



Strategic regional frameworks for addressing slums in Sub-Saharan Africa

MARCO ESTRATÉGICO REGIONAL PARA ABORDAR EL PROBLEMA DE LOS BARRIOS INFORMALES EN EL ÁFRICA SUBSAHARIANA

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Resumen El derecho a la ciudad” de Henri Lefebvre sostiene que la industrialización y la urbanización han fragmentado las ciudades, agravando la desigualdad social y la degradación medioambiental. Mientras el Sur Global se enfrenta a la expansión de los asentamientos informales, las soluciones actuales siguen siendo insuficientes. Este estudio examina las estrategias para abordar los problemas de los barrios marginales en el África subsahariana, haciendo hincapié en la necesidad de adaptación al contexto. Se analizan cuatro enfoques clave: seguridad de la tenencia, reasentamiento, gobernanza participativa y mejora in situ. Mediante una matriz de examen cruzado, la investigación evalúa estos enfoques en contextos históricos coloniales Anglófonos, Francófonos y Lusófonos, teniendo en cuenta parámetros de movilidad, desarrollo socioeconómico, impacto ambiental y escalabilidad. Los resultados revelan que la participación comunitaria es universalmente aplicable (puntuaciones 4-5), la mejora in situ muestra una eficacia constante (3-5), mientras que el reasentamiento tiene un éxito limitado (1-3). Los patrones regionales muestran que los contextos Lusófonos se enfrentan a graves retos, pero también tienen el mayor potencial para las soluciones dirigidas por la comunidad, mientras que los contextos francófonos demuestran una mejora sistemática y los contextos anglófonos se benefician de las innovaciones de la gobernanza participativa. El análisis a escala de las ciudades de Luanda, Maputo y Santo Tomé revela además variaciones significativas dentro de una herencia colonial compartida. El estudio concluye que no hay un enfoque único que sea óptimo, y recomienda soluciones a medida

Abstract Henri Lefebvre’s “Right to the City” argues that industrialisation and urbanisation have fragmented cities, worsening social inequality and environmental degradation. As the Global South confronts expanding informal settlements, current solutions remain insufficient. This study examines strategies for addressing slum challenges in sub-Saharan Africa, emphasising context adaptation necessity. Four key approaches are analysed: tenure security, resettlement, participatory governance, and in situ upgrading. Using a cross-examination matrix, the research evaluates these approaches across Anglophone, Francophone, and Lusophone colonial-historical contexts, considering mobility, socio-economic development, environmental impact, and scalability parameters. Findings reveal community participation emerges as universally applicable (scores 4-5), *in situ* upgrading shows consistent effectiveness (3-5), while resettlement demonstrates limited success (1-3). Regional patterns show Lusophone contexts facing severe challenges but also highest potential for community-led solutions, while Francophone contexts demonstrating systematic upgrading strength and Anglophone contexts benefiting from participatory governance innovations. City-scale analysis of Luanda, Maputo, and São Tomé further reveals significant variation within shared colonial heritage. The study concludes no single approach is optimal, recommending tailored solutions addressing local context profiles while considering broader regional challenges. The diagnostic methodology provides systematic framework for evidence-based intervention selection and resource allocation.

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que aborden los perfiles del contexto local al tiempo que tienen en cuenta retos regionales más amplios. La metodología de diagnóstico proporciona un marco sistemático para la selección de intervenciones basadas en pruebas y la asignación de recursos.

Palabras Clave barrios marginales, África subsahariana, seguridad de la tenencia, reasentamiento, gobernanza participativa, mejora in situ.

Keywords slums, sub-Saharan Africa, tenure security, resettlement, participatory governance, in situ upgrading.

1. Introduction

1.1. Theoretical Review

Henri Lefebvre's "Right to the City" (1968) provides a critical framework for understanding contemporary urban challenges, particularly in rapidly urbanising contexts where spatial control perpetuates historical inequalities. Lefebvre's critique focuses on how industrialisation and urbanisation processes have fragmented cities through the control of space by economic and political elites (Harvey, 2008). This framework challenges neoliberal and technocratic urban policies, positioning urbanisation as a political process rather than a technical one (Brenner, Marcuse, & Mayer, 2011; Purcell, 2002). The concept has influenced the evolution of urban development approaches from exclusionary interventions to more participatory, rights-based strategies that recognise the agency of urban dwellers (Butler, 2012; Marcuse, 2011).

