Unplanned and unregulated urban development is not unique to Swaziland, but addressing the issue through direct consultations with beneficiaries is an important improvement toward resolving this persistent problem. The Swaziland Urban Development Project includes standard infrastructure work, such as increasing urban roads, rehabilitating and expanding water and sewage services, and developing a solid waste facility.

However, in Swaziland it was the shift in focus from infrastructure problems to land ownership policies that reframed the urban issues. To make property ownership possible, the legal framework was changed to allow for the signing of 99-year leases by occupants. Project beneficiaries pay a deposit for their plots and use their leases as collateral to access loans to pay for the new services.

The World Bank team contracted with consultants to develop participatory methods, provide training for personnel, and improve institutional capacity. It was the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (MHUD) and the beneficiaries who worked together to address the process of land acquisition. As a result of the project’s success, beneficiary input in the process of urban development has become a mainstay for projects in Swaziland.

**Project Objectives**

The objectives of the project were to:

- Provide a basis for sustainable urban development through emphasizing policy reform and institutional development
- Pilot land reform, participatory development, and housing solutions for moderate- and low-income urban households
- Address critical infrastructure needs, including water, sanitation, waste disposal, and roads.

This project was recognized as Best Practice in Social Development by the Social Development Family and received an award for Excellence in Supervision (QSR) from the Quality Assurance Group (QAG). The task team leader was Naa Dei Nikoi. This best practice note was prepared by Kathleen Kuehnast.
Securing Government Support for Urban Renewal

Although Swaziland is not an intensely urbanized country, urbanization has been increasing, and urban growth is 5 percent to 6 percent per year. The problem with urban expansion in Swaziland is that it is largely unplanned.

Remarkably, more than 60 percent of the population in the two largest cities of the Mbabane-Manzini corridor live in ad hoc housing. These unplanned communities inhabit substandard structures on unsurveyed land with no legal titles. Less than 50 percent of the urban population have access to safe water, and less than 20 percent are connected to the sewerage network. Poor water quality contributes to a child mortality rate significantly higher than might be expected in a country with Swaziland’s per capita income. In addition, both the service utility operating systems and water treatment installations have reached capacity. Rapid development on steep lands and the use of limited soil and timber resources to build temporary dwellings are compromising the country’s resources. Therefore, without sound local planning processes in place, environmental degradation will continue.

In general, Swaziland has lacked an effective management system by which to plan urbanization. The absence of clear national sectoral policies and a pervasive lack of institutional capacity have left the government with little ability to legislate sustainable growth. However, most problematic in the ongoing urbanization has been the lack of available land for development.

Cultural Aspect of Land

In Swaziland, land represents more than physical property. The legacy of considerable land loss during the colonial period has heightened sensitivities to changes in land tenure and led to a complex mosaic of landholding arrangements. For example, about 60 percent of rural and semi-urban land has been classified as Swazi Nation Land (SNL) and has been held in trust by the King for the Swazi Nation. Typically, this land is unsurveyed and unregistered, nor can it be used as collateral to raise capital. This form of land tenure severely curtails planned development of formal housing and the extension of urban services.

Building Consensus and Promoting Beneficiary Participation

Building consensus around the mechanisms needed to obtain land for urban development was a delicate and prolonged process involving the government, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders. In 1992, the King agreed to allocate the SNL for urban development. Nevertheless, consultations were critical to secure the support of community leaders, chiefs, and regional administrators. Moreover, because the communities are extremely interconnected, it became essential that residents of informal urban settlements be closely consulted in the project design.

Socioeconomic information about the beneficiaries obtained through a Land and Housing Market Study was used to structure the participation process and to ensure equitable representation of all groups. A Community Liaison Task Force was established to facilitate a series of meetings convened by community leaders prior to and during the preliminary engineering design. These meetings engaged residents in discussions of service options and costs, placement of roads, services, and community facilities.

In-depth consultations with beneficiaries were also initiated through the use of focus groups. The project recognized the need for community participation to move at a contextually appropriate speed. Although the process moved more slowly than the task managers had anticipated, it was important that the beneficiaries felt that they owned the project.

