Promoting Land Rights for the Urban Poor with the Social Tenure Domain Model

Security of tenure is one of the most critical components of slum upgrading and sustainable urban development. It represents confidence in the future; people who are safe from eviction with a sense of long-term stability, whether they own the land or not, are much more likely to invest in their housing or community.

An increasing number of city residents in developing countries live without security of tenure, and obtaining it can be tricky, especially for slum dwellers who face significant obstacles to owning or obtaining land rights. Land markets are frequently dysfunctional, and control of land is often connected to political patronage and corruption – making it difficult to get clear information about land ownership, use and availability.

The innovation of STDM

This is where the Social Tenure Domain Model (STDM) comes in. STDM is an innovative land information management system developed by UN-Habitat through the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) partners (International Federation of Surveyors, International Institute for Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation Management of the University of Twente, and the World Bank).

The use of STDM developed and enhanced partnerships by generating conversation between local authorities and the community, and creating the capacity for this conversation to happen.

It integrates formal, informal and customary land rights – reflecting the realities on the ground in many poor communities. Unlike previous enumeration tools that related a person's name and address to land, STDM can relate personal identifiers, such as fingerprints, to a coordinate point inside a plot of land or dwelling.

The main benefits of STDM are that it is flexible, affordable and easy to share. Communities can use the system to easily collect accurate, reliable information about themselves, analyse the data and generate quick reports. They can also easily update the information as needed.

Because STDM is based on a global standard, the data can then be shared within the community and with local and national governments to assist the development of the community, identify priorities, and target interventions more effectively. It can also be used in combination with other enumeration and planning tools.

The STDM model was initially piloted in Mbale, Uganda by UN-Habitat and Slum Dwellers International (SDI) in partnership with the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development

Project: Piloting and Scaling up the Use of the Social Tenure Domain Model

Partners: UN-Habitat and Slum Dwellers International

Cities Alliance Financing: USD 75,000 (Phase I) and USD 225,000 (Phase II)

Duration: 2011-2016

Key Results:

• STDM is shown to be an innovative land information tool that can directly impact the lives of the poor.

• Dialogue has begun among communities, government and partners on inclusive planning and tenure security.

(MoLHUD); the Municipality of Mbale; the NGO ACTogether; the local slum dweller federation; community leaders; and residents. The pilot was part of the Government of Uganda's Transforming the Settlements of the Urban Poor in Uganda (TSUPU) initiative, supported by the Cities Alliance through its Country Programme framework.

The second phase of the STDM project built on the successful pilot. It focused on capturing and sharing key lessons and experiences, technical assistance, and building capacity to implement STDM with training and learning events. The emphasis was on scaling up the use of STDM in Uganda, as well as in other countries where UN-Habitat and SDI are operating, including the establishment of regional resource centres in Uganda and the Philippines.

Partnership makes STDM possible

Partnership has been key in implementing STDM. The relationships established through TSUPU provided an effective platform for UN-Habitat and Cities Alliance to test a pro-poor, innovative land information tool.

The project also capitalised on each partner's strengths, enabling greater impact. Combining the technology brought by UN-Habitat and GLTN with community engagement and participation from decades of experience by SDI proved not only possible, but transformative for many of the local communities involved.

Impact and results

The pilot phase demonstrated that STDM is technically sound, has multiple usages and is user-friendly. By the end of the first phase, community members were able to use the system and to confidently manage and update the information on an ongoing basis.

Data generated by STDM also played an important role in informed the preparatory second phase of TSUPU. The data collected revealed that huge service gaps existed in the informal settlements and influenced negotiations towards improving the status of the settlement.

The effort taken by the community to gather this data and engage around it convinced the Municipal Council to award the community a number of contracts for sanitation units. A sanitation unit established in Mbale's Mission settlement greatly improved sanitation by providing toilets to the communities as well as clean water. The community implemented eight water point projects which are currently running and benefitting slum settlements.

