PARTICIPANTS

Social Dimensions of Upgrading

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National Upgrading Support Programme
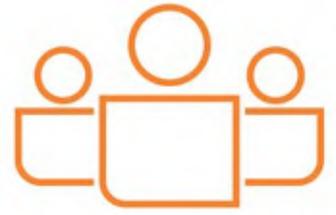
Summary

Beyond poor shelter and services: the social dimensions of upgrading

Informal settlement upgrading is about more than the physical development of a settlement. It is also about improving people's social and economic circumstances and opportunities, so that life in these neighbourhoods can improve. The existing assets that residents draw on and the livelihood approaches they use provide opportunities to do this.

A range of social and economic problems are typically found in informal settlements. Informal settlements reflect high levels of poverty, unemployment and insecure income generation. Formal employment opportunities are limited, informal employment opportunities are often casual or short-term and wages tend to be low. People in informal settlements are less likely to access the banking system and to get formal loans. Informal settlements reflect lower levels of education and food security. HIV prevalence in informal settlements is significantly higher.

For more details see Section 2, item 1.2

In addition residents of informal settlements are further disadvantaged by physical weaknesses such as disability, sickness or pain; isolation such as being cut off physically, lacking communication or being unable to access information through not being able to read; a lack of power and influence to change circumstances and feeling inferior, humiliated or disrespected.

People in informal settlements tend to experience a range of risks and insecurities, which results in a precarious existence. Within this situation unexpected events that contribute further to household instability and that place people at risk are known as shocks. Shocks are usually sudden events that have a significant impact – usually negative – on livelihoods. They are irregular and vary in intensity. They include events such as natural disasters (e.g. a tornado, fire or a severe hailstorm), civil conflict (e.g. an outbreak of violence between warring factions or gangs), losing one's job, and a collapse in the price of crops or goods that a household grows or makes. Other examples would be the death of a member of the household, an illness or additional members joining the household and needing support.

For more details see Section 2, item 1.3

A focus on vulnerability and shocks assist in understanding social and economic problems that affect people in informal settlements. It highlights the varied forms of deprivation that people are facing simultaneously, and how the combination of these factors makes the prospects for achieving a better life very difficult.

Finding resources locally: assets and livelihoods

There are ways to lessen the impact of exposure to risks and vulnerability of people living in informal settlements.

Assets are also known as capital and refer to the resources people are able to draw on. They can also be thought of as the building blocks that make people stronger in their life strategies. They belong to one of five groups:

1. Human capital refers to people's skills, knowledge, good health and ability to work.
2. Natural capital is the term used for natural resources such as trees, land and water.
3. Physical capital includes affordable transport, secure shelter and buildings, adequate water supply and sanitation, clean, affordable energy and access to communication.
4. Financial capital refers to the financial resources that people use to achieve their objectives (savings, loans, grants and remittances).
5. Social capital refers to the formal and informal social relationships from which people can draw various opportunities and benefits. It is like the glue or fabric of society and includes trust, behavioural norms, networks, contacts and connections.

A livelihood refers to the combination of the resources used and the activities undertaken in order to live. The resources might consist of the assets or capital described above. Livelihood

strategies is the overarching term for the range and combination of activities and choices that people make and undertake in order to achieve their livelihood goals. Taking a livelihoods approach to providing support seeks to gain an accurate and realistic understanding of people's strengths (or assets) and how they use them. The livelihoods approach is thus concerned first and foremost with people. The approach is founded on a belief that people require a range of assets to achieve positive livelihood outcomes. No single category of assets on its own is sufficient to yield all the many and varied livelihood outcomes that people seek. This is particularly true for poor people whose access to any given category of assets tends to be very limited. As a result they have to seek ways of nurturing and combining what assets they do have in innovative ways to ensure survival.

A livelihood is considered sustainable when it can cope with and recover from external stresses and shocks, and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets now and in the future. Improving people's livelihoods is about improving their living conditions, quality of life and prospects for the future. The objective is to increase resilience or the ability to recover from negative events, and to reduce dependency on outside support. The livelihoods approach thus seeks to promote **choice, opportunity and diversity.**

Strengthening social capital and livelihoods

It is possible to strengthen assets such as social capital to support people's livelihood strategies:

- Start by scanning widely the existing circumstances in a

community, using different ways of gathering and understanding information. From this broad view, a better understanding of the diverse circumstances of the people and the area can be developed.