Rapid urbanisation and population growth in sub-Saharan Africa have led to the proliferation of slums, with UN-Habitat reporting that 62% of the region's urban population lived in slums as of 2010 (Arimah, 2011). In this context, the "Right to the City" concept takes on contours, shaped by the complex intersection between colonial legacy, post-independence socialist experiences, and subsequent neoliberal transitions. African cities, marked by colonialism, present a characteristic spatial duality that crystallised persistent patterns of exclusion (Morange & Spire, 2019; Raposo et al., 2012). Colonial-historical heritage—Anglophone, Francophone, and Lusophone—provides a relevant framework for understanding African urban development, as these distinctions reflect different urban planning traditions that continue to shape spatial patterns and challenges decades after independence. According to Baruah et al. (2021), Anglophone cities show 22% more urban sprawl with less organised patterns than Francophone cities, resulting from British 'indirect rule' that allowed colonial and native sections to develop separately without comprehensive planning (Andersson, 2017). Francophone cities feature more compact development with denser centres and grid-like roads, reflecting France's centralised and standardised planning approach that sought unified urban land control (Dembele, 2006). Lusophone cities present a third pattern: intra-urban racial segregation with formal colonial centres surrounded by extensive self-built peripheries (Silva, 2016a; Raposo et al., 2012).

These historical development patterns persist in contemporary urban expansion. According to Lieberherr-Gardiol (2006), the evolution of approaches to addressing slums in Africa can be understood through distinct historical phases:

1. From 1950-1970, newly independent governments justified slum clearance through modernisation ideologies, viewing these settlements as temporary results of rural migration. While most Anglophone and Francophone countries gained independence in the 1950s, Lusophone countries remained under Portuguese rule. Anglophone countries adopted slum clearance policies, while Francophone countries maintained existing segregated spatial organisation with minimal investment in indigenous neighbourhoods (Andersson, 2017; Dembele, 2006). In Lusophone countries, late colonial plans acknowledged slums with proposals for “integration”, but the segregated system persisted (Silva, 2016b).
2. Between 1970-1990, international organisations began advocating for upgrading strategies to support resident’s rights. Newly independent Lusophone countries promoted slum inclusion through socialist programs, but limited resources and civil wars undermined effective implementation (Raposo et al., 2012). Francophone countries also established attempts to organise the territory through ‘formalisation’ practices, yet spontaneous settlements continued developing outside these formal structures (Dembele, 2006). Anglophone countries were the exception, by neglecting the expansion of slums with minimal infrastructure investment (Andersson, 2017).
3. The 1990s introduced environmental concerns about slum degradation amid political transitions across Africa. International organisations (United Nations, World Bank) and new actors (NGOs, private sector) emerged, while structural adjustment programs, neo-liberal urban models and market liberalisation worsened housing inequalities. This led to increased urban segregation with limited government intervention in slum areas in both Anglophone and Lusophone countries (Andersson, 2017; Raposo et al., 2012). Francophone countries experienced similar conditions but introduced decentralisation policies that shifted urban management to the commune level, focusing on human resource development and poverty alleviation (Dembele, 2006).
4. The post-2000 era was shaped by international frameworks emphasising disadvantaged population’s political and social rights, principles later incorporated into the Millenium Development Goals. However, the MDGs ‘Cities Without Slums’ target was often misinterpreted as justification for physical elimination of slums in Africa (Huchzermeyer, 2011). Some Lusophone and Anglophone countries adopted this approach combined with resettlement solutions for the vulnerable population, and gated communities for the rich (Andersson, 2017; Raposo et al., 2012). With Francophone countries mainly adopting upgrading approaches (Dembele, 2006).

