



WORLD BANK GROUP

Urban, Disaster Risk Management, Resilience & Land

UPGRADING INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN BRAZZAVILLE AND POINTE-NOIRE

**Urban Development and Poor Neighborhood
Upgrading Project**

**Partners: Ministry of Large Scale Works and Territorial Planning
and the Municipalities of Pointe-Noire and Brazzaville**

Duration: 2016-2021

Finance: US\$80 million[1]

AT A GLANCE

Country: Republic of Congo

Total population: 5.2 million (2018)

Urban population (% of total population): 67

Urban population growth (annual %): 3.3

Population living in informal settlements: Approximately 58% of the total population living in the two largest cities, Brazzaville and Point-Noire

1. CONTEXT: RUNDOWN INNER CITIES AND PROLIFERATING INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

The Republic of Congo, a fragile country of 5 million people,[2] is urbanizing rapidly at a rate of 3.3% per year.[3] It is one of the most urbanized countries in the world; the country's proportion of urban population is almost 25 percentage points higher than in Sub-Saharan Africa.[4] More than half of Congo's population lives in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire, its two largest cities.[5] Brazzaville, the country's capital and largest city, has a population of about 1.6 million; Pointe-Noire is close to 1 million. The inner cities, however, are rundown because of ineffective urban planning and land management, limited investment in infrastructure, and inadequate institutional capacity at the national and local levels. These have also brought urban sprawl and snowballing growth in informal settlements. Of the total population in these cities, 1.5 million people live in unplanned neighborhoods and these settlements account for around 60% of the total land area in the two cities.[6] Access to public services across Congo is substandard, including in cities. An estimated 20% of urban households had access to adequate sanitation and 55% to electricity in the country.[7] However, in Brazzaville the number of households connected to the electricity network is much lower at 22%, and in Pointe-Noire it is 39%.[8] Unplanned urbanization and an uneven geographical distribution of the urban population have made it hard for the national economy to benefit from urbanization effectively. If well managed, urbanization could be a key driver for Congo's economic growth and structural economic transformation.[9]

[1] The project's account totals US\$80 million.

[2] After a series of civil conflicts in the 1990s, peace and security have since gradually returned, however the country is considered fragile because the government and the international community are still striving to consolidate peace in the capital region.

[3] World Bank estimates based on the United Nations Population Division's World Urbanization Prospects: 2018 Revision.

[4] World Bank, 2018, The Republic of Congo, Systematic Country Diagnostic.

[5] *ibid*

[6] World Bank, 2018, The Republic of Congo, Systematic Country Diagnostic.

[7] Based on World Bank 2009 poverty studies and 2012 databank statistics

[8] According to World Bank socioeconomic studies of Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire in 2015.

[9] International evidence shows that economic activities are concentrated in urban areas. In Congo, lack of economic concentration is one of the main challenges confronting the country. Specifically, economic activity is spatially fragmented in the two places where two-thirds of the population live: Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire. For the country to reap the benefits of urbanization, Congolese cities need to become more productive and encourage firms to cluster and allow agglomeration economies in a spatially inclusive territory. As countries urbanize, workers move from rural to urban areas in search of better-paying and more productive jobs. Hence, close spatial proximity has many benefits: firms located near each other can share suppliers, lowering input costs; thick labor markets reduce search costs, giving firms a larger pool of workers to choose from; and spatial proximity makes it easier for workers to share information and learn from best practices.

In 2004, the government launched the Accelerated Reconstruction of Municipalities Program. It is an infrastructure program designed to stimulate local economies and improve living conditions. The program, however, lacks a substantial component for institution building. To help, the World Bank has been supporting the program since 2010 through the Water, Electricity, and Urban Development Project (PEEDU) and since 2016 with the Urban Development and Poor Neighborhood Upgrading Project (UDPNUP). Building on the PEEDU's approach, the current program puts more focus on integrating urban upgrading and institutional capacity building to improve the government's capacity to scale-up these interventions.

2. THE URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND POOR NEIGHBORHOOD UPGRADING PROJECT

The objective of the Urban Development and Poor Neighborhood Upgrading Project (UDPNUP) [10] is to improve access to infrastructure and basic services for people living in selected unplanned settlements in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire while also strengthening the urban upgrading capacity of the government and municipalites.[11]

The project benefits the 65,000 residents of the most impoverished neighborhoods of Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire, covering around 420 hectares. It provides an inclusive package of interventions to improve economic, physical, and social aspects of the living conditions in both neighborhoods, strengthen community organization and the ability of residents to voice their needs, boost job opportunities in labor-intensive construction activities, and, in the long term, enable permanent job opportunities in local economic development.

The UDPNUP also supports developing the capacity and institutional foundations for implementing a multi-sectoral strategy and action plan for upgrading vulnerable neighborhoods beyond the scope of the project. This includes devising neighborhood upgrading plans, improving regulatory frameworks and urban planning tools, and strengthening the role of institutions and the capacity of city governments and elected officials to finance, plan, implement, and maintain infrastructure and upgrading projects.

