

SDGs as a driver to development

Urban change needs bold action. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a global plan to build better world by 2030. SDGs 11 speaks particularly about 'Sustainable cities and communities, but all other 16 SDGs are also interconnected to cities and urban development.

This fact sheet is part of a series to gain knowledge on the localization of SDGs in the endeavor for making them meaningful drivers for future urban development.



Women-led upgrading process in informal settlements

A case study of Freedom Square, Gobabis

This research analyses gender sensitivity of the upgrading process of the recently formalised settlement- Freedom Square in Gobabis, Namibia, by exploring local women's leading role in the process. The data was gathered in Namibia through interviews with experts and women inhabitants of Freedom Square and a participatory workshop. These provide information on women participants' motivations of tenure security and access to basic services which have been partially fulfilled through the process. However, the participating women did not have their major challenges addressed or resolved. Furthermore, lack of alignment between stakeholders affected the women's participation by gradually reducing it. These have resulted in less than anticipated impact of the upgrading process. Such research is significant in localising the SDG 11 in Africa, in an integrated manner with SDG 5.

Background

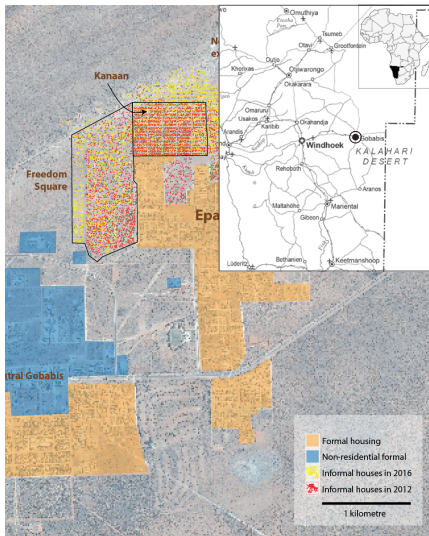
- » Namibia is facing urbanisation with a rapid growth in informal settlements. The inhabitants of these settlements do not have tenure of the land they occupy. This makes particularly women inhabitants more vulnerable and in constant fear of eviction. Moreover, due to a lack of tenure security, they do not receive access to basic services such as water and sanitation, which affect them the most due to their social role in household management.
- » The Flexible Land Tenure Act (FLTA) of Namibia can be utilized to mitigate this situation. It focuses on faster and cost effective land delivery to formalise an informal settlement thus making it eligible for to basic services. This law also allows women to own land.
- » This research looks into one of the women led informal settlement upgrading processes implementing the FLTA and how this process contributes to a sustainable development.



Inside the formalised settlement of Freedom Square (Ahmed, 2024)

Case study

Freedom Square, Gobabis, Namibia



Freedom Square (Weber and Mendelsohn, 2017)



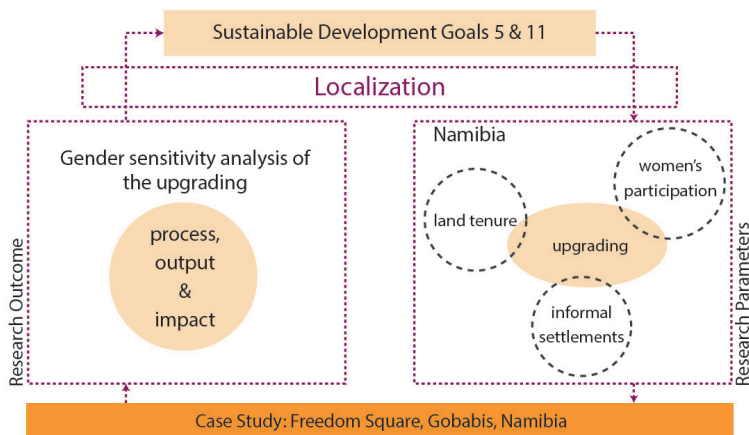
Freedom Square settlement (Ahmed, 2024)

- » In the case study location, Freedom Square, Gobabis, Namibia- a nine years long upgrading process occurred from 2012 to 2021, achieving 4 milestones throughout the way.
- » Initiating with enumerating the settlement, followed by planning the settlement, relocation of inhabitants to the planned layout, installation of service connections, forming management committees and concluding with handover of copies of tenure certificates.
- » most participants were women who are inhabitants of Freedom Square who stated to the government representatives that they do not wish to be moved from this location and need their highest priorities met, which were tenure security and access to basic services.
- » As they initiated the process, women also actively engaged themselves in planning the settlement with the planning students of Namibia University of Science and Technology and provided physical labour to excavate for service connections.

The research

The research has been conducted as part of a master thesis at the University of Stuttgart and the SDGs GoGlobal! project in 2024.

- » The main research question guiding the research was: **How gender sensitive was the settlement upgrading process in Freedom Square, Gobabis?**
- » The data collection has been conducted in April and May 2024 and included reports, interviews with experts and inhabitants and participatory workshop.
- » The data was categorised to identify women’s motivations, challenges and the role of stakeholders throughout the upgrading process.
- » The findings synthesis indicated towards the impact of the process on participating women and gives an overview the gender sensitivity of the process.
- » The research concludes with identifying how far this process contributes to creating sustainable communities. Followed by discussions and recommendations on localising SDG 11 in contexts similar to Namibia, through these women-led processes.