Colonial planning legacies continue shaping contemporary slum interventions across regions through inherited spatial and institutional frameworks. Baruah et al. (2021) show that Francophone cities maintain more compact development with higher density city centres and grid-like street patterns, while Anglophone cities exhibit more sprawling expansion with 72% more leapfrog development and less planning coordination. However, both experience persistent disconnect between formal planning and community needs that has allowed slums to expand (Dembele, 2006; Andersson, 2017). Lusophone countries continue to reflect colonial spatial dualism, concentrating investment in central areas while further marginalising vulnerable communities to the peripheries (Silva, 2016a; Raposo et al., 2012).

The current international framework–Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030) and the New Urban Agenda (2016)–represented a paradigm shift: advocating for inclusive, participatory upgrading strategies that maintain existing social networks while improving living conditions (Kumar et al., 2016; Dick, 2016; Mohanty, 2020). Despite decades of testing and evolving strategies for addressing slums, an optimal approach remains elusive, confirming Watson’s (2014) observation that no universal solution exists. While the paradigm shift increasingly acknowledges slum resident’s agency and their ‘right to the city’, slum improvement approaches should be contextually analysed and adapted to regional and local realities.

1.2. Empirical Review

Building upon this theoretical foundation, I identified the four most common slum interventions in the literature, that have shaped policy and practice: tenure security, resettlement and relocation, participatory and collaborative methods, and *in situ* upgrading. These approaches reflect different interpretations of the “Right to the City” concept, shaped by the institutional legacies examined above. The most prominent tenure security approach by de Soto’s (2000), emphasises formal property rights, but authors such as Gilbert (2009) argue this oversimplifies slums challenges to the legal sphere. Resettlement strategies while effective in specific situations, when implemented broadly often cause displacement rather than erasing slums (Bettencourt, 2011; Todes, 2013). Participatory approaches have gained popularity by emphasising bottom-up and context-specific planning reflecting population needs and long-term satisfaction (Pieterse, 2013). While *in situ* upgrading–influenced by Turner & Fichter (1972)–emerged as an alternative to large-scale demolition, with recent research showing it can achieve both environmental goals and improve living conditions (Teferi & Newman, 2018). Current thinking favours coordinated, holistic strategies that can combine various planning tools and policies rather than isolated, top-down interventions to address African cities interconnected urban challenges.

Slum interventions across sub-Saharan Africa vary in scale, duration, and methodology. This analysis focuses on documented reference cases across Anglophone, Francophone, and Lusophone contexts, as this colonial-historical framework offers more nuanced

understanding than geographic categorisation—recognising how different colonial administrations established distinct urban planning traditions that continue influencing contemporary slum formation and intervention strategies (Njoh, 2000). Table 1 presents selected interventions with sufficient documented analysis to support comprehensive evaluation. These cases were analysed for implementation processes, stakeholder engagement, outcomes, and challenges, providing the foundation for identifying common patterns and best practices examined in the results section. Each approach is introduced with its theoretical framework and implementation context, using broader regional characterisation alongside specific cases for nuanced and critical assessment.

TABLE 1
List of programs considered in the examination of each strategy for slum improvement in the African context. Source: Author.

| APPROACH | REGION | PROGRAM | LOCATION (SCALE) | PERIOD | FUNDING SOURCE |
|-----------------|-------------|---|--|--------------|---|
| Tenure Security | Anglophone | The Tanzania-Bondeni Community Land Trust Experiment | Voi, Kenya (Local) | 1900-present | German Cooperation Agency (GIZ) and others |
| | | STDM Implementation | Kwa Bulu & Mashimoni, Kenya (Local) | 2020-2023 | Global Land Tool Network, Pamoja Trust |
| | Francophone | Land Administration Project | Burkina Faso (National) | 2009-2014 | World Bank |
| | | ProPFR Program | Benin (National) | 2016-2022 | German Cooperation Agency (GIZ) and others |
| | Lusophone | Paraíso Perceived Titling | Luanda, Angola (Local) | 2001-2005 | Government |
| | | Land Titling Programs | Various Districts, Mozambique (National) | 2007-present | Government |
| | All | SDI Movement | Various Countries (Global South) | 1996-present | Multiple stakeholders |
| | | Global Land Tool Network | Several sub-Saharan Africa countries | 2006-2023 | The United Nations, World Bank, and Swiss Development Cooperation |
| | | TSFSA Project | Angola, Mozambique, South Africa (Continental) | 2012-2013 | Cities Alliance, Ukaid |
| Resettlement | Anglophone | KENSUP | Kibera, Nairobi, Kenya (Local) | 2005-2020 | Government, UN-Habitat |
| | | Cosmo City Relocation Project | Johannesburg, South Africa | 2005-2009 | Government, Codevco, and private investments |
| | | LMDGP | Lagos, Nigeria (Metropolitan) | 2006-2015 | World Bank |
| | | Msimbazi River to Mabwepande Resettlement | Tanzania | 2011-present | World Bank, Spain, and the Netherlands |
| | Francophone | Saint Louis Emergency Recovery and Resilience Project (SERRP) | Senegal | 2018-2025 | World Bank |
| | | Zero Slum Program | Djibouti | 2018-2023 | World Bank |
| | Lusophone | GTRUCS | Sambizanga & Cazenga, Angola (Local) | 2014-2020 | Government |
| | | WACA Program | S. Tomé and Príncipe (National) | 2018-present | World Bank Group |
| | | Zango 1 | Luanda, Angola (Local) | 2001-2005 | Government |
| | | LNG project Quitunda Village (RAP) | Quitunda, Mozambique (Local) | 2019-2024 | Mozambique LNG Project's Social Investment Fund |

