



## BPD SANITATION SERIES

# Sanitation Partnerships: Nairobi Case Study

### Introduction

For BPD's Sanitation Partnership Series (SPS) Nairobi was an interesting case from several angles. The first was the important role that NGOs play in attempting to improve sanitary conditions in crowded and poor neighbourhoods. Approaches were very diverse and used different techniques to engage residents. The second was the challenging landlord – tenant dynamics that one finds in such contexts – not only in Kibera but in other informal settlements in the capital. The third aspect explored was how full latrines are emptied in urban areas, and the contrast between mechanical and manual emptying of pit latrines.

### Background

The population of Kenya is projected to increase dramatically over the next two decades, doubling by 2025. Much of this growth will be in urban centres. While official figures cite sanitation coverage as lowest in rural areas, the squalor of informal settlements is more than obvious, and there is a pressing need for achieving sustainable and effective urban sanitation in Kenya. The current population of Nairobi is roughly 1 million people, with 60% of these people living within the extremely densely populated informal settlement of Kibera.

With an estimated 600 000 inhabitants over an area of 250 hectares, Kibera is the largest informal settlement in sub-Saharan Africa; the majority of its residents are poor, living below the poverty line (Ksh.2 000 per month – approx \$26). The extreme density of the settlement translates to an estimated one (5 person) 'household' per 10m<sup>2</sup>, residing in barrack blocks of rented accommodation built to very low standards. Its residents are highly cosmopolitan, coming from a wide range of tribal groups both inside and outside of Kenya. Overcrowding, insecurity and extreme variations in wealth and poverty all lead to sometimes explosive social dynamics with a heated political situation and many local conflicts.

Kibera is by no means the only informal settlement in Nairobi however, nor the only without sanitation. BPD visited a several others, where it also focussed on the role of NGOs and CBOs and the landlord-tenant question.

### A crowded and ever-changing context

Most of Kibera's residents work as casual labourers outside the settlement, and move on as other opportunities arise. The inward and outward migration of people makes community mobilisation difficult. There is little social cohesion, and clashes between rival groups undermine development activities, and the tension and lack of trust among residents inhibits the formation of effective working groups.

In Kibera, there are indications that up to 150 people share a pit latrine, firstly due to the lack of space for new construction of household facilities and secondly, because many landlords are unwilling to incur the extra expense of adequate sanitation provision for their tenants.

Into this vacuum have sprung up communal facilities - examples of public 'non-pay' toilet blocks in Kibera include UNICEF and AMREF supported communal VIP latrine / bathroom blocks in Kianda and Makina Villages. Yet many of these facilities have deteriorated over time due to management problems (landlords "privatizing" them) and other maintenance

problems (like missing vent pipes and full pits that require emptying. There are also three commercial bathing facilities within Kibera, which are relatively well maintained and have running shower taps – one is connected to a trunk sewer bordering Kibera, but the others not.

Similar facilities exist in other informal settlements: for instance, in the nearby slum area of Kangemi, the Kaptagat Usafi Group (a local CBO) recently began operating a communal ‘pay’ toilet and bathroom facility.

### **Strong role for NGOs**

There are several organisations outside government who are active in sanitation in Nairobi. For many of these sanitation is one part of a wider portfolio of activities. One example is the NGO Pamoja Trust, which works together with a federation of the urban poor (Muungano wa Wanvijiji) to develop a consensus among the inhabitants of informal settlements around issues of land and structure entitlements. Through community-based savings schemes, slum enumerations (which incorporate surveys on sanitation issues) and house modelling, these organisations build consensus among the poor on upgrading and tenure, and develop community capacity to manage these activities. Consensus is particularly important in Kenya because of the conflicting priorities of landlords (the ‘structure owners’) and their tenants.

Such intermediaries provide a bridge between communities and the municipal authorities. AMREF is another example, having trained 300 community health workers to educate residents on safe disposal of water, solid waste and excreta. Using PHAST, puppetry, drama and door-to-door visits, they educate residents about the ways in which they can manage their own living environments better to safeguard their health. They have also played a prominent role in leading the water and sanitation section of a community-level collaborative co-ordination forum in Kibera. They have also engaged the Kenyan government over proposals for the upgrading of Kibera, but the process has not been altogether smooth, something not helped by the volatile political situation.

An important lesson for such NGOs working in this sort of urban context is that voluntarism is not viable long-term. Just 20 volunteers remain from the original 300 that AMREF trained. These have been retained by reducing their time commitment to two hours a day, forming them into groups for mutual support, and assisting them to set up micro-enterprises to generate the income needed to support their health promotion work. This model does away with dependence on external funding, but requires enormous discipline, motivation and support.

### **The tenancy question**

The second issue explored by BPD in Nairobi was the significance of landlord – tenant relationships to the provision of sanitation. Highly transient tenants typically have little incentive to invest their own resources in sanitation improvement. This is exacerbated in places such as Kibera, where space is at such a premium that landlords are reluctant to forfeit any potential rental income by using scarce land to provide toilets.

Leadership is crucial in such situations - experienced NGOs such as Amref and ITDG have helped to some extent by assisting CBOs to persuade landlords to demolish small clusters of rentable property to make space for communal or public facilities in over 40 localities across Kibera. Facilities are then managed by local residents with strong CBO oversight. Establishing each of these requires painstaking mobilisation and protracted negotiation.

Kibera’s landlords have been much written about – many of these ‘structure owners’ are large-scale, often absentee landlords, some of whom are well connected politically. This is not the case for all landlords, but the tension between them and tenants over the issue of

land tenure is seen elsewhere. Landlords in Kibera wish to acquire full legal tenure of the land on which their structures are built. Long-term tenants of absentee landlords would prefer recognition of their right to reside there, and with it, the possibility of becoming land and house owners themselves. Thus the two groups have very different priorities within any programme to legalize land tenure.

Work in Nairobi has also shown that tenants' willingness to contribute to community projects depends on the nature of their tenancy. Unlike transient tenants, long-term resident tenants are known to participate in community committees. Rental relationships can also structure payments for investment or maintenance, as was the case when new toilet blocks were built in Mukuru in Nairobi. Here tenants paid a contribution which was deducted from their rent.

### **Emptying**

Mechanical pit emptying by vacuum tankers and other technology (the vacutug was developed here) is practised in Kibera, but is only really effective in areas where pit latrines are situated close to the road. As a result for the majority of the settlement manual pit emptying by local informal entrepreneurs is the norm. Manual pit emptiers interviewed in Kibera gave insights into their livelihoods, discussing prices and volumes removed, along with the seasonal variations in demand. In the rainy season there is apparently more demand, whilst the job is also easier, as the pit exhausters can empty the contents of their buckets directly into the open drains that run between dwellings, where storm water runoff washes it away. In the dry season emptiers must hire carts and cart the waste away manually. The Water and Sanitation Programme have recently published an interesting account of manual pit emptying in Nairobi, to which there is a link below.

### **Conclusions**

Nairobi highlighted the range of approaches being taken to tackling urban sanitation, but also the complexity of the dynamics between landlord and tenant, and between government and non-government actors. NGOs share fora with local and national government to discuss policy issues, but service delivery arrangements tend to be less organised. Linkages between the many actors working on sanitation, while usually cordial, are few and informal and very limited in comparison to the scale of the challenge in Nairobi's slums.

One notable observation is that many of the successful examples of sanitation interventions are taking shape within a broader context. For instance in Kibera it is an emerging strategic alliance among slum dwellers and service groups, that seeks to improve general living conditions within the slum, that's having an impact on sanitation. There is perhaps a lesson here for those wishing to improve sanitation in similar contexts elsewhere.

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