- It is important to understand that different people in a community have different circumstances and strengths. It is important to think about those who may easily be overlooked or discounted because they are not powerful or do not have a clear way of expressing their points. These are marginalised and excluded groups.

- There are existing talents, skills, activities, opportunities and features within a community from which to build. This requires identifying and recognising the potential and opportunity, and then finding ways to support these.

- In a context of high unemployment, few opportunities to access formal jobs and entrenched poverty, it is essential to help appropriate economic activity flourish and grow. It is important to reflect carefully on what government, and other community partners can contribute, what value they can add, and what additional support and resources they can bring to a situation.

- The starting point is with how people themselves view their circumstances, and what they view as their livelihood objectives. There is no prejudgement about what these are – they must be established through participatory *activities*. A participatory approach is therefore essential.

The sustainable livelihoods approach does not require new participatory methods, but it does require that existing methods are used to obtain a wide view of assets, options and constraints to the advancement of the poor.

Integrating with informal settlement upgrading

The South African government emphasises the importance of improving socio-economic conditions. Upgrading a settlement should therefore include a plan for the transformation of a target

For more details see Section 3, item 4

community into a sustainable human settlement. The requirement to develop a plan for sustainability is intended to ensure that the qualitative and livelihoods aspects of upgrading are not sidelined by an emphasis on other aspects of upgrading such as engineering services, tenure or house construction.

For references and resources click here

Content

1. Beyond poor shelter and services: the social dimensions of upgrading

1.1 Introduction

Informal settlement upgrading is about more than the physical development of a settlement. It is also about improving people's social and economic circumstances and opportunities, so that life in these neighbourhoods can improve. The overall upgrading process can be a platform for further development and the improvement of the lives of the residents of informal settlements. The existing assets that residents draw on and the livelihood approaches they use provide opportunities to do this.

1.2 Social and economic problems affecting informal settlements

A range of social and economic problems are typically found in informal settlements. Some key facts and figures are listed below[1]:

- **Significant numbers of unemployed adults:** At 32% the unemployment rate in informal settlements is above the national average of 25%, although this varies across provinces.
- **Lower levels of employment in the formal sector:** Only 37% of employed adults living in informal settlements are permanently employed in the formal sector, compared to the national average of 53%.
- **Higher levels of employment in the informal sector:** 27% compared to the national average of 21% of people are employed in the informal sector.
- **People with insufficient or insecure access to food:** Over a quarter (26%) of households with children who live in informal settlements say they have not had enough food for their children in the past year, compared with 14% in formal housing. Almost one fifth (19%) indicate that children in their households have gone to bed hungry in the past year compared with 11% in formal dwellings.
- **A significantly higher prevalence of HIV:** A study of HIV prevalence in adults aged 15–49 years by locality type shows 26% HIV prevalence in urban informal settlements

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[1] Adapted from HDA 2012: 39 - 51

compared to 14% in urban formal dwellings[2]. The prevalence rate is how many people have the disease at a particular point in time.

- **Comparatively low levels of education:** According to the 2009 General Household Survey, four out of five adults aged 18 and over living in informal settlements have not completed matric. Of adults aged 18 years and over, 7% have no schooling (the same proportion for all South African adults). Only 2% of adults in informal settlements have completed technical, university or other post-matric courses compared to the national average of 11%.

Key points

- Informal settlements reflect high levels of poverty, unemployment and insecure income generation.
- Formal employment opportunities are limited, informal employment opportunities are often casual or short-term and wages tend to be low.
- People in informal settlements are less likely to access the banking system and to get formal loans.
- Informal settlements reflect lower levels of education and food security. HIV prevalence in informal settlements is significantly higher.

1.3   Understanding vulnerability in addition to poverty

When we think about poverty we often focus on how much money people have: how much they earn or access through grants, and whether they can manage to save anything. But lack of money is not the only thing that can make people weak, powerless, at risk and susceptible to negative things. There are other ways in which the residents of informal settlements can be further disadvantaged including:

- Physical weakness (such as disability, sickness or pain);
- Isolation (such as being cut off physically, lacking communication or unable to access information through not being able to read);
- A lack of power and influence to change circumstances (because of violence, coercion and manipulation); and
- Feeling inferior, humiliated or disrespected[3].

These circumstances, as well as the various environmental conditions identified above, make people vulnerable. Vulnerability can be understood as the probability of being exposed to risk[4] and shows that there are many dimensions of poverty[5].

