



MAP KIBERA PROJECT

KIANDA PILOT SITE

Progress Report – July 2008

Introduction

MKP is aimed at mapping the population and the physical and structural features of the informal human settlement of Kibera (Nairobi, Kenya).

The main purpose of the research is to allow a clearer and immediate view of the settlement of Kibera through the production of a multi-dimensional digital map.

Highlights

- The Kibera slum is made of 13 villages. Out of these, Kianda was chosen as pilot site for its physical characteristic and political significance. The first phase of socio-demographic and physical mapping of Kibera begun from here.
- A team of 36 people, chosen throughout Kibera by the project manager, Mr. Kepha Ngito, was formed.
- Prior to the mapping exercise, a short induction training was done, where research assistants were taken through several technical aspects (map reading and physical location of structures; data collection techniques and form filling method) to help them in effectively carrying out their work.
- The research co-ordinator, the secretariat and the project manager visited all the relevant offices of the local authorities: Provincial Administration; District Officer, Chief were met and briefed of the project. All of them gave their consent.

- The Provincial Physical Planning Officer, the Office of the Kenya national Bureau of Statistics and the Ministry of Lands were also visited and briefed of the project. They gave us the maps to which the research outcome intends to update and re-defined.
- The six (6) days of mapping activities in Kianda pilot village had several ups and downs. Even though the collected data resulted for the most part unfunctional for the construction of accurate digital maps of the village, the mapping activities in general ended up being a very useful methodological training.
- Challenges and lessons learned: the pilot phase had several technical, organizational and administrative challenges which the secretariat have received positively with a view to inform the second phase of the research activities.

Problems experienced during the pilot phase

Map reading and data collection

- The first phase experienced many map reading and data collection hitches because many research assistants could not effectively read and use the maps. This incapability must be ascribed to the lack of an effective previous training of the research assistants.
Due to this, many structures were wrongly identified and numbered; this had a far reaching effect on the digital map building since the collected data, even though supposed to be accurate, were correlated to the wrong structures on the map.
- Most of the collected data resulted inaccurate also because of the initial uncertain and often ambiguous information given to the research assistants about data collection methodology. The shifting in-progress of the methodology and the ensuing clearing up of the prescribed form drafting was due to the experimental and preliminary nature of this pilot phase of the research.

- Besides, some field assistance were reported to have recorded false data, guessing data because of .

Language barriers (instructions)

- The research co-ordinator, Dr. Stefano Marras, and some research assistants had communication barriers and hitches. This was evident during the induction training and daily debriefing sessions. Dr. Stefano Marras could give clear instructions and ways forward which to our view was not followed due to barriers in communication. Simple instructions could be interpreted differently by research assistants. Therefore, the results would also be different not as expected.

Level of understanding

- Larger percentage of the research assistants were undertaking major research activity for the first time in their lives. This made the understanding level of the techniques and even of the meaning of the research low, that even the daily debriefing sessions could not change much.

Poor planning

- A major research project such as the MKP would require an adequate planning and preparation from all the involved player/actors. Inadequate planning clearly brought out some technical, organizational and administrative hitches in carrying out the project. Some important logistic arrangements (such as supplies necessary to cope with rainy weather or other practical problems) were not prevented prior to the keeping off of the field work. Fortunately, during the days of activity none of such problems arose.

High expectations

- There was high expectations both from the research assistants and the community where the project was piloted. Despite the fact that a proper explanation was given by the members of the project board as far as project

finances were concerned, many assistants still held high expectations on the financial facilitation of the project.

- The case was not different from the community which also expected some financial assistance especially when the research activity was being carried out immediately when the community was settling down from post election's skirmishes which widely affected the slum.

Topography of Kibera

- Physical topography of Kibera and more so of the pilot village also played a part. Many structures were not easily accessible due to the difficult terrain. Some research assistants, after failing to access the structures, opted for guess work. The untraceable segment of the data collected by guessing undermines the all reliability and integrity of the dataset.

Funding

- A project of this volume and magnitude needs proper financial preparation and support.

MKP was launched without any financial allocations. This affected the operations and logistical aspects of the project.

The lack of finances undermines the accomplishment and fulfilling of its objectives.

Fundraising for the MKP is therefore necessary to enable the passage to the next phase towards the mapping of the whole slum.

Way forward and recommendations

MKP being a noble undertaking that will inform service providers, opinion leaders, policy makers, project officers, UN agencies and the Government of Kenya of the opportunities and existing gaps in the Kibera slum, should take the following into consideration:

- The use of logical framework approach to planning for the project in Kibera as this will ensure predictability and maximum results. This will also address the planning problem because it will inform the planning process in regards to trainings, number of research assistants needed and the resources required to effectively carry out and fulfil the project.
- The number of research assistants should be scaled down from the actual 35, and specific roles (i.e. map readers, census data collectors, infrastructures data collectors) and proper training given must be given.
- Proper funding mechanisms must be employed to acquire resources to implement and carry out the research activities in a shorter and better way.

Conclusion

According to us, mapping represents the first most important step towards the implementation of any project of human settlements' development. Therefore, the MKP appears to be a project of paramount importance which should be supported by all to help Kibera people get better services.