> "Through enumeration and mapping, the STDM process has provided for interaction between the Mbale Municipal Council and the local community to establish the most pressing problems and come up with baseline information to address critical issues – thereby enhancing service delivery in Mbale."

– *Angella Neumbe, Community Development Officer at Mbale Municipal Council, Uganda*

The STDM project has also formalised relations between communities and local government. Community is now recognised as a legitimate development actor and not merely beneficiaries of upgrading initiatives.

In a bid to ensure proper maintenance and the sustainability of these projects, the Mbale federation pushed for a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) outlining the community mandate to manage these upgrading projects. On 8 January 2015, the Community Development Officer of Mbale Municipal Council signed an MoU on behalf of the authority which gave the federation the right to manage all eight water points – ensuring they will continue to serve Mbale's informal communities.

Residents appreciated STDM's usefulness in addressing their information requirements, especially for improving tenure security and enhancing planning and access to basic services and infrastructure. The data analysis has empowered them to plan and pursue priority projects such as roads, lighting, water and sanitation. In Mbale, Uganda communities have established five public toilets, one school toilet, two stone pitched drainage channels, open roads, and improved on street lighting.

Government officials welcomed STDM as a potential tool for much larger urban development objectives. The process provided an opportunity for the authorities and slum communities to initiate dialogue on inclusive planning and possible tenure security improvement. The tool has enhanced learning among physical planners in different towns in Uganda who received training in the software.

In addition, the STDM project in Uganda has provided a platform for innovation around land registration tools. The Government

of Uganda – through the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development – is studying the STDM tool to see how it can inform and modernise the Land Information System in six zonal land offices. It is also exploring the establishment of a national land information centre to facilitate and improve the delivery of basic land services to Ugandan citizens.

The STDM project has attracted considerable interest from various countries and partner organisations. International training has been held for slum communities and municipal governments from eight countries – creating impact beyond Uganda. There is increasing demand to use and apply STDM in different ways and situations. Through its empowered local networks, SDI continues to roll out and use STDM in municipalities.

Lessons learned

The STDM project shows that pro-poor solutions have great potential to directly impact on the lives of city residents. The partnership aspect enabled stakeholders to combine the technical STDM tool with that of participatory enumerations used by SDI. It has also shown to be a practical way to engage young people in development projects, as they are key collectors and analysers of the information compiled through STDM.

Community ownership of the process is critical, and the partnership model and capacity development activities have made this possible. Conversations have begun between local communities and governments in negotiations for improved tenure security, inclusive planning, and access to basic services.

This commitment of communities and government partners to STDM is the primary driver for its sustainability, ensuring that its expansion is local demand, rather than as a donor project. Communities within the SDI movement conduct profiling and enumeration as part of standard practice, and the tool has become integrated into this work – which suggests high sustainability.

And because it stimulates local action, STDM also has the potential to entice government and other partners to give time, expertise and resources towards implementing identified priority areas. For example, in Mbale the government has invested nine million Ugandan Shillings (USD 3,183) towards realising projects identified through the STDM process.
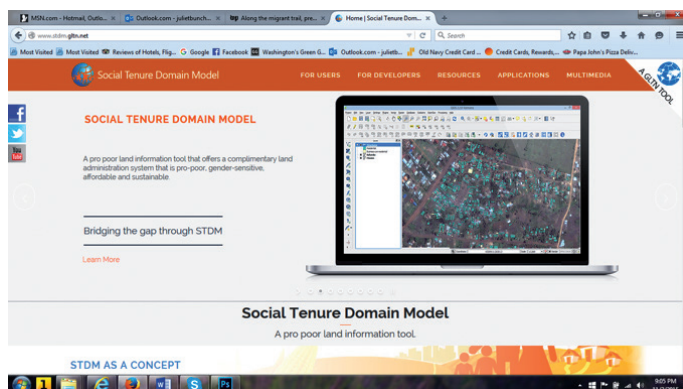
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