| APPROACH | REGION | PROGRAM | LOCATION (SCALE) | PERIOD | FUNDING SOURCE |
|--------------------------|-------------|--|--|--------------|---|
| Participatory Governance | Anglophone | The Building in Partnership: Participatory Urban Planning (BiP:PUP) | Kitale, Kenya | 2001-2004 | UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID) |
| | | CMA Initiative | Various Regions, South Africa (National) | 2014-present | Government |
| | | Mukuru SPA | Nairobi, Kenya (Local) | 2017-2019 | Multiple stakeholders |
| | Francophone | Foundation Droit à la Ville (FDV) | Senegal | 2000-present | The Government of Senegal, the German Cooperation (GTZ and KfW), and others |
| | | The Lalankely program | Madagascar | 2011-present | Agence Française de Développement (AFD), the European Union, and the Malagasy Government. |
| | Lusophone | Luanda Urban Poverty Programme (LUPP) | Luanda, Angola (Local) | 1999-2006 | Department for International Development (DFID) |
| | | Programa Nacional de Desenvolvimento Urbano e Capacitação das Cidades (PNDUCC) | Cape Verde (National) | 2003-2015 | Ministério das Cidades |
| | All | SDI Movement | Various Countries (Global South) | 1996-present | Multiple stakeholders |
| | | The PILaR (Participatory and Inclusive Land Readjustment) | Kenya, Djibouti, Angola | 2013-present | UN-Habitat |
| In situ Upgrading | Anglophone | The Community Infrastructure Upgrading Programme (CIUP) | Tanzania (National) | 2000-present | Local Government Support Program (LGSP) |
| | | Kambi Moto Upgrading | Nairobi, Kenya (Local) | 2003-2009 | Pamoja Trust and other Stakeholders |
| | | Amui Dzor Housing Project | Ghana (Local) | 2007-2010 | GHAFUP, UN-Habitat SUF |
| | | KISIP (1st Phase) | Multiple Cities, Kenya (National) | 2011-2020 | World Bank, Government |
| | | Khayelitsha Project | Cape Town, South Africa (Local) | 2012-2016 | Multiple Stakeholders |
| | Francophone | NOSSIN project | Burkina Faso | 1982-1985 | The Netherlands |
| | | Upgrading Housing Programme at Dalifort | Dalifort, Senegal (Local) | 1987-1990 | The German Cooperation (GTZ and KfW), |
| | Lusophone | 'Operação Esperança' Program | Cape Verde (National) | 2003-present | The Government of Cape Verde and other stakeholders |
| | | PROMAPUTO Program | Maputo, Mozambique (Local) | 2006-2011 | World Bank, the Government and Maputo Municipal Council |
| | | WACA Program | S. Tomé and Príncipe (National) | 2018-present | World Bank Group |
| | | Casas Melhoradas | Maxaquene A, Maputo, Mozambique (Local) | 2015-2020 | Multiple stakeholders |
| | All | PSUP | Several sub-Saharan Africa countries | 2014-present | UN-Habitat, Government |

TABLE 1 (CONT.)

