



Local governments in Uganda engaging slum dwellers on public service delivery challenges

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When you meet Sarah Nandudu, you may need to lean a bit closer to hear what she says. But don't let that soft spoken approach belie the strength of this amazing woman. Sarah works in Jinja, Uganda with the Ugandan Slum Dwellers Federation, an affiliate of Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI). ICMA is working with her in Jinja and in four other cities as part of the [Transforming the Settlements of the Urban Poor in Uganda](#) (TSUPU) project, which is supported by the World Bank and Cities Alliance. ICMA and its partners will help five municipalities (Arua, Jinja, Kabale, Mbale, and Mbarara) improve their urban management and planning systems and help strengthen UAAU as a sustainable municipal organization representing the interests of urban local governments in the country. ICMA is also helping these municipalities engage their citizens through Urban Forums, citizens like Sarah.

I just returned from Uganda and went to visit with staff and project stakeholders to check in on project progress. My colleague Alan Edmond and I met with the Jinja Town Clerk (City Manager), Francis Barabanawe and the city's coordinator for the project, Geoffrey Muzusa to learn how the city is implementing the project. Geoffrey then took us to meet with Sarah and her colleagues at the slum/informal settlement of Rubaga in Jinja.

We pulled up on a badly damaged dirt road of Rubaga, a small, informal settlement of 1,000. The tiny houses are made of wood and tin, with maybe one window. Informal drainage ditches line the pathways of the slum. There are no sanitation – only pit latrines and little electricity. We met in a small room in the slum, with the doors wide open to allow the Uganda sunshine in. We then took turns telling about ourselves, our work and sharing experiences.

Sarah and her colleagues are setting up networks around Uganda that create saving schemes/groups



Sarah Nandudu speaks with us and her colleagues about the work of the savings groups/schemes with Slum Dwellers International in Uganda.

Saving groups are comprised of slum dwellers and SDI brings them together and teaches them how to save so they can increase their incomes and livelihoods. The group pools their savings so small loans can be made to participants. These loans can be used to start small micro businesses such as candle making, weaving or jewelry. Or it can be used to pay for school fees or for an unexpected emergency. These groups provide some economic stability to slum dwellers. Creating economic stability creates opportunity to also save for housing, pay for water and advocate to local government for these types of services. TSUPU has supported SDI in creating new saving schemes/groups to not only achieve some economic stability but also to unite them in speaking with a stronger voice in the community.

We met with them to find ways that the local government can engage them on service delivery needs such as water access and sanitation service. Check out the ICMA's You Tube page and see the video where Sarah describes their efforts - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rh7pqaXQkCY>.

The Municipality of Jinja has donated land near the slum so people can save money to build houses. In addition, through this project, they are building their first sanitation building, which will have three toilets and a bathing area.

The strength of the folks we met was humbling and I am glad ICMA is able to help cities engage their most vulnerable citizens and hear their voices for better public service delivery.

http://icma.org/en/icma/knowledge_network/blogs/blogpost/515/Local_governments_in_Uganda_engaging_slum_dwellers_on_public_service_delivery_challenges