**TOWN BUILD WORKSHOP GUIDE**

Theme: Housing Challenges in Informal neighbourhoods - basic services, infrastructure and housing improvements

Urban-based Low-income residents try to gain or improve their shelter, or improve their shelter, sometimes by constructing a new or creating make-shift squatter units, and others seek loans to build. But can they afford to repay? What is the eligibility criteria for a resident to apply for a loan? Is it flexible? Low income households have a multitude of complex issues when it comes to attaining a ‘roof over the head’

This workshop is a planning exercise with the resident families, aimed at developing attainable shelter and housing solutions. The workshop will be in the following steps:

**you get to WALK**

1. A **transect walk**, through the neighbourhood: an exercise to physical see and diagnose living conditions and to compare view points and perceptions by walking with local people and ‘experts’

**you get to SIT DOWN and discuss**

1. Identifying their **neighbourhood and housing needs**
2. Identify **assets** (physical, social, economic). Assets are things that the locals already have that could be useful in planning. For example, they could have old roof sheets in the back yard (physical), they might want to partner with their neighbour in building a market stall (the partnership is social asset). Assets present opportunities
3. **Rank and prioritize** housing problems: rank from 4-1, 4 being for the most important and 1 for the least.
4. Pick 2 or 3 problems and analyse them: **identify the causes and consequences** of a problem; this might reveal that a big problem is the root cause. When you know the cause it is easier to ‘attack and, address’ a problem.
5. Develop possible **strategies and solutions** in a neighbourhood plan

**You get to DRAW**

1. Develop a **housing improvement plan**.
2. Develop a **new house plan**

Somethings you need to keep in mind:

It is important to consider the needs and perceptions of all the occupants of the house before agreeing on improvements, as needs can vary according to age and gender.

Perceptions of problems are different depending on the lenses through which a sector is being looked at, a particular problem in a specific area might not be as important for people that live a block away or down the street: which highlights why it is important to identify problems by groups and the prioritize the issues, to see who is more affected by an issue.

Take care not to encourage dominance: some might misuse the workshop platform to air out personal vendettas’ and grudges which are not necessarily key housing or planning issues …

**A good example** of the issues that came up in a different WORKSHOP case are:

The strategies named in group 4: rain water drainage – this is at an infrastructure level. A suggest solution from the locals was to improve maintenance and increase coverage/capacity of the drainage system, educate and inform the people about more appropriate ways of disposing garbage in the community through awareness campaigns.

For issues of housing, the suggested strategies were to repair the existing by maintenance and/or refurbishment, or through government incentives.

For Insecurity it was agreed that the built environment be improved with street lights and clear neighbourhood layout, or by community surveillance with policing and community watch being implemented.

In weighing, ranking and prioriting the proposed solutions,

* tackling insecurity with street lights was first and of most importance to the locals,
* then second was to improve housing,
* third to provide skills training for youth unemployment,
* followed by funding of microenterprises
* and last of all was to restore existing drainage infrastructure.

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<http://townbuild.org/word/?page_id=18>

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