[10]Project Task Team Leader: Dina Ranarifidy

[11]<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/484631468195854426/pdf/PAD1266-PAD-P146933-Box394849-OUO-9-R2016-0011-1.pdf>

A. SPATIAL INCLUSION: CONNECTING POOR NEIGHBORHOODS TO THE CITY

The UDPNUP provides access to infrastructure and essential services in targeted neighborhoods and improves connectivity and integration with the rest of the city through:

- **Primary and secondary infrastructure:** Investments are made in network infrastructure to connect beneficiary neighborhoods. This includes upgrades to about 18 km of roads and 10,000 square meters of anti-erosion structures in Brazzaville, as well as the expansion of primary and secondary infrastructure in both cities to connect beneficiary neighborhoods to water and electricity networks.
- **Tertiary infrastructure:** Investments are designed to rehabilitate or build a wide array of socioeconomic infrastructure in the targeted neighborhoods. This includes building drainage, environmental, and anti-erosion works; building, improving, and providing access to water and electricity networks; and building and improving commercial facilities, health centers, primary schools, public spaces, and other municipal infrastructure.
- **Digitalizing the community's knowledge of risk data collection using innovative tools such as satellite imagery, drones, and geographic information systems.** The data will be used in developing the neighborhood plans financed through the project, adding a resilience lens to address issues pertaining to floods, erosion, and other natural disasters that affect the project areas.



B. SOCIAL INCLUSION: HARNESSING THE POTENTIAL OF COMMUNITIES

The project is designed to achieve a long-term vision of increased municipal responsibility for urban development and the delivery of services to residents, all with high levels of inclusion and participation by the local population. The project takes a different approach to the long-used centralized implementation arrangements for infrastructure investment and service delivery. It does this by developing the necessary capacity for the central and city governments to replicate the upgrading process in other neighborhoods after the project is completed, working in collaboration with the residents of those neighborhoods.

The project harnesses the potential of communities as drivers of inclusion through participatory investment planning. Activities include:

- **Hiring community facilitators** to assist communities in participating in the upgrading, from data collection to needs identification, investment planning, implementation, and operations and maintenance. Community facilitation activities include workshops, focus group discussions, and communication campaigns on socio-environmental issues.
- **Setting up volunteer-led local development committees and providing them with venues for community meetings.** The committees, made up of neighborhood representatives and city government focal points, serve as liaisons with local communities and propose projects based on pre-agreed technical criteria. The committees have significant female participation. They have been formalized by municipal decree in both cities.
- **Training neighborhood representatives and city government staff** on participatory methods with age and gender differentiation, in addition to leadership and change management.
- **Building the capacity of youth** and fostering their engagement by creating a strategic partnership with two local universities.
- **Setting up a grievance redress mechanism** before the project commences and training communities on using it to voice their complaints.

C. ECONOMIC INCLUSION: BOOSTING JOB OPPORTUNITIES

The project contributes to local economic development by:

- Creating temporary work during the construction phase through the use of labor-intensive construction techniques.
- Rehabilitating existing municipal markets and building new ones to support economic activities and livelihoods.
- Encouraging small firms to participate in tenders by providing them with training to increase their capacity to apply for small contracts.
- Providing training and assistance to project-affected people to develop new income-generating activities.

3. RESULTS: TRAINING THE LOCAL COMMUNITY TO VOICE THEIR NEEDS

The early results are related to structuring community engagement:

- Multi-stakeholder facilitation committees were created to inform people about the project and mobilize opinion leaders to take part in the local development committees and the management of community development committees.
 - Existing institutional structures were revitalized.
 - Two hundred members of the local development committees were trained to voice their needs and take on crucial roles in the project. The topics covered in the training sessions included leadership, conflict management, awareness building, social mobilization, sensitization, participation, data collection, participatory diagnostics, and safeguards.
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4. CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED: GETTING IT RIGHT FROM THE START

- Fostering community participation is a challenge in a post-conflict and fragile context with low social capital. It also requires tremendous efforts from the start and a long-term gradual approach, but is instrumental to ensure the sustainability of investments.
- Community mapping activities have catalyzed youth mobilization. The mapping has served as a platform for youth participation as can be seen in a growing number of young cartographers in the communities.
- In fragile situations, it is important to keep the approach as simple as possible to allow the government to scale it up after project's completion. For example, in situ upgrading minimizes the resettlement of people and reduces the costs of the project, making the upgrading approach easier to replicate.
- Structuring community mobilization through local development communities gave residents a sense of worth and belonging.



The case note is prepared by Urban Poverty and Housing GSG and Urban Poverty and Slum Upgrading KSB. The team comprised of: Phoram Shah, Waad Tamaa, Reyna Alorro, Rodica Tomescu-Olariu, Mansha Chen, Judy Baker and Dean Cira. Project Task Team Leader, Dina Ranarifidi provided substantive inputs. Charles Newbery provided editing support.

Please visit GSG website for additional information (<https://worldbankgroup.sharepoint.com/sites/gsg/uphsg/Pages/index.aspx>).

For questions on the project, please follow up with Dina Ranarifidi (dranarifidy@worldbank.org).