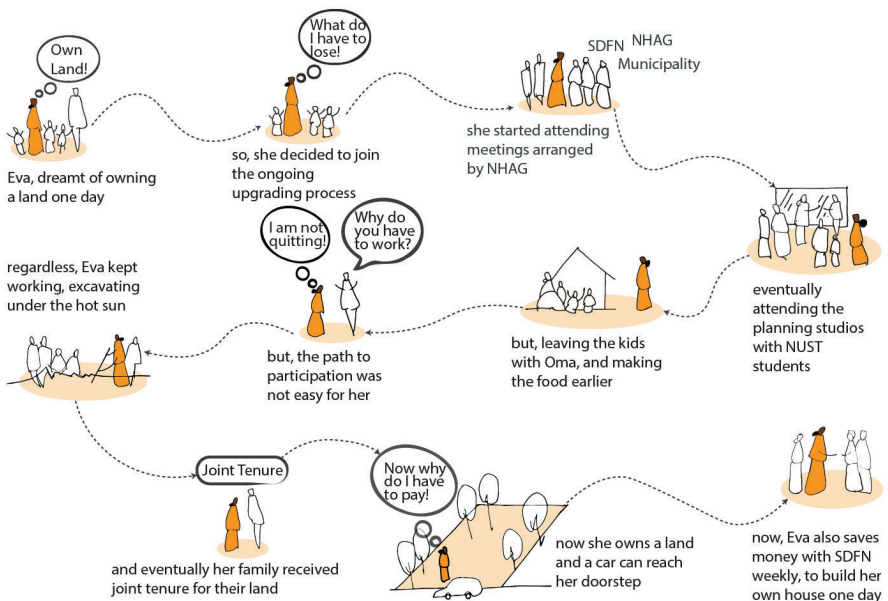


Research framework (Ahmed, 2024)

Key findings

Gender sensitivity of women led upgrading processes

- » The changing roles of non govt. and govt. stakeholders impacted women's active engagement.
- » Due to a lack of gender mainstreaming agenda and a lack of post-process monitoring, most economic and social challenges of the participating women went unnoticed.
- » Primary motivation of land occupation has been accomplished. Basic services needs have been partially fulfilled. However, land instalments are not paid, making tenure security questionable.
- » Women are committee leaders, but lack of women in decision making, authority & governance remains. Inhabitants are focused on avoiding land instalments but on building permanent structure and availing basic services.
- » The process has been able to accommodate certain gender specific needs, but it has room for reform by evaluation, monitoring and further planning.



Story of Eva's challenges of participation (Ahmed, 2024)

Recommendations

- » The policy recommendations include existing laws to explicitly acknowledge genders using clear terminologies and definitions. Furthermore, the urban development policies shall acknowledge inclusivity and set requirements of inclusive participation, to avoid the risk of overlooking gender specific needs.
- » Additionally, local authorities need to be equipped to handle the rapidly formalised communities and certain responsibilities shall be delegated to the committee leaders for better management.
- » The recommendations for development processes highlight the importance of holistic planning and an integrated approach. But moreover, regular assessment and post process monitoring are equally recommended. The stakeholders engaged in the development shall have a continued engagement to ensure sustainable result of the process.
- » Finally, raising social awareness in communities and within households is of high importance to achieve SDGs, specially the goal of gender equality. For example, inclusive decision making regarding household matter can impact the family members who will be open to an inclusive participation in processes, or an inclusive governance consisting all genders.



Participatory workshop to validate data (Ahmed, 2024)

SDGs relevance



- » Localisation of goal 5 (Gender Equality) requires a gender mainstreamed approach where processes and policies are aware of differences between genders and addresses them accordingly—thus being gender sensitive. The localisation of goal 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) requires taking an inclusive approach in informal settlement developments therefore ensuring participation of all groups with a comprehensive plan in mind.
- » Both these goals are possible to localise by taking an integrated approach, by being inclusive of all genders and all stakeholders in policy making, planning, process implementation and monitoring of urban planning projects.
- » An upgrading process with women’s active engagement among other stakeholders and producing outcomes considering women’s needs (land tenure leading to housing, access to basic services) therefore, impacting their lives with economic and social benefits can be translated as an integrated approach to localise SDG 5 and 11 in Namibia.
- » However, this research concludes that to localise SDG 5 & 11 through these upgrading processes in Africa, even though multi stakeholder engagement is necessary, alignment of stakeholder goals is of equal importance. As the goals aim to be sustainable, any process or policies to localise them needs to have a long term impact on its users. It is also important to remove barriers such as political influence on communities, which might set their development back.



SAFE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION

ENSURE FULL PARTICIPATION IN LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING

EQUAL RIGHTS TO ECONOMIC RESOURCES, PROPERTY OWNERSHIP AND FINANCIAL SERVICES



The SDGs GoGlocal! project aims to strengthen translocal and transdisciplinary research and teaching in how to localise and ground the SDGs meaningfully in urban planning and development practice. It is a partnership between the University of Stuttgart in Germany, the Namibia University of Science and Technology in Windhoek and the Ain Shams University in Cairo, Egypt.

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