

***SUSTAINABLE IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES
FOR LOWER INCOME URBAN COMMUNITIES***

**Preliminary Outline of Research Agenda for
Reassessment of Amman Upgrading Projects**

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Summary Statement of Purpose:

The research proposes to assess the urban upgrading project carried out by the Urban Development Department (UDD) of Amman. The UDD, previously affiliated with the Municipality of Amman, is currently working with an expanded mandate in the Ministry of Municipalities. Two of the four sites improved through an integrated community upgrading project (Jofeh and Wahdat) will be surveyed. A variety of research methods will be used to evaluate the sustainability of project improvements and the spatial, socio-economic and cultural impact of the project and its investments five years after project completion.

The reassessment is the first phase in the development of guidelines for sustainable improvement projects implemented by public authorities and non-government organizations. It will also be made part of a comparative analysis of upgrading projects in different Third World countries with the aim of comparing not only the impact of such projects on the situation of housing for the urban poor but also isolating such elements in project design that enjoy the characteristic of replicability and have met with success in providing a safe, sanitary and livable built environment for the lower-income urban communities. The study's aim is to help organizations undertaking urban upgrading projects to develop operational strategies to safeguard environmental quality.

Aims, Issues and Types of Data

The reassessment of 1990 differs from earlier studies conducted by the UDD in that it does not attempt to evaluate the UDD project per se (ie "Has the UDD met its project objectives") but rather to assess the sustainability of the various project elements as they have evolved over time in operational terms.

The three main issues to be reassessed are:

- the impact of the project on the beneficiaries;
- the livability (quality of life) of the upgrading areas five years after project completion; and
- the sustainability of various project components and the identification of the ingredients of sustainability.

In the actual fieldwork, it is important to keep in mind that the ultimate aim is to assess livability and sustainability and structure the survey instruments accordingly. Furthermore while it is important to be sensitive to the social, cultural and managerial context of the results of the study, it is equally important to establish criteria of livability and sustainability, the former in terms of human access to a certain quality of life and the latter in terms of physical, spatial,

institutional and economic grounds. These criteria will form the basis for the development of operational guidelines to stimulate upgrading and environmental quality.

Data Collection Methods

1. Physical survey;
2. Socio-economic survey; and
3. Participant-observation. The data gathered through participant-observation will focus on exactly the same topics as the physical and socio-economic survey. However, a limited number of households will be studied intensively over a period of four weeks, each household being visited four times (once a week). The households will be chosen based on the results of the physical and socio-economic surveys.

A. Field Investigations

This will focus on three main aspects: (1) the physical environment, (2) the socio-economic characteristics of the area (3) sense of community and utilization of project benefits.

1. The Physical Environment.

This includes four main types of space: (1) circulation network: streets, alleys, stairs and intersections; (2) play spaces, green areas (3) community facilities including health centers; (4) the dwellings. Data will be collected on:

- 1 Criteria regarding the selection of specific design standards
- 2 Solid waste collection
3. Assessment of issues confronted in operations and maintenance
4. Use of space and the allocation of activities over different types of spaces
5. Alterations, encroachments and other changes made by the beneficiaries to the original designs or intended use of public space
6. Beneficiaries' attitudes and evaluation of their current physical environment (to be included in the household survey instrument).

Main Questions and Hypotheses

a. To what extent has the project and the choice of standards, level of services and physical configurations impacted the utilization and maintenance of common spaces.

b. Has supervision been required by the UDD to maintain standards and enforce regulations. Which elements required UDD involvement in the upgrading areas instead of turning over operations and maintenance functions to the agencies responsible for the service.

c. Existing settlements exhibit an array of communal spaces which often serve the purpose of increasing community ties, cooperation and reciprocity. To what extent have the new designated communal spaces fulfilled the same purposes?

d. Social centers are usually designated to be a catalyst for organizing residents through providing income-generation, training and "consciousness-raising" functions. What has been the impact of these facilities on: (1) implementation of upgrading activities (2) the use of community services provided and (3) the compliance of area residents with upgrading guidelines including solid waste disposal.

e. What are the differences in the physical impact of the project at the edges of the project area vs. the center? How far outside the project area can the beneficial impacts of the project be felt?

f. Where do the children play? What is the adequacy of the location, safety of environments and accident records of these locations.

g. Regarding those who took advantage of the home improvement loans, what are the most common transformations made: additions, vertical and horizontal and changes of spaces. What were the stages of change in dwellings? How does this compare to those who didn't utilize the loans?

h. UDD enforcement of upgrading guidelines. Which aspects of the project generated the greatest supervisory burden eg., building regulations, solid waste collection, maintenance of drainage channels etc.

