streets are controlled by groups of hustlers.
× Informal areas are often stigmatised and associated with high crime rates.
× Girls and women are discouraged from walking in the streets, especially at night.

Practices & Potentials

✓ Community contributes to lighting of streets by means of privately operated lighting fixtures outside their buildings and shops.
✓ The urban fabric contributes to safety in the following way:

narrow residential street with ground floor dwellings

prevents through-traffic of both vehicles and pedestrians

use of the street as an open space for residential activities

residents control and monitor the street against strangers

Safety

Goal: Achieve safe streets

☐ Allow only vehicles owned by residents to access residential streets by maintaining dead-end streets.

☐ Use material other than asphalt to pave residential streets spanning the entire width of the street from one building line to the other so that car access is restricted or slowed down.

☐ Avoid widening any residential streets to prevent it being used for through-traffic by vehicles.

☐ Recognise community surveillance as a form of community policing and encourage channels of communication between police force and community members.

☐ Allow residents to appropriate and extend activities onto the residential streets without considering it as encroachment to sustain their control over their street.

☐ React early to any concentration of illegal activity along any street such as drug dealing, drug consumption or prostitution.

☐ Focus street lightning efforts on deserted and side streets that are not lighted by the community.

Benefits

For Local Government

Less crime in the district.

Less burden on the local police force.

For Community

Increased feeling of safety which allows higher mobility for all age groups of both sexes.

Provision of Services

×   Shortage in resources (budgets, land etc.) for service provision, improvement or maintenance in informal areas.

×   Scarcity of public land in informal areas upon which to construct public services.

×   Community-initiated services are often of 'modest' or 'poor' quality while there is a demand for 'good' quality services from the middle and upper income groups.

×   Poor location of education facilities contributes to discontinuation of schooling, especially for girls (inaccessible safely on foot).

Practices & Potentials

✓   Community initiatives in education (private schools, voluntary tutoring), health (health clinics) and transportation (*Tuk-tuks* and minibuses) compensate for the shortage in services provided by the government.

✓   Community initiatives are a major source of employment for the residents in informal areas.

✓   Social solidarity among local community is the foundation that sustains local initiatives.

✓   Local initiatives in service provision are always demand-driven and, therefore, offer solutions appropriate to real needs and affordable to the local community.

✓   Girls are allowed to walk alone anywhere in the neighbourhood, but parents are concerned when they have to take mass transportation to go to school.

Goal: Satisfy community needs

☐ Sustain strong social ties and a sense of community which are essential to sustain local initiatives. This can be done through:
- Maintaining walkability in the neighbourhood to increase the opportunity to meet.
- Avoiding the widening of residential streets in order to keep them stranger-free, and thus strengthening the opportunity to appropriate them, nurture the sense of community and increase safety for women.

☐ Legalise, support and regulate community initiatives by NGOs, CBOs and community members to upgrade the quality of the services they provide (→ affordable quality standards).

☐ Provide community-initiatives with legal and administrative support by facilitating permits and providing information about laws, regulations and procedures, for example advising on how to acquire land, construct service facilities, connect infrastructure etc.

☐ Participate in deciding on school location to ensure that routes to schools are walkable and safe from traffic and harassment.

☐ Direct and mobilise funds/resources to support community initiatives.

☐ Develop service guides (governmental and non-governmental service provider and terms of service provision) by district's information centers or other entities.

Benefits

For Local Government

Private sector investment in service provision to achieve acceptable standards.

No underused services and waste of resources.

Less violations to tackle.

For Community

Affordable / appropriate services.

Less vulnerability.

More empowerment and propensity to invest in service provision and improvements.

More girls will go to school.

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Up-to-date Knowledge

× Local government faces difficulty obtaining accurate data about the population and physical development of the district due to its illegal development origins.

× Community has little knowledge of up-to-date development plans, project implementation schedules and service provision regulations.

× Dynamic character of informal areas and low penetrability of residential streets makes it harder to keep up with occurring changes.

× Shortage of funds and human resources to conduct periodic surveys for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

Practices & Potentials

✓ The physical environment sustains social interaction leading to sharing local knowledge on the neighbourhoods as follows:

high density and walkability

extensive use of streets and public space

opportunity for social encounters and knowing what goes on

community has accurate, updated information about the neighbourhood

Goal: Practice informed decision-making

"TO DO" Actions by Local Government

- ☐ Find out about community needs and concerns such as availability and quality of services, congestion and crime.

- ☐ Set standards and structures for data collection methods and analysis using GIS and participatory needs assessment, problem/potential identification tools. These tools and procedures are mandatory to all parties involved in data collection (local government, NGOs, community members etc.).

- ☐ Train community leaders and local officials (appointed and elected) in communication skills to improve dialogue among them and with the community.

- ☐ Train community leaders to produce and update neighbourhood problem maps to address them in local plans and actions.

- ☐ Take immediate action in coordination with all respective administrations to solve problems of high priority to the community to gain the trust in local government effectiveness.

- ☐ Ensure beforehand communication of plans and implementation activities to the community.

- ☐ Enable the local community to participate in monitoring and evaluation systems.

Benefits

For Local Government

Respond to problems when they are still emerging.

More effective impact to local government actions.

Crime prevention measures rather than a policy of reaction to crime.

For Community

Building-up of dignity and self-esteem.

Trust building towards government.

Less marginalization.

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Notes