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Guiding principles

building of trust
formal and ad hoc meetings
development of local expertise
local politics
building community capacity
inclusive of all the community
building community spirit
linking communities with the government

Rebuilding Dili has been a major focus of international efforts in the years since its extensive destruction in 1999 not least because it is the capital city of the world's newest nation. This investment served to consolidate the position of Dili in the context of other urban and regional centers in Timor-Leste however, many of the nation's poorest moved to Dili causing widespread poverty and overcrowding.

The Dili CUS sort to identify and cost upgrading for the urban poor across the city and develop an upgrading strategy to ensure at least minimum levels of basic service delivery could be achieved. A total of 98 communities were identified.

The Community Action Planning (CAP) allowed the project team to pilot upgrading activities with four local communities in urban Dili. By following this CAP process the team of six East Timorese was able to achieve a great deal in a very short period of time. In total, with the comparatively small sum of USD 30,000 spread over four communities, a total of 12 projects of varying complexities were fully completed by early October 2005. These projects included, local roads, rehabilitation and construction drainage systems, rubbish collection "waste bunkers", a community hall, water supply piping and tanks, as well as community toilets and washing facilities.

The pilot projects in four communities provided assistance to over 3,000 persons allowed detailed costing associated with upgrading to be identified. These costing can be broadly adopted with some clarifications as a cost basis for scaling up in urban Dili and replication in other urban centres.



Location of under-served settlements in Dili

Community Development Unit

The Community Development Unit (CDU) was established immediately following the completion of the Dili CUS project in October 2005. The CDU is located in the Ministry of Public Works and staffed by people trained by the Dili CUS project. The CDU is bringing together various government departments required for community upgrading and acts as a conduit between the community and the Government. CAP priorities identified by the community are being matched wherever possible with service delivery capabilities of government line departments. The CDU team, for example, has facilitated Water Department permission and assistance in design of connections to the town water supply on the one side, and has managed community contracting to lay water pipe and build community water storage tanks on the other side.

A strategy approach based on a continuous process for transforming the lives of the poorest groups in the city (rather than aiming for a fixed set of products) is more suitable, learning-oriented and capable of progressive, incremental improvement. The residents in the target communities are at the centre of the Dili CUS: in both the decision-making and the action.



The role of the public sector as an enabling agent - facilitating access to land, financing technical supportive policy and regulatory framework - promotes beneficiary participation and initiative and builds confidence and trust on all sides.



The upgrading of existing areas rather than wholesale redevelopment and resettlement constitutes the optimum approach through redressing infrastructure inadequacies, improving the quality of the dwellings within a regulated layout and providing secure tenure. This reduces social disruption and the loss of existing dwelling unit investments in dwellings and minimizes the need for external resources and for additional land.



For disadvantaged, low-income dwelling units, "community contracting" by the residents themselves on a transparent commercial basis, alongside some unpaid labour and financial contributions, no matter how modest, encourages a culture of cost recovery ownership and partnership, and promotes responsibilities for ongoing incremental upgrading and maintenance.



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UN-HABITAT Regional Office for Asia & the Pacific

UN-HABITAT Fukuoka Office

ACROS Bldg. 8F, 1-1-1 Tenjin, Chuo-ku, Fukuoka 810-0001 Japan
Tel: (81-92) 724-7121; Fax: (81-92) 724-7124
Email: habitat.fukuoka@unhabitat.org
<http://www.fukuoka.unhabitat.org>

UN-HABITAT Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya

Email: infohabitat@unhabitat.org
<http://www.unhabitat.org>



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FAST FACTS

Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

- Population: 925,000 (Census of 2004)
- 23.3% of the population lives in urban areas.
- Urban Dili with a population of 150,000 persons makes up approximately 75% of all people considered living in urban areas.
- Only 45% of all dwelling units in Dili has access to a piped water system and more than half the urban population has access to private toilets

Source: DCUS Main Report

TIMOR-LESTE

Developing a strategy for improving low-income settlements

Dili City Upgrading Strategy



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The Government of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste in collaboration with UN-HABITAT as the implementing agency received a grant from the Cities Alliance to undertake a City Upgrading Strategy (CUS) for the capital city of Dili. The draft Community Action Planning (CAP) Guidelines were prepared with the assistance of and based on UN-HABITAT and Cities Alliance experience throughout the developing world adopting tools for meaningfully engaging communities in the development of their local areas and thereby leading to poverty reduction. CAP is predicated on the belief that local communities can bring considerable resources and enthusiasm to improving their living conditions if empowered and given the right tools to do so.

Dili city has grown rapidly in the past nearly five years since the destruction and violence of September 1999 destroyed an estimated 70% of the housing of the city. The preliminary figures of the first National Census put its growth at nearly 40%. While this population growth rate might be higher than the reality, even half this growth of the population already living in these unplanned poorly serviced areas.

The CAP guidelines allowed the project team to pilot upgrading activities with four local communities in urban Dili. The CAP process demonstrated to all key stake holders that significant quick impacts in upgrading areas could be achieved with only small inputs of capital. The CAP tangibly demonstrates that with a dedicated skilled-up team in CAP the extensive upgrading identified under the Dili CUS (98 communities representing 45% of the population of the city) can realistically be achieved.

Traditionally in Timor-Leste it is not common for people to work together with their neighbors where they do not have any blood relations, particularly in urban areas. In this traditional system the extended family unit rather than community is the focus. This is most acute in Dili where many families have moved to the city from all over the country and many in recent years to location where they have no direct blood relations. Improving the community infrastructure was therefore not the only aim of the Dili CUS pilot projects, but it was also to create a sense of community in the urban areas. This approach has opened a new way in tackling community problems.

Community participation

Living in Sao Jose is not easy as there is almost no infrastructure available. Water is a mayor concern whereby the community must walk many kilometers per day to fill up their water containers from government provided water tanks. This situation causes some arguments with communities in the area as supply is often limited.

After the Independence of Timor-Leste in 1999, Francisco believes his life suddenly became very tough when his dream of a better life and services failed to become a reality, worse still he lost his job due to the down turn in the country.

After many failed attempts at gaining an office job, Francisco has decided to continue his studies at a local university and is hoping that a better qualification could help him to get a better job.

Francisco was a major contributor to making this community's CAP and community contracting processes the most successful of the four pilots. He was an instrumental in identifying priorities, designing projects and organizing work teams. His community now has water within 200 meters of all houses through two water tanks. He now has water within 30 meters of his house.

Francisco, one of the 56 households in Sao Jose Community

