Cities Alliance
Cities Without Slums

Innovation Series:
Grassroots Mobilisation Towards Improved Emergency Responsiveness and Slum Upgrading in East Jerusalem
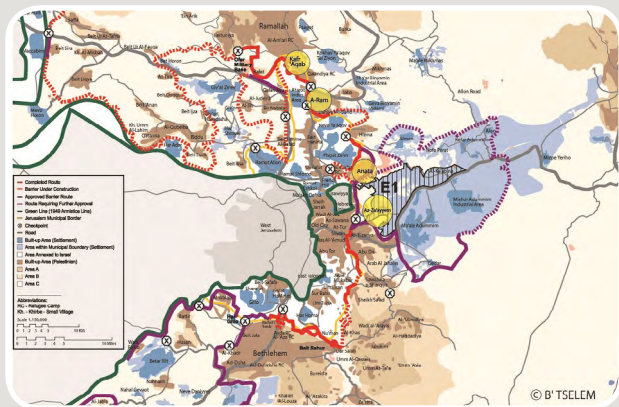
After a separation wall was built in 2002, more than 100,000 Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem found themselves physically separated from the city, outside the Palestinian Authority's territory but without access to services as residents of Jerusalem Municipality.

As a result, these communities lack critical urban services (such as employment, education and healthcare) and suffer from uncontrolled urban development.

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The UN-Habitat Palestine office and the Arab Thought Forum wanted to pilot an approach to help four Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem – Al Ram, Kufur Aqab, Anata and Al Zaiem – collect data on their populations and living conditions so that they could initiate change.

They received funding from the Cities Alliance Innovation Programme Know Your City call for proposals.

The project:

The activity developed a reliable, accurate urban database with information on the four pilot areas that communities and NGOs can use as an advocacy tool to proactively engage decision makers and donors to improve their living conditions.

The approach:

- Engaging local stakeholders with mapping to generate cooperation and trust.
- Collecting data on the population and socioeconomic and physical conditions in four communities.
- Producing and disseminating databases, graphic materials, and assessment reports to show residents' needs.
- Engaging with local stakeholders to identify priority needs (emergency and developmental) and develop strategic frameworks.
- Establishing local committees to advocate for better social and physical infrastructure with authorities and external parties

Transformative change:

- Information about each neighbourhood was collected and consolidated it into an online platform, which local committee staff were trained to operate and update.
- Easy-to-read factsheets and infographics helped communicate concrete challenges faced daily by residents, using the power of information to foster social engagement.
- Local committees engaged residents used the datasets and tools to identify priority needs and advocate for improvement.
- A participatory strategic framework for upgrading the four informal neighbourhoods and a Position Paper with recommendations for urgent interventions were developed.
- Training programmes showed more than 30 participants how to use GIS, remote sensing, and electronic databases.

> *We tried to collect as much data as possible to show the actual conditions on the ground with factual information that reflects the size of the problem facing these neighbourhoods … The number of people living there is much higher than what is published in the Israeli authorities' statistics.*

Lubna Shaheen,
UN-Habitat Project Manager and Senior Urban Planner in Palestine