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[2] Vearey et al 2009

[3] Derived from Chambers 1995

[4] Rigg 2007: 33

[5] DFID 2001

People in informal settlements face a range of difficulties in addition to a shortage of money, and they often face a number of these difficulties simultaneously. This becomes a situation of multiple overlapping vulnerabilities[6].

Vulnerabilities existing at the same time and heightening risk could include the following:

- Not having a sure source of sufficient food;
- Having inadequate access to water, sanitation and electricity;
- A lack of cash;
- Living far away from facilities and support programmes;
- Struggling to meet basic needs;
- Being female[7].

Poor households tend to experience a range of risks and insecurities, which results in a precarious existence. Within this situation unexpected events that contribute further to household instability and that place people at risk are known as shocks. Shocks are usually sudden events that have a significant impact – usually negative – on livelihoods. They are irregular and vary in intensity. They include events such as natural disasters (e.g. a tornado or a severe hailstorm), civil conflict (e.g. an outbreak of violence between warring factions or gangs), losing one's job, and a collapse in the price of crops or goods that a household grows or makes[8]. Other examples would be the death of a member of the household, an illness or additional members joining the household and needing support[9].

Key points

Shocks can be classified into the following categories:

- Human shocks (e.g. illness, accidents);
- Natural shocks (e.g. floods, earthquakes);
- Economic shocks (e.g. job losses, sudden price changes);
- Conflict (e.g. gang wars, violent disputes);
- Crop/livestock health shocks[10].

A focus on vulnerability and shocks assists us in understanding social and economic problems that affect people in informal settlements. It highlights the varied forms of deprivation that people are facing simultaneously, and how the combination of these factors makes the prospects for achieving a better life very difficult.

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[6] Vearey 2011

[7] Derived from Vearey and Drimie 2012, Vearey 2013

[8] Adapted from DFID 2001

[9] Derived from CSDA 2008: 19

[10] Adapted from DFID 2001

A big devil in the shacks: The politics of fire[11]

On average in South Africa over the past five years there are ten shack fires a day with someone dying in a shack fire every other day. Fires happen a lot in the shacks and not in rich areas because shacks burn easily. Shacks burn easily because they are often made of wood and plastic and cardboard. If a paraffin stove is knocked over in a shack, people inside have less than a minute before the fire will kill anyone still inside.

Often people build shacks very close together so that new shacks will not be noticed (and destroyed). In some communities the only space that is not for housing is the paths between the houses.

Ask anyone from a shack settlement the causes of fires and they will tell you: candles and paraffin stoves. Open flames were the biggest single cause of fires in informal dwellings in 2006, and nearly half of the known causes. As shack settlements often have very few water taps, when there is a fire it is hard for people to put it out themselves.

Shack fires are a big problem for the Fire Service; over a quarter of fires in South Africa are shack fires. They are the biggest single type of fire after bush fires. Thousands of people are made homeless every year after shack fires. For many of them it will not be the first time. If a fire happens at night when people are sleeping, or they are not in the area, many people are left with only the clothes they are wearing. When people store money in jondolos, years of savings may be wiped out by a fire. Personal items (such as photos) are also lost and can never be replaced. Time at work will be lost. Tools or stock are destroyed. Matric, diplomas and training certificates, as well as ID books (needed to access state healthcare and grants) are also burnt, requiring a lengthy and expensive process of replacement.

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[11] Adapted from *Birkinshaw, M (2008) Pambazuka News 2008-09-17, Issue 396.* Available at
*http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/comment/50572*

2. Finding resources locally: assets and livelihoods

2.1   Assets

Section 1 above focused on the problems and difficulties of life in informal settlements. But there are ways to lessen the impact of exposure to risks and vulnerability. This section discusses how a focus on assets can help.

