



**UN HABITAT**  
Regional and Technical Cooperation Division



# MALAWI: LILONGWE URBAN PROFILE



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HS Number: HS/085/11E

ISBN Number(Volume): 978-92-1-132377-1

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Design and Layout: Florence Kuria



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UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME

REGIONAL AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION DIVISION

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## FOREWORDS



According to research published in UN-HABITAT's<sup>1</sup> flagship report, *The State of the World's Cities 2010-2011*, all developing regions, including the African, Caribbean and Pacific states, will have more people living in urban than rural areas by the year 2030. With half the world's

population already living in urban areas, the challenges we face in the battle against urban poverty, our quest for cities without slums, for cities where women feel safer, for inclusive cities with power, water and sanitation, and affordable transport, for better planned cities, and for cleaner, greener cities is daunting.

But as this series shows, there are many interesting solutions and best practices to which we can turn. After all, the figures tell us that during the decade 2000 to 2010, a total of 227 million people in the developing countries moved out of slum conditions. In other words, governments, cities and partner institutions have collectively exceeded the slum target of the Millennium Development Goals twice over and ten years ahead of the agreed 2020 deadline.

Asia and the Pacific stood at the forefront of successful efforts to reach the slum target, with all governments in the region improving the lives of an estimated 172 million slum dwellers between 2000 and 2010.

In sub-Saharan Africa though, the total proportion of the urban population living in slums has decreased by only 5 per cent (or 17 million people). Ghana, Senegal, Uganda, and Rwanda were the most successful countries in the sub-region, reducing the proportions of slum dwellers by over one-fifth in the last decade.

Some 13 per cent of the progress made towards the global slum target occurred in Latin America and the Caribbean, where an estimated 30 million people have moved out of slum conditions since the year 2000.

Yet, UN-HABITAT estimates confirm that the progress made on the slum target has not been sufficient to counter the demographic expansion in informal settlements in the developing world. In this sense, efforts to reduce the numbers of slum dwellers are neither satisfactory nor adequate.

As part of our drive to address this crisis, UN-HABITAT is working with the European Commission (EC) and the Brussels-based Secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group to support sustainable urban development. Given the urgent and diverse needs, we found it necessary to develop a tool for rapid assessment and strategic planning to guide immediate, mid and long-term interventions. And here we have it in the form of this series of publications.

The Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme is based on the policy dialogue between UN-HABITAT, the ACP Secretariat and the European Commission which dates back to the year 2002. When the three parties met at UN-HABITAT headquarters in June 2009, more than 200 delegates from over 50 countries approved a resounding call on the international community to pay greater attention to these urbanization matters, and to extend the slum upgrading programme to all countries in the ACP Group.

It is worth recalling here how grateful we are that the European Commission's 9th European Development Fund for ACP countries provided EUR 4 million (USD 5.7 million at June 2011 rates) to enable UN-HABITAT to conduct the programme which now serves 59 cities in 23 African countries, and more than 20 cities in six Pacific, and four Caribbean countries.

Indeed, since its inception in 2008, the slum upgrading programme has achieved the confidence of partners at city and country level in Africa, the Caribbean and in the Pacific. It is making a major contribution aimed at helping in urban poverty reduction efforts, as each report in this series shows."

I wish to express my gratitude to the European Commission and the ACP Secretariat for their commitment to this slum upgrading programme. I have every confidence that the results outlined in this profile, and others, will serve to guide the development of responses for capacity building and investments in the urban sector.

Further, I would like to thank each Country Team for their continued support to this process which is essential for the successful implementation of the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Joan Clos'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**Dr. Joan Clos**  
Executive Director, UN-HABITAT

<sup>1</sup> UN-HABITAT - United Nations Human Settlements Programme

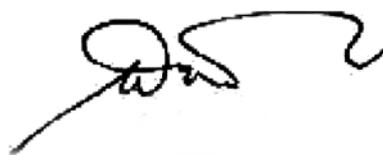
Poverty reduction is the Malawi Government's overriding development objective as espoused in the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy. In line with this, the government recognizes the critical role played by the cities and other urban centres in the socio-economic development of this country. Thriving and well functioning cities will in turn lead to thriving national economic development.

Our cities and other urban areas which are growing rapidly face a number of challenges, key among them is that of urban poverty that is characterized by, among others, poor housing, poor access to water and sanitation as well as unemployment. The cities also face environmental challenges that are in part heightened by poor urban planning and environmental degradation.

The government therefore welcomes the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (PSUP) that is coordinated by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) and is being implemented in all the four cities of Lilongwe, Blantyre, Mzuzu, and Zomba. The urban profile for Lilongwe City is an important document that sets out the key challenges faced by the city in areas of governance, land and housing, slums, basic urban services including water and sanitation, local economic development, gender and HIV/AIDS, energy, disaster risks, environment, and waste management.

Through a consultative process of city stakeholders, the city council has identified the priority actions to be carried out in support of efforts to achieve sustainable urban development and reduce urban poverty. The challenge is now to move forward to implement these priority actions that seek to improve the quality of life of the urban poor. In this regard, the Government of Malawi will continue to support the city council under the decentralized framework in achieving the poverty reduction goals. Lilongwe City Council will need to redouble its efforts and ensure that more resources are allocated towards pro-poor activities in the city. The goal of ensuring sustainable urban development and poverty reduction cannot be achieved by the efforts of central government and the city councils alone. More importantly, it will need the concerted efforts of all stakeholders involved in the development of Lilongwe including the private sector, civil society, political and community leaders, development partners, and city residents.

