

A just urban transition for and with informal settlements

THE ART OF DELIBERATIVE ENGAGEMENT

In a just urban transition, local government plays a central role in upgrading informal settlements in a manner that addresses historical injustice and results in improved conditions for informal settlement communities. This includes strengthening the ability of these communities to adapt to and recover from unpredictable, extreme weather events and other disasters wrought by climate change.

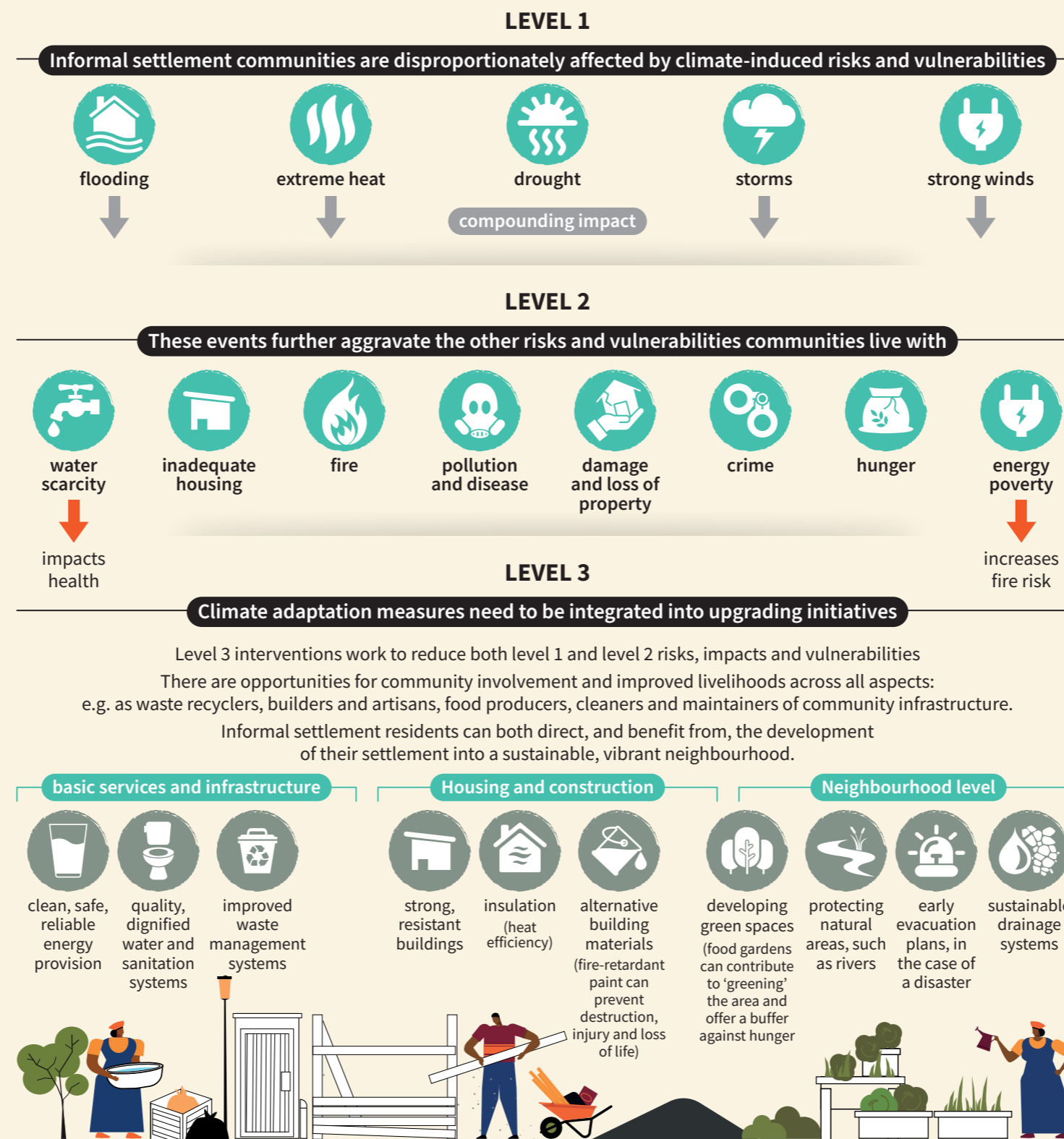
This emerging approach to upgrading involves new technologies and institutional arrangements. Much has to be clarified in policy, but what it does necessitate is that municipalities and communities jointly make complex decisions in unpredictable circumstances, which are largely due to the devastating effects of climate change for many informal settlement communities.