1.2.1. *Tenure Security Programmes*

Security of tenure, a fundamental component of housing rights, provides protection against forced eviction and incentivises community investment (Elbow, 2014; Syagga, 2011). Two main approaches have emerged: formalisation through formal legal titles and regularisation via perceived security. Hernando de Soto (2000) formal titling approach promotes individual property rights as urban poverty alleviation, gaining traction among decision-makers for “helping the poor without changing the existing economic system” (Gilbert, 2009, p. 41). However, critics argue this oversimplifies complex challenges by focusing solely on legal aspects whilst disregarding social and economic conceptions (Obeng-Odoom & Stilwell, 2013). Despite widespread acceptance by international development agencies, its incorporation into Sub-Saharan Africa countries legislation has met resistance (Huchzermeyer, 2011).

Colonial property legislation created parallel systems—formal land laws alongside traditional communal arrangements—with distinct implementation patterns that continue influencing contemporary governance decisions (de Pelichy & Afolabi, 2020). Anglophone countries show extensive land registration experience inherited from British colonial emphasis on private property (Dickerman et al., 1989). The Tanzania-Bondeni Community Land Trust Experiment (1900-present) exemplifies early collective management recognition, though highlighting financial and management limitations that can exacerbate social inequalities without adequate community participation (Dickerman et al., 1989; Ogwen, 2023). More recently, Kenya’s Social Tenure Domain Model (STDM) implementation in Mashimoni and Kwa Bulu represents the evolution of this model, utilising GIS platforms to support land administration of communities with unrecognised land rights (Ouma et al., 2017; Ogwen, 2023).

Francophone experience reveals a pattern of state-centric approaches to land management, governments maintaining ultimate ownership while granting use rights (Dickerman et al., 1989). For example, Burkina Faso’s Land Administration Project (2009–2014) an initiative to address rapid urbanisation land management challenges, achieved slow implementation despite thousands of pending applications (Gonzalez Gómez, 2020). Also, Benin’s ProPFR Program (2016–2022) emphasised land formalisation in peri-urban areas with higher demand, reflecting growing land commodification pressures—a pattern suggesting that centralised approaches may be more responsive to market-driven urbanisation pressures (World Bank, 2020a).

Lusophone countries show limited land registration experience, reflecting Portuguese colonial priorities and post-independence socialist orientations emphasising land use over registration (Dickerman, et al., 1989). For example, Mozambique’s Land Titling Programs (2007-present) attempted to implement the 1997 Land Law, through occupancy declarations, providing socially recognised security which works effectively but lack formal legal protection, leaving residents vulnerable to displacement (Urban Land Mark, 2013). Similarly, Angola’s Paraíso Perceived Titling, following mass occupation after Boa Vista evictions, demonstrates how residents avoided distant resettlement, purchasing plots informally driven by administrative encouragement but without legal protection (Muyeba, 2023).

While Anglophone countries pioneered extensive formalisation attempts earlier, experiencing limitations sooner and developing collective tenure innovations, these challenges later influenced participatory governance approaches, where collaborative land management became central to community engagement strategies. Francophone countries maintained consistent state control adopting renewable leases rather than full ownership. This incremental approach arguably avoided some of the social disruption documented in Anglophone countries, though it has also limited the scope of formal land markets (Dickerman, et al., 1989). Lusophone conflict-affected trajectories produced pragmatic informal systems providing substantial perceived security despite minimal formal recognition, suggesting that a customary system enhancement may prove more effective than integral registration where state capacity is limited (Dickerman, et al., 1989).

