

Lessons from mobilisation around slum evictions in Tanzania

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Forced evictions are a prominent challenge facing developing world communities, and a major driver of forced migration. A study of forced urban eviction in Tanzania shows that grassroots mobilisation alone may be unable to confront the challenges of displacement and that there are risks when mobilisation around displacement is premised on unrealistic expectations.

It is estimated that 4.3 million people globally were affected by forced evictions in 2007-08. In the developing world especially, there is a hope that grassroots mobilisation can serve as a means for marginalised groups to address such challenges.

Dar es Salaam's Kurasini ward lies adjacent to the city's port and is home to approximately 35,000 people. In October 2007 the government started evicting residents from the community in order to expand fuel storage capacity in the area. The Tanzania Federation of the Urban Poor (TFUP) – affiliated with Slum Dwellers International (SDI) – was the main group that mobilised residents around the eviction. The principal mobilisation effort undertaken by TFUP members in Kurasini before the eviction was a community-led population census and comprehensive mapping of plots and households. Accepting that the eviction would take place, TFUP used the data to lobby government for a grant of land for community resettlement. Six months after eviction, no grant of land had yet been secured and evictees were forced to independently find homes elsewhere in the city.

With respect to post-eviction outcomes, evictees who resettled as owners tended to relocate significantly further from their former homes than those who resettled as renters (an average of 4.5 kms distance versus 1.3 kms). In addition, the most negative impacts were found in employment, rather than housing. And TFUP members fared worse than non-members, particularly in respect of employment.

It appears that being a member of TFUP negatively affected resettlement outcomes by raising members' resettlement expectations and adversely influencing their strategies for securing post-eviction housing. Instead of finding new housing quickly, TFUP members intentionally delayed in anticipation of obtaining land and housing as a result of TFUP's mobilisation efforts. Six months after the eviction, none of the evictees reported having received any housing assistance from the movement. In Dar es Salaam's competitive housing market, the delayed action of TFUP members to find housing forced them to resettle relatively further from their former homes than non-members.

Since owners resettled significantly further from their former homes than renters, the strategy of delayed housing search was particularly problematic for members who resettled as owners, some of whom were forced to move to plots further than 20 kms from their former homes. Delayed action on securing housing after the eviction led TFUP members also to

experience more negative outcomes with respect to employment. These evictees either had to commute long distances to jobs near their former homes or find new forms of livelihood in their new places of residence.



Demolished homes following evictions in Dar es Salaam's Kurasini Ward.

The conclusion is that where expectations around the outcomes of mobilisation are unrealistic, they may ultimately prevent more pragmatic action to protect evictees' interests. While no direct promises were made to TFUP members by movement organisers concerning resettlement, the evictees' persistent belief that members would receive a grant of land became well established in everyday discussions and planning. This occurred in part as a result of brainstorming exercises in which TFUP members worked with local architects to visualise their post-eviction homes. The results suggest that proactive efforts must be made to support communities in their efforts to cope with highly disruptive events, such as evictions and consequent migration. However, while participatory approaches have considerable potential, especially in contexts where governments are unwilling or unable to act on behalf of communities, this case shows that organisers must be especially careful to establish clear and realistic expectations.

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