The notion that informal settlement communities are active agents of change who must define their own development is central. This implies that they have a 'seat at the table' and the ability to influence decision-making around upgrading.

In a just urban transition for/with informal settlements, emphasis is placed on *how* decisions get made, *who* makes decisions, whether the intended outcomes advance climate resilience and justice, and whether opportunities, resources and benefits are distributed *fairly*.

Deliberative engagement is key to realising these objectives. Deliberative engagement is fundamentally about choices and trade-offs, resource allocation and accountability – all are at the heart of informal settlement upgrading, which involves making informed decisions about complex matters to ensure people's rights, dignity and wellbeing are advanced. As such, deliberative engagement helps bring the proposed 'social compact' between informal settlement communities and municipalities to life.

Understanding risks and vulnerabilities experienced by informal settlement residents



The Just Urban Transition for Informal Settlement Upgrading Project is an initiative of Isandla Institute with the support of the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI). The primary objective of the project is to support the transformation of informal settlements into vibrant, safe, resilient future neighbourhoods. This pamphlet is informed by community dialogues with representatives from informal settlements in Cape Town. Isandla Institute would like to thank participants for sharing their experiences and recommendations, and the Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC) for providing facilitation support in these conversations.

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Deliberative engagement is

- A structured, two-way engagement, focused on deliberating options, pathways and sequencing of development
- About knowledge sharing, building a common understanding and co-learning
- Representative and inclusive, with specific attention given to the fair representation of under-represented and/or marginalised groups
- Decision-focused and action-orientated, defining trade-offs, priorities, resource allocation, roles and responsibilities, and timeframes
- Open-ended about options and solutions, as these are co-determined

Benefits and value

- Development of better, more grounded policy or interventions
- Increased trust between participants
- Sense of shared ownership and commitment
- Inclusive/representative of local needs and interests
- Directs action and instils accountability
- Defuses conflict and builds social cohesion
- Allows for testing of new ideas and technologies against local expectations, preferences and cultural acceptability

Success factors

- The allocation of dedicated (municipal) capacity, with the requisite capabilities and skills, and resources
- A dual approach to community engagement, which combines representative engagement (through a community structure) with broader community outreach and civic engagement (i.e. embedding the social compact in a broader community engagement approach)
- Clear articulation of expectations and commitments
- Integrity and transparency as core values driving behaviour and interaction
- Willingness and capability to listen (and learn)
- Ability to connect with or draw in other actors, where relevant (e.g. CSOs, provincial government)

Learning and connecting

- Embed a reflective practice in the initiative
- Draw lessons from deliberative engagement in informal settlement upgrading projects to shape the 'organisational DNA' of the municipality
- Facilitate peer learning and seeding of knowledge across informal settlements, neighbourhoods and sectors
- Document and share practices and learning to enable replication of best practices and to attract additional support

A deliberative engagement tool for informal settlement upgrading

A just urban transition approach to informal settlement upgrading is concerned with three aspects of justice:

Restorative

To correct historical exclusion and marginalisation

Distributive

To ensure the benefits and burdens of development are shared fairly

Procedural

To enable those who are often marginalised in decision making processes to be heard and influence decisions that affect them



Ultimately, the goal is to transform informal settlements into liveable, vibrant, safe and resilient neighbourhoods. This can be achieved through deliberative engagement processes that support pathways defined by communities themselves.