Assets refer to the resources people are able to draw on. They can also be thought of as the building blocks that make people stronger in their life strategies. Assets are also known as capital. They belong to one of five groups:

1. Human capital refers to people's skills, knowledge, good health and ability to work. Human capital is required in order to make use of any of the four other types of assets.
2. Natural capital is the term used for natural resources such as trees, land and water.
3. Physical capital includes affordable transport, secure shelter and buildings, adequate water supply and sanitation, clean, affordable energy and access to communication.
4. Financial capital refers to the financial resources that people use to achieve their objectives (savings, loans, grants and remittances).
5. Social capital refers to the formal and informal social relationships from which people can draw various opportunities and benefits. It is like the glue or fabric of society and includes trust, behavioural norms, networks, contacts and connections. These connections take a variety of forms e.g. membership of clubs, societies and religious institutions, friendships, family relationships and networks. Social capital gives access to information, influence or power and support from others.
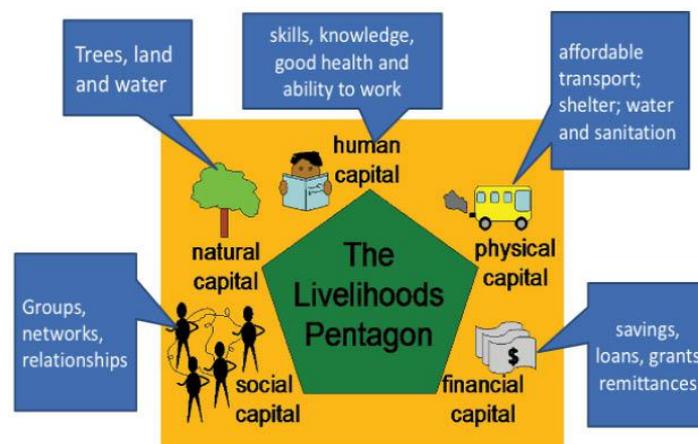
> **Social capital**
>
> *Social capital can be used in both negative and positive ways. Groups can exclude people, as well as include them and can constrain as well as facilitate. Networks may be based on strictly hierarchical or power relationships that limit people's ability to thrive. The costs of maintaining social capital can be high (such as maintaining good relationships, supporting others), and may fall disproportionately on women or less powerful members of the household. Membership of a group or network often entails obligations (e.g. to assist others in times of distress) as well as rights (to call upon assistance). Calls for assistance may come at difficult times, such as a funeral happening at the same time as needing to buy school uniforms (DFID 2000).*

2.2   Livelihoods and sustainable livelihoods

A livelihood refers to the combination of the resources used and the activities undertaken in order to live. The resources might consist of the assets or capital described above, i.e. human, natural, financial and physical capital. For example, a livelihood strategy that includes growing food and gardening could consist of:

- Someone's skill in gardening (human capital);
- Their access to some land that no-one else is using (natural capital);
- Seeds from a neighbour (natural capital from a social network);
- Support received from a gardening NGO, that provides advice and skills training (social capital).

Livelihood strategies is the overarching term for the range and combination of activities and choices that people make and undertake in order to achieve their livelihood goals. People combine activities in different ways to meet their various needs at different times. An example of this is straddling where different members of the household live and work in different places temporarily (e.g. seasonal migration) or permanently. The Johannesburg Poverty and Livelihoods study notes a package of strategies used by poor households, such as surviving through grants and income from formal or informal employment, complemented by strategies such as keeping good relations with family and neighbours in order to get their assistance when needed (such as borrowing money or food).

Taking a livelihoods approach to providing support seeks to gain an accurate and realistic understanding of people's strengths (or assets) and how they use them. The livelihoods approach is thus concerned first and foremost with people. The approach is founded on a belief that people require a range of assets to achieve positive livelihood outcomes. No single category of assets on its own is sufficient to yield all the many and varied livelihood outcomes that people seek.

This is particularly true for poor people whose access to any given category of assets tends to be very limited. As a result they have to seek ways of nurturing and combining what assets they do have in innovative ways to ensure survival.

Seeing opportunity in difficult circumstances

In their physical and legal characteristics informal settlements have a range of problems and deficiencies when compared to formally developed areas. However they can, in fact, be places of socio-economic opportunity for some people. Most informal settlements afford some livelihoods opportunities to residents. Providing support and investment into the settlement can improve livelihoods and contribute to long-term socio-economic transformation of the area. Informal settlements should thus not be regarded merely in terms of their physical form, but also in terms of human capital, social mobility and livelihoods opportunity. (Adapted from PPT and HDA 2014:17)

Sustainable livelihoods

A livelihood is considered sustainable when it can cope with and recover from external stresses and shocks, and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets now and in the future[12].

Improving people's livelihoods is about improving their living conditions, quality of life and prospects for the future. The objective is to increase resilience or the ability to recover from negative events, and to reduce dependency on outside support[13].

