

**Unit for Housing and Urbanization**  
**Harvard University Graduate School of Design**

**STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE IMPROVEMENTS  
THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

*Proposed Study Outline in Response to Paragraph 2.11 (d),  
Second Urban Project, Republic of Guinea*

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## ***STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE IMPROVEMENTS THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION***

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### **Introduction**

The government of Guinea is embarking on an ambitious urban development program to provide efficient and functioning infrastructure for its cities to support the process of economic revitalization and employment generation in both the formal and informal sectors. The program will be implemented through a comprehensive framework integrating strategic urban planning, infrastructure rehabilitation and supply, self-supporting land development schemes, and institutional development combined with decentralization, revenue generation and delivery of services.

Urban interventions developed with World Bank assistance aim at rebuilding the previously neglected basic infrastructure systems crucial to the functioning of Conakry and secondary cities. A new self-financing land development scheme is expected to supply the estimated 200 hectares of serviced land required annually to accommodate the demand for housing in Conakry.

The natural carrying capacity of land is limited by the topographic characteristics, lowlands, flood plains and drainage channels which dictated urban growth patterns in Conakry and have a direct influence on sanitary conditions in the city. Densification and proliferation of activities in unserved or inadequately serviced areas can aggravate the already poor environmental conditions. At a critical level, further overload causes the area to fall into a downward spiral of deterioration, destroying its livability and posing serious health hazards.

### **Purpose and Scope of Study**

With an estimated 70% of the urban population living in under-served and over-densified neighborhoods, there is an urgent need to define improvement strategies that:

- Significantly raise the level of environmental quality;
- Promote the sustainability of the planned improvements;
- Link closely to the overall institutional and development frameworks;
- Reflect the fiscal limitations faced by local government authorities; and
- Respond to the most pressing environmental issues to be addressed in each neighborhood.

The Unit for Housing and Urbanization at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design would assist the Ministry of Housing to develop strategies for progressive improvements at the neighborhood level. Ongoing research and work undertaken by the Unit over the past two years will provide analytical tools and comparative materials for this study.

## Objectives

The study will identify and define strategies enabling local authorities to improve health and sanitary conditions at the neighborhood level through the active participation of residents in each community for the development and implementation of pragmatic and sustainable action programs.

Specific objectives include:

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- Formulation of strategies for sustainable community driven improvements which can be implemented gradually or in discrete increments.
  - Development of improvement packages to be implemented by neighborhood residents through informal associations or formal NGOs with minimal assistance from public authorities.
  - Development of training programs for public officials within DATU, other designated agencies and members of community organizations to support the implementation of action programs.

## Methodology

The methodology is based on an approach that will identify and program a sequence of improvements which can build upon previous achievements to progressively raise the level of environmental quality in existing neighborhoods with particular focus on health and sanitation. Criteria for the design of minimal packages of activities will ensure that they generate a perceivable improvement in the living conditions of the residents, are sustainable over time and can engage community cooperation in implementation and maintenance. They would also be responsive to perceived social needs, culturally defined patterns of utilization of urban space and the functional requirements of informal activities from which households derive the majority of their income.

Sites for pilot projects to test the proposed strategies and assess the adequacy of the programmed improvement packages will be selected in cooperation with the Ministry of Housing and other agencies involved. Two or three sites could be located in Conakry. An additional site could be chosen a secondary city on the basis of planning studies currently underway within the S.N.A.T framework. Proposed improvements would be closely tied to and coordinated with ongoing or planned projects to rehabilitate and upgrade primary and secondary infrastructure in the city. The methodology will involve the following tasks.

1. General Assessment of Environmental Conditions and Identification of Potential Pilot Projects Preliminary assessment of environmental conditions in existing neighborhoods of Conakry and identification of the most pressing issues to be addressed, especially those associated with health and sanitation.

Selection of two or more sites that exhibit unacceptable or potentially hazardous environmental conditions and require improvements in storm drainage, disposal of waste water and



sullage, solid waste processing, street cleaning and other remedial actions. Suggested criteria for choosing sites in Conakry are listed in annex 1.

2. Site Assessment For selected communities, assessment of minimal improvement needs, physical constraints and potential for community-driven actions. This will be accomplished through:

- Interviews of community leaders and a limited number of households;
- Documentation of activity patterns with special emphasis on spatial requirements for informal sector enterprises and the income generating activities of women; and
- Documentation of the socio-cultural parameters shaping spatial arrangements and the dynamics by which residents create, appropriate, define and regulate their spatial environment, particularly as applied to vacant, shared and public spaces.