The Government of Malawi would like to thank UN-HABITAT<sup>1</sup>, the European Union and the ACP<sup>2</sup> Group of States for the technical and financial support towards the formulation of this profile. The commendable role of Mzuzu University in facilitating the process of the urban profile formulation as well as that of the chief executive, the PSUP city focal point, and management of Lilongwe City Council is appreciated. Special mention is made of the first National Coordinator of the PSUP in Malawi, the late Mr. Dalitso Mpoola who dedicated his time, skills and efforts to ensure the successful implementation of this phase. May his soul rest in peace.



**Kester E. Kaphaizi**

Principal Secretary for Local Government  
and Rural Development

<sup>1</sup> UN-HABITAT - United Nations Human Settlements programme  
<sup>2</sup> ACP - Africa, Caribbean and Pacific



Lilongwe, just like the other cities in Malawi, is facing rapid urbanization with the growth rate averaging in excess of 4 percent per annum. It is the fastest growing city in the country. The low income areas and the informal settlements comprise 73 percent of the residential land share. The rapid population growth

rate is almost synonymous with the growth of informal settlements. The city is therefore faced with the need to properly plan for the rapid urban population growth in order to lessen or mitigate the negative impacts that lack of forward planning for rapid urbanization would bring. At the same time, the city is faced with the challenge of providing shelter and basic urban services to its existing population.

To provide the necessary and appropriate intervention measures, there was need to first of all have an understanding of the issues facing the city. This was necessitated by the fact that little documentation on development challenges facing the city is available. The Lilongwe urban profile is therefore the culmination of that process that sought to get information on the state of the city through a participatory approach, focusing on the following seven main themes; Governance, Local Economic Development, Land, Gender, Environment, Slums and Shelter, and Basic Urban Services. Lilongwe urban profile is a tool for the city to make informed decisions on various intervention strategies to improve the livelihood of its citizens. The urban profile provides a good basis for proper coordination of intervention efforts by the city and other actors, that is, community based organizations, non-governmental organizations and donors, and as such getting the most out of any such interventions.

Lilongwe urban profile also provides a basis to make Lilongwe an inclusive city as the cross cutting issues raised cover the whole city including the informal settlements that have been neglected for too long. These are areas that accommodate more than half of the city's population and yet have previously not been very high on the city's agenda. This contributed to further deterioration of the living conditions of slum dwellers as well as environmental degradation. These are areas that have also seen a high level of various forms of interventions by local and international non-governmental organizations with little coordination thereby resulting in duplications and wastage of resources.

I would like to thank UN-HABITAT<sup>1</sup>, the European Union (EU) and various donors, and the UN-HABITAT Programme Manager for Malawi for making it possible for the urban profiling process to take place. I look forward to further supporting in the other stages that are required to bring the results of the urban profiling exercise into fruition.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'H. K. Mmangisa', written in a cursive style.

**H. K. Mmangisa**  
Chief Executive  
Lilongwe City Council

<sup>1</sup> UN-HABITAT - United Nations Human Settlements Programme

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

The Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (PSUP) is an accelerated and action-oriented urban assessment of needs and capacity-building gaps at the city level. The programme is supported by funds from the European Commission's European Development Fund and it is currently being implemented in 23 African countries, 59 African cities, 4 Pacific countries, 3 Caribbean countries, and 21 Pacific and Caribbean cities. The Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme uses a structured approach where priority interventions are agreed upon through consultative processes. The PSUP methodology consists of three phases: (1) a rapid participatory urban profiling at national and local levels, focusing on Governance, Local Economic Development, Land, Gender, Environment, Slums and Shelter, Basic Urban Services, and Waste Management, and proposed interventions; (2) detailed priority proposals; and (3) project implementation. The Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme in Malawi encompasses a national profile, as well as profiles for Blantyre, Lilongwe, Mzuzu and Zomba, each published as a separate report. This is the Lilongwe report and it constitutes a general background, a synthesis of the seven themes; Governance, Local Economic Development, Land, Gender, Environment and Urban Disaster Risks, Slums and Shelter, and Basic Urban Services; and priority project proposals.

## BACKGROUND

Lilongwe, the largest city in Malawi, became the capital and administrative City of Malawi in 1975 after relocating from Zomba. Lilongwe has witnessed a high urbanization rate ever since, accelerated by the relocation of all government head offices from Blantyre to Lilongwe from 2005. The city is divided into four sectors (Old Town, Capital Hill, Kanengo, and Lumbadzi). Lilongwe is situated at the centre of a large agricultural area and there are many economic activities taking place in the city. However, Lilongwe lacks the

in order to address the existing obstacles to development. Improvement and expansion of the existing social infrastructure, improved provision of basic urban service and improved planning and financial management is a necessity. Overall, the leadership of Lilongwe should embrace good governance principles that include sustainability, subsidiarity, equity, transparency and accountability, civic engagement and citizenship, and security.

## GOVERNANCE

Lilongwe City operates within the Local Government Act of 1998, which entitles citizens to elect councilors directly. The elected councilors then elect a mayor amongst themselves. Since 2005, the cities have had no councilors as all councils were dissolved at the end of their term. The Local Government Act (as amended in 2009) empowers the State President to decide on the date of local government elections instead of having the elections soon after the national presidential and parliamentary elections. The 2009 amendment makes Members of Parliament bonafide voting members of the councils. Civic participation is low with the absence of elected councilors. Corrupt practices, lack of sufficient capacity, poor revenue generation, and poor accountability and transparency have resulted in poor governance and consequently, inadequate service delivery. A Service Charter is under preparation to assist in service delivery.

## LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Lilongwe is the capital of Malawi and the main administrative urban centre. The civil service employs about 27 percent of the city's work force. The private sector employs about 40 percent and 24 percent are self employed. Although data is limited, the informal sector is estimated to employ a significant proportion of the labour force. However poverty levels are still high,

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