The livelihoods approach thus seeks to promote **choice, opportunity and diversity.** The idea is that those with many types of assets are able to choose from a range of options in order to maximise their achievement of positive livelihood outcomes, rather than being forced into any given strategy because it is their only option[14].

Dealing with competition

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[12] Derived from PPT and HDA 2014: 6
[13] PPT and HDA 2014: 15
[14] DFID 1999

Development projects that favour some people can disadvantage others. When considering livelihood strategies it is important to recognise that people compete (for jobs, for markets, to secure better prices, etc.) This makes it difficult for everyone to achieve simultaneous improvements in their livelihoods. There is no 'solution' to this problem. However, it emphasises the importance of extending people's choices and opportunities and building up their ability to take advantage of these opportunities. It also requires thinking about 'safety nets' for those who remain unable to achieve their livelihood objectives. (Adapted from DFID guidance sheets.)

The Informal Economy

The informal economy gives some people a way to survive in towns and cities. Even if the type of activity or the way it operates may not meet formal standards and regulations, it is often the only option available to people when there are no jobs to be found. The informal economy allows access into economic activity because of advantages as low barriers to entry, low administrative requirements, low setup costs, and greater flexibility and manoeuvrability. By contrast, formal economic activity is often more costly and complicated to access, and is out of the reach of many poor people. Informal economic activity has a vital role to play in broadening the number of people involved in productive activity and in bringing in vital income for people. (Adapted from PPT and HAD 2014:18.)

3. Strengthening social capital and livelihoods

It is possible to strengthen assets such as social capital to support people's livelihood strategies and there are some tools to help identify what needs to be done. These tools will be outlined in Section 4.

Principles for strengthening social capital

- **Taking a wide view in the beginning:** It is useful to start by scanning widely the existing circumstances in a community, using different ways of gathering and understanding information. This usually involves residents putting forward a broad range of issues, concerns and ideas. From this broad view, a better understanding of the diverse circumstances of the people and the area can be developed. The investigation can then start focusing on specific aspects to analyse more intensely[15].

  Participatory approaches are in Section 4.

- **Recognising difference in the community:** It is important to understand that different people in a community have different circumstances and strengths. There is

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[15] DFID 2001

often a need to break down information into how it reflects the circumstances of men, women, the elderly, youth and so on, and to understand how these circumstances differ – and therefore how support might need to differ. Also it is important to think about those who may easily be overlooked or discounted in gathering information and formulating plans, because they are not powerful or do not have a clear way of expressing their points. These are marginalised and excluded groups[16].

- **Building on strengths:** As noted in the section above, a livelihood approach works with people's strengths[17]. From this perspective there are existing talents, skills, activities, opportunities and features within a community from which to build. This requires identifying and recognising the potential and opportunity, and then finding ways to support these.

- **Identifying external support:** A specific dimension of livelihood support relates to facilitating economic activity and income generation within the neighbourhood. In a context of high unemployment, few opportunities to access formal jobs and entrenched poverty, it is essential to help appropriate economic activity flourish and grow. Building on strengths requires careful reflection on the part of government, and other community partners, about what they can contribute, what value they can add, and what additional support and resources they can bring to a situation. It is important for municipalities to identify their roles and responsibilities and find ways for the livelihoods support function to be resourced. Municipalities need to identify their potential to contribute, as well as their own capacity limitations. They will need to be strategic about what they prioritise, what they undertake in-house and what they achieve either through partnerships with other spheres of government, the private sector or NGOs[18].

- **Adopting a participatory approach:** The starting point is with how people themselves view their circumstances, and what they view as their livelihood objectives[19]. There is no prejudgement about what these are – they must be established through participatory *activities*[20]. A participatory approach is therefore essential. However there is no single approach: flexibility in method is a distinctive feature of the sustainable livelihoods approach[21].

The sustainable livelihoods approach does not require new participatory methods, but it does require that existing methods are used to obtain a wide view of assets, options and constraints to the advancement of the poor. There will never be a set recipe for what method to use under what circumstances.

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[16] DFID 2001 guidance sheets

[17] DFID 1999

[18] Adapted from PPT and HDA 2014: 22

[19] DFID 2001

[20] DFID 1999

[21] PPT and HDA 2014: 7

There are techniques that can be used to identify existing characteristics, patterns, issues and circumstances in a particular settlement. Two useful tools to identify and agree on how to improve things, what to prioritise and how to get support with these are community surveys and action planning. These are outlined in Section 4.