The participating communities have since appointed Project Steering Committees, which are working with the implementing agencies and design engineers in the detailed design phase. In addition, locally recognized community leaders, known as Project Outreach Facilitators, play a significant role in maintaining open lines of communication between the Swaziland National Housing Board and the community. For example, when it came time to introduce the concept of plot prices to the community, the Outreach Facilitators explained the fee structure and the services that would be available once the land was rehabilitated.

Within the upgraded areas, relocation of an estimated 300 temporary houses took place for construction of on-site facilities. The Outreach
Facilitators engaged the local community as to what would be best, especially for widows, disabled, or older people who are without real income and thus have no access to a plot. The community consultations led to viable solutions that enabled the poor to purchase plots. In several instances, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) were approached to purchase plots for the poor. Trust funds also were established to assist the poor.

**Women’s Access to Land**

The project incorporates equity principles. The Staff Appraisal Report (SAR) (Report no. 12753-SW, October 21, 1994) emphasized improved access to basic infrastructure and social services, especially for women, children, and the poor. However, as the project developed, gender disparities in land title registration became more apparent and required special attention.

An estimated 43 percent of the total heads of household who could qualify for plots were women, but legal provisions blocked some women from landholding. Under the relevant Swazi law, a civil law marriage gives marital powers and property rights to the husband unless an agreement otherwise is made in advance and recorded on the marriage register. Approximately 20 percent of the women who qualified for plots had contracted civil law marriages in which their husbands retained property rights. This status limited their ability to register titles at the Deeds Registry.

The Marriages Act (1964) and the Deeds Registry Act (1968) impose limits on a married woman’s ability to register immovable property in her name. Under the Marriages Act, the allocation of plots with urban services to female heads of household is problematic. As noted above, the Swazi Law on Civil Marriages (which follows the Roman/Dutch Common Law) gives property rights to the husband. Unless women deny their husbands’ marital power, the women cannot legally register title to property in their names.

These issues were analyzed in meetings with stakeholders, as well as at the Mid-Term Review workshop. Short- and long-term actions were recommended that ultimately led to amendments in the provisions of the Marriages and Deeds Registry Acts that had limited the capacity of some women to register title deeds in their names. The actions also promote compliance with the Age of Majority Act, which gives equal status to men and women above the age of 21.

The project has instituted activities to sensitize citizens at all levels of society—policymakers, parliamentarians, traditional leaders, and the communities—to enhance their understanding of gender issues as well as to obtain their support for the required gender-related reforms.

**Supervising for Outcomes**

Despite a very difficult project that has been slow to implement and has a limited supervision budget, important attention has been given to the social components of supervision. This effort has improved the overall operation of social development, the ongoing involvement of the beneficiary communities, and the design of participatory project implementation monitoring.

Social development issues and social risks have been taken into account, as seen in the workshops held to address institutional roadblocks and to improve institutional interrelations. In-depth analysis has spurred the government to improve women’s access to land ownership. In addition, actions have been taken to encourage the national housing authority to establish the cost of plots for development so that the community can continue to buy land under the project.

Social development outcomes continue to be monitored under the project. Supervision has resulted in greater interaction among the major institutional players involved. Contact has been maintained with the communities despite the difficulties posed by the slow implementation. Participatory monitoring and evaluation have been designed and will be put into operation as the project is implemented. The one weakness is the tendency to concentrate on monitoring outputs rather than outcomes.

**Major Social Development Accomplishments**

This project has resulted in major social development accomplishments:

- Improved equity and inclusion for women, children, and the poor, especially pertaining to land acquisition and access to infrastructure
• Increased participation of communities in urban development and monitoring and evaluation

• Strengthened social capital and social cohesion

• Government spurred to improve women’s access to land ownership

• Accountable and transparent governance promoted at community and central levels

• Excellent attention paid to key social development issues in reporting, particularly risks to community ownership as the result of continued delays in implementation

• Increased interaction among major institutional actors resulting from their involvement in supervision

• Project design adapted to make indicators more realistic regarding timing

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