2. The Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Households.

The data collected will focus on the characteristics of the households in the area including:

1. Household size and structure
2. Household expenditure patterns
3. The well-being of children and youth
4. Maintenance of building standards as set by the project in the dwellings
5. Reliability of the services in the dwellings (water electricity etc.)
6. Use of space and allocation of activities
7. Beneficiaries' attitudes and evaluation of their current physical environment
8. Beneficiaries' appreciation of the value of services provided
9. Changes in the physical location of neighbors and kinfolk
10. Changes in responsibility for communal and public spaces
11. Cooperation and shared activities
12. Utilization of community and training center programs
13. Grass-roots activities

Main Questions and Hypotheses

a. New economic circumstances lead to new types of household structure. Has this led to an increase or decrease in density and crowding within the dwelling?

b. To what extent are the physical changes made in the dwelling structure related to changes in household composition and lifestyle?

c. How did the upgrading activities affect the activity patterns of children under five in terms of location, appropriateness, adequacy and impact on well-being.

d. How did the upgrading activities affect the activity patterns of children over five (boys/girls) and youth (male/female) in terms of location, appropriateness, adequacy and impact on lifestyle.

e. At this post-project completion stage, households have adapted somewhat to the economic burden imposed by the loans and the various adaptive patterns may be discerned. What is the impact of these new arrangements on household expenditure patterns and the impact of expenditures related to children.

f. Adaptation has led to new methods of resource mobilization. Has this taken the shape of additional work for men? more entry of women into the formal and informal labor market? the earlier economic utilization of children and hence decrease of investment in education? and finally the mobilization of kin networks and reciprocity? In what combinations do these various methods exist? And how does it impact upon the well-being of children?

g. Adaptation may have led to an increase in multiple family households as married sons are unable to afford moving into separate dwellings. Yet married sons initially qualified for separate units in the upgrading areas - to what degree were families able to utilize this?

h. Has living in a different type of dwelling "modern house" rather than "traditional courtyard" led to new expectations and behaviors?

3. Sense of Community and Utilization of Project Benefits:

The focus will be upon:

1. Changes in physical location of neighbors and kinfolk
2. Changes in responsibility for communal and public spaces
3. Cooperation and shared activities
4. Utilization of community and training center activities
5. Grass-roots organizations

Main Questions and Hypotheses

a. To what extent does the beneficiaries' attitude towards the upgrading project impact their involvement in the community and their participation in programs at the social center or their use of vocational training and health services ?

b. Undergoing the upgrading project has often led to a new sense of community different from the one which existed before, what relationships, groups, leadership has emerged to express this new definition of community?

c. How have changes in the physical location of kin and neighbors who formed "mutual-aid units" led to changes in visiting patterns, the use of space and upkeep of communal spaces?

d. A sense of responsibility arises out of a sense of empowerment and control over life and its conditions. To what extent do the inhabitants feel that their needs and desires have been accommodated by the upgrading project and the other institutions which are now operating the community services provided by the project.

B. Livability

This will be evaluated by assessing the quality of life at the present for the inhabitants of the project areas as well as pinpointing likely future trends.

The key issues are:

1. Increasing densification
2. Levels of cleanliness
3. Access to basic services
4. Adequacy of Health Services
5. The prospects of healthy future development for children in the project area.

C. Sustainability

This is a fairly broad concept that has to take into account not only the project objectives per se but also the physical, economic and institutional (urban management) context of the project.

The major aspects are:

1. The mission of the UDD as it evolved over time, its interaction with local, national and international organizations. What adjustments were made over time to project elements, design standards and involvement of UDD in project areas.
2. To what extent were private resources mobilized to assist in the upgrading and subsequent maintenance of project improvements?

3. What has cost recovery really meant? Has it come from the sources as planned or from new and unexpected sources?
4. What structuring of public/private interface encouraged the sustainability of project investments.
5. To what extent have the projects physical components withstood the test of time and use?
6. What is the percentage of the community that has benefitted from the various benefits extended by the project including basic payment loans, home improvement loans, and training? What are some of the adjustments that the UDD has had made in order to encourage all potential beneficiaries to participate fully of the services provided?
7. In general a project experience leads to increased expectations, how do the beneficiaries view the possibility of further improvements in their area especially at a time of economic recession?
8. To what extent do the residents feel that they have to play an active role in the maintenance of their physical setting?
9. Definition of the spatial boundaries within which responsibility could be willingly assumed for various maintenance tasks--sweeping, sprinkling, garbage removal, watering plantings, landscaping, cleaning, drainage channels, safeguarding infrastructure connections, repairing damaged surfaces, painting etc.