4.1   Planning for sustainable human settlements

The South African government emphasises the importance of improving socio-economic conditions. This is evident in various government policies, plans and targets. For example:

- In housing policy there has been a shift to the creation of human settlements rather than the delivery of housing;
- There is also the Outcome 8 target of creating sustainable human settlements and improved quality of household life;
- The National Development Plan of 2012 also highlights these objectives.

> These policies are discussed in more detail in Section 3.

The Outcome 8 Delivery Agreement requires the development of a plan for the transformation of a target community into a sustainable human settlement. The requirement to develop a plan for sustainability is intended to ensure that the qualitative and livelihoods aspects of upgrading are not sidelined by an emphasis on other aspects of upgrading such as engineering services, tenure or house construction. This plan is called a transformation plan or a **settlement-level response plan**. It must be tied into municipal planning and budgeting processes.

> Developing a response plan is outlined in Section 10.

Programme level	
Settlement level	√

4.2   Examples of activities, interventions and partners

Below are three examples of activities, interventions and partnerships, which could be linked with an informal settlement upgrading project.

Example 1 – Active boxes built in Khayelitsha through the VPUU: Khayelitsha has one of the highest crime levels in South Africa. Following an analysis of the situation (including crime mapping) a range of responses were formulated including the construction of active boxes in

Safe Node Areas (SNA). Active boxes are a series of easily identifiable vertical buildings along major pedestrian routes. These structures create a specific identity for each of the Safe Node Areas; they function as orientation devices along the pedestrian routes and they are points of refuge along the route should a criminal situation arise. The structures accommodate day and night activities.

Example 2 – Community-based maintenance in Msunduzi: From 1998 the Ntuthukoville community partnered with the Msunduzi municipality to deliver services in their area, an informal settlement that had recently been upgraded. The project was initiated to combat the deterioration of their newly-delivered infrastructure through lack of maintenance. For a

daily work rate, participants (mainly female heads of households) collected refuse from people's homes, picked up litter, cut grass on road verges and in public space, cleaned stormwater drains, swept streets, undertook minor road repairs and implemented anti-soil erosion measures[22].

Example 3 – Community work programme: The Community Work Programme (CWP) is a sub-programme of government's Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). It supplements livelihood strategies by providing a basic level of income security through work. It aims to provide a number of days of work to residents of an area through delivering a project that the community has chosen. The programme is targeted at unemployed and underemployed women and men of working age. Work must be useful work that improves the area and the quality of life for the people living there.

See video on the Community Works Programme

5. Summary: The livelihood impacts of upgrading

Sustainable human settlements and improved quality of household life are defined by:

- Access to adequate accommodation that is suitable, relevant, appropriately located and affordable;
- Access to basic services (water, sanitation, refuse removal and electricity);
- Security of tenure irrespective of ownership or rental, formal or informal structures;
- Access to social services and facilities, and economic activities and opportunity within reasonable distance.

Incremental upgrading can improve access to livelihoods by strengthening assets or capital. It can do so in the following ways:

Human capital

- Health improvements and reduced health risks through water and sanitation provision.
- Increased skills and knowledge through participatory processes.
- Social capital.
- Sense of permanent community through secure tenure.
- Improved access to support services; network building through community participation and empowerment.

Natural capital

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[22] Unfortunately this initiative was discontinued in 2006 because of Msunduzi municipalities' financial constraints and interpretation of the MFMA (*Naidoo N, The Witness 12 June 2006*).

- Improved natural environment through the provision of storm-water drains and electrification as an alternative to fossil fuels.

Physical capital

- Provision of basic services: water, sanitation, drainage, access to public transport, area lighting, electrification.

Financial capital

- Secure tenure provides a focus for investment.
- A fixed address improves access to banking facilities.
- Improved employment opportunities through links to transport and economic amenities.

Reduced vulnerability to external shocks through:

- Security of tenure;
- Greater social cohesion;
- Pro-poor attitudes from officials, professionals and politicians engaging in the upgrading process (but it can take time for attitudes to change).

Toolkit

You will find the following resources on the Toolkit CD:

- CWP video: Overview of the Community Work Programme (Department of Cooperative Governance COGTA, 2011)
- Informal Settlements: Informal early childhood development centres: Guidelines (HDA and PPT, 2014)
- Informal Settlements: Improved livelihoods, the informal economy and local job creation: Guidelines (HDA and PPT, 2014)

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