



Myanmar's urban population is expected to double by 2030, and its largest city, Yangon, is struggling to cope with this rapid urbanisation. Informal settlements are increasing, where citizens are often undocumented, lack security of tenure, and have no access to infrastructure or basic services. The city has virtually no information on these settlements.

The Yangon City Development Committee and Yangon Regional Government wanted to collect data on the size, location, origin and living conditions in the city's informal settlements. Led by UN-Habitat, the project received funding through the Cities Alliance Innovation Programme Know Your City! call.





The project:

Mapping Yangon helped fill the city's data gap through comprehensive mapping, enumeration and surveying of its informal settlements. It established a knowledge base on the scale and location of the settlements, as well as the dwellers' living conditions, origins and livelihoods.

The data can influence policy making and counter the government's practice of forced evictions.

The approach:

1. Data collection:

-  Trained municipal officers identify and map informal settlements.
-  Survey conducted on socioeconomic, housing, livelihood and employment conditions.
-  A high-level overview of land and tenure arrangements undertaken.
-  Qualitative research conducted to assess residents' priority needs.

The approach:

2. Advocacy and awareness:



Solid data on informal settlements is a necessary step to improve living conditions and allow for future regularisation of tenure, provision of basic services, and infrastructure.



The information collected through the project is used to promote alternatives to forced evictions, such as participatory approaches when resettlement is inevitable.

Transformative change:

While research on rural poverty had previously been undertaken in Myanmar, Mapping Yangon was the first time a large-scale and participatory database was produced in an urban setting, opening up new perspectives for policy making and action.

Impact:

- The project identified 423 informal settlements in Yangon, with an estimated 365,000 people living without piped water, sanitation or solid waste management collection.
- The project's outputs have created a strong knowledge base for designing future interventions, especially around slum upgrading and urban poverty alleviation.
- UN Habitat uses the datasets as advocacy tools to influence the local authority's decision making. By demonstrating pro-poor approaches to settlement upgrading, the project has influenced the government to defer from the practice of forced evictions.
- Data collected generated valuable insights and helped to fight preconceptions on urban poverty. For instance, many informal residents are not migrants, but impoverished urban dwellers who were previously homeowners or tenants in other parts of the city.

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We wanted to make information that was unprecedented at that time. When data and facts speak, it becomes easier to convince authorities that there are many people not under their radar.
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Bijay Karmacharya,
UN-Habitat Myanmar Country Manager