With its focus on a strong social foundation and fair process, this is a novel approach to informal settlement upgrading that demands a different set of capabilities from municipalities. Adopting a deliberative orientation

in informal settlement upgrading fundamentally challenges municipalities to work differently with informal settlement communities. This requires a change in mindsets as much as a change in routines, practices, relationships and resource allocations. The benefits, however, are clear and far outweigh the complications this new way of working will bring. Being reflective and sharing experiences and lessons will be critical to ensure that deliberative engagement becomes the norm in informal settlement upgrading.



PUTTING MEANING INTO THE SOCIAL COMPACT

Listen

- to our needs
- to our understanding and assessment of local realities and dynamics
- to our proposals and solutions

Be present

- make time to be part of the process
- in our spaces/at our events

Be inclusive and empowering

- support us in asserting our rights
- don't ignore women, youth, persons with disability or the elderly

Be clear and transparent

- about the scope of engagement
- about possibilities and constraints, including resource constraints
- about roles and responsibilities – don't commit to something you can't or won't do

Use our data

- enable the community to share existing data or to collect, analyse and interpret community data

Share your data

- about our community and anything that concerns our development, including your analysis and conclusions

Engage us in our own languages

- use a translator, where necessary
- avoid technocratic jargon



NEIGHBOURHOOD

Discuss with us

how we can create a neighbourhood that includes green spaces, is safe, feels welcoming and is well-connected to other parts of the city

Jointly develop

- a vision and plan to incrementally develop the settlement
- monitoring and evaluation systems and mechanisms



ESSENTIAL SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Understand

- our risks and vulnerabilities (flooding, fires, etc)
- our "worldview" (social, environmental, economic) and how our experiences shape our understanding of how/whether a particular intervention is just

Develop an understanding with us

over short, medium, long term options (practical, realistic, not "pie in the sky")

Explain new technologies

and allow for an honest assessment of pros and cons (don't test on us)

Involve us

- designing, maintaining, managing and monitoring (basic) services. Ask what ideas and practices we've already developed to govern services and how these can be built upon
- in deciding on the scope of work for tenders and procurement and enable community monitoring of contractors

Allow what is important to us

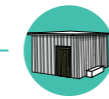
to influence decisions. Factors like location, frequency, affordability, access, safety, dignity and acceptability matter to us

Show us

that other parts of the city also play their part in changing to resource-efficient systems and are not being unfairly advantaged

Connect us

to relevant municipal departments so that we can report faults and be involved in the maintenance of systems so as to avoid frustration while upgrading is ongoing



LAND, TENURE AND HOUSING

Be transparent

about intended use of the land we live on

Involve us

in discussions about managing relocation and curtailing settlement growth. Our experience in settlement reblocking can help

Discuss alternative land options

with us and what infrastructure and services will be available in the recipient area

Explore tenure options

and learn from us what would give us a sense of security and stability to plan our futures

Be clear and honest about housing delivery

and our options to access subsidies and support

Explain alternative building technologies

and materials so that we can discuss the pros and cons

Identify what support we most need

and ways to respond (e.g. bringing in other stakeholders) to assist with self-build

Discuss

what livelihoods, skills and economic opportunities can be supported in construction value chain



LIVELIHOODS AND ECONOMY

Have an explicit focus on livelihoods

and economic opportunities, as these are very important to us. Examples are:

- Job creation in waste management/recycling
- Community involvement in managing and maintaining local infrastructure and spaces
- Local labour in the construction value chain
- Changes to land use management (LUM) regulations and zoning restrictions to stimulate home-based enterprise and local businesses
- Provision of economic infrastructure (including digital access) for local traders and businesses

Be clear what the purpose is and who will benefit

When proposing to use a public works employment programme

Discuss the pros and cons of local labour

and engage us about fair systems to manage this



PARTNERSHIPS, GOVERNANCE AND FUNDING

Work with our trusted partners

who have a track record in community development

Agree on the purpose, benefits and criteria

of (external) partnerships and involve us in the final selection

Connect us

to relevant units, departments, spheres of government and decision makers

Define the "room to act"

be clear about what is already planned, resource requirements and what resources are available

Involve us

in a joint budgeting for upgrading and expenditure monitoring

Support

a community-managed fund for small-scale local initiatives to respond to strategic needs and opportunities