3. Formulation of Intervention Strategies and Improvement Programs Determination of a set of mutually reinforcing physical interventions and the institutional support required to implement them, giving particular attention to the implied level of community participation. The proposed interventions would be articulated in a sequence of sustainable improvement packages to be implemented gradually or incrementally. Each package will define:

- Generic interventions as well as specific actions determined by site conditions and community defined priorities, such as drainage, sanitation, solid waste management, maintenance of public space, and creation of spaces for income-generating activities;
- Leadership and social networks in the community capable of motivating and organizing neighborhood associations and informal groups to implement improvements and assume responsibility for the operation and maintenance of on-site facilities, pathways, utilitarian spaces and public open spaces; and
- Measures to eliminate or prevent the emergence of situations conducive to problems such as over-densification, misuse of space and social friction which undermine the implementation or sustainability of improvements.

The proposed improvements will be related to ongoing projects by KFW, RWSG and UNICEF who are in the process of formulating programs to improve sanitation at the neighborhood level as well as the activities of other donor agencies and USAID's work in secondary cities.

4. Preparation of Action Plans for Environmental Sustainable Improvements in Pilot Project Areas Development of a program of simple and effective remedial measures in agreement with community leaders and municipal authorities which responds to and capitalize on the specific characteristics of the site and the community.

Elements of the action plan could include:

- Description of proposed improvements and schedule of tasks;
- Preliminary cost estimates and community inputs;
- Institutional arrangements and responsibilities for implementation of project components; and;

-Community information and organization guidelines with particular reference to participation incentives, coordination of work and responsibilities of different formal and informal groups.

5. **Training** Provision of on-the-job training to the DATU team assigned to the study. The development of training materials and programs for local officials and community leaders could be complementary to this study.

6. **Development of Appropriate Local Planning Guidelines** Development of realistic and enforceable planning guidelines to safeguard environmental quality and eliminate health hazards. The guidelines would:

- Set minimum standards tailored to the upgrading needs of existing settlements based on the findings and the experience gathered in the preparation of pilot projects;
- Foster community compliance and promote cooperation among residents for enforcement;
- Embody the physical and socio-cultural rationale underlying current urban patterns;
- Reflect informal rules and accepted conventions that structure and regulate the use of space;
- Recognize the dynamism inherent in spontaneous and squatter areas; and
- Provide the flexibility required to meet the changing needs of developing communities.

The strategies and action packages should be reviewed following an evaluation of pilot projects. Key elements should be retained for incorporation into the guidelines for existing neighborhoods and new land development.

## **Study Outputs**

The study will assist the Ministry of Housing and DATU in:

- Developing strategies for the development of sustainable programs to improve the health and sanitary conditions in existing settlements which can be implemented incrementally and through enhanced community participation;
- Assessing the feasibility of active community participation in the implementation and maintenance of improvements and the organizational support entailed by different inputs and levels of involvement;
- Assessing the replicability of pilot projects focusing on the validity of specific concepts and strategies rather than generic activities and mechanisms; and
- Developing local planning guidelines incorporating socio-cultural parameters to promote upgrading and maintenance of environmental quality and reduce health hazards in the face of continual processes of transformation and change in urban neighborhoods.

## **Annex 1—Criteria for Site Selection**

In Conakry, selected pilot projects would represent the range of existing settlements in the city that require upgrading of their environmental conditions. Three broad categories are suggested exhibiting the following general characteristics:

### **Central Slums:**

This category would highlight the environmental problems of a centrally-located slum, having the following features:

- .Old public subdivision
- .High density (>600 persons/ha), close to saturation
- .Legal tenure
- .Dilapidated infrastructures and facilities
- .Water and electricity supply in the settlement
- .Numerous informal activities
- .Central location
- .Higher proportion of tenants than owner-occupants (i.e, a majority of "wagon plots")
- .Ethnic mix and weak community leadership
- .Fairly flat site with drainage problems

### **Spontaneous Developments**

This category will emphasize the environmental issues in a neighborhood having the following characteristics:

- .Spontaneous settlement with marginal services
- .Medium density (300-500 persons/ha)
- .Fairly secure tenure
- .Limited drainage systems and community facilities
- .Equal proportion of tenants and owners

### **Fringe Settlements**

This category will underscore the environmental and social conditions of a fringe settlement in its early stages of development:

- .Peripheral spontaneous settlement or urbanizing village
- .Low density (<300 persons/ha)
- .Illegal tenure but no eviction threats
- .No infrastructures and very few facilities
- .Majority of owners-occupants
- .Agricultural land uses gradually shifting to residential uses
- .Agriculture-oriented economic activities
- .Customary leadership and good social cohesion