Successful contemporary approaches increasingly emphasise collaborative efforts between communities, NGOs, and governments (Abbott, 2002). The Slum Dwellers International (SDI) network's success across 30 countries (1996-present) demonstrates cross-regional knowledge learning prioritising community involvement over strict legal solutions (Patel et al., 2001). Also, the TSFSA Project (2012-2013) and The Global

Land Tool Network (2006-2023) facilitated knowledge transfer across multiple sub-Saharan African countries, supporting tools like STDM and recognising that diverse legal, economic, and social interpretations of tenure security prove more effective than narrow formalisation approaches (Urban Land Mark, 2013; Obeng-Odoom & Stilwell, 2013). Alternative approaches focus on increasing perceived tenure security through administrative recognition and incremental improvements (Durand-Lasserve & Royston, 2002), including Community Land Trusts, de facto tenure (Payne, 2014), and legitimacy-based models, providing security benefits without the complexities associated with formal titling (Syagga, 2011). Various tenure security formats have emerged across Africa, from de facto tenure to temporary occupation licenses (Durand-Lasserve & Selod, 2007). While various formats have improved service access, challenges of affordability and social exclusion persist, with informal practices providing limited security but lacking legal protection across regions (Payne, 2014; Muyebe, 2023).

1.2.2. *Resettlement Initiatives*

The evolution of slum intervention approaches in Africa since the 1950s reflects changing policy perspectives and lessons learned. Post-independence governments initially adopted a 'benign neglect' approach, assuming economic growth would naturally eliminate slums, followed by failed low-cost housing programmes suffering from insufficient units, excessive quality standards and fraudulent practices (Arimah, 2011). These failures led to drastic measures like slum demolition under the 'Cities Without Slums' action plan before shifting to resettlement strategies (Huchzermeyer, 2011). Contemporary research highlights how peripheral housing projects create mobility challenges, affecting access to employment, education, and services (Williams et al. 2021).

Anglophone countries pioneered systematic resettlement through ambitious federal programmes. Nigeria's Federal Housing Programs (1975-2013) exemplified post-independence modernisation aspirations whilst consistently failing to meet targets due to weak coordination and insufficient resources, reflecting British colonial administrative legacies combined with post-independence development ambitions (World Bank, 2015). The Lagos Metropolitan Development and Governance Project (LMDGP, 2006) revealed critical disconnects between World Bank safeguard policies and Nigerian legal frameworks regarding informal settler's rights, highlighting the importance of integrating resettlement programs with broader urban development strategies (World Bank, 2015). Similarly, Tanzania's Msimbazi River to Mabwepande Resettlement (2011- present) resulted in poor housing conditions and declining living standards, whilst Kenya's KENSUP programme faced affordability issues despite providing modern high-rise buildings (Mkasanga, et al., 2025; Sebambo, 2015).

Francophone countries developed state-centric systematic approaches addressing both aesthetic and humanitarian concerns. Rwanda's Kigali Master Plan (2013) aimed for 'slum-free' transformation through large-scale redevelopment yet imposed significant social costs, with 38% of resettled households losing employment and experiencing disrupted social networks (Nikuze, et al., 2019). Environmental pressures from drought-induced rural migration and regional conflicts drove other interventions. Senegal's Saint-Louis Emergency Recovery and Resilience Project (SERRP, 2018-2025) addressed severe coastal erosion through planned resettlement, demonstrating climate-adaptive approaches preserving social cohesion via participatory methodology (Kane, 2020). Moreover, Djibouti's Zero Slums Program (2018-2023) which combines slum prevention, upgrading, and resettlement, emphasised an integrated approach while implementing resettlement strategies (World Bank, 2020b).

Lusophone countries faced distinct challenges as post-independence conflicts and socialist orientations limited large-scale resettlement programmes, with displacement occurring through conflict or environmentally driven migrations. Angola's Luanda expansion of slums, largely attributed to civil war-induced rural migration, prompted resettlement approaches to peripheral centralities. The Zango I project (2001-2005), relocated Boa Vista residents after slum demolitions, though many avoided the distant resettlement lacking administrative, social and economic infrastructure, instead settling in Paraíso slum (Muyeba, 2023). Environmental risks drove similar outcomes in Mozambique's Zambezi and Limpopo River areas, where government relocations from flood-prone areas failed as populations abandoned new homes, returning to slums and increasing densification (Mkasanga, Kyessi, & Magembe-Mushi, 2025). Recent industrial projects like Mozambique's LNG development in Quitunda Village (2019-2024) required physical and economic displacement of hundreds of families. Although, the resettlement plan—Plano de Ação de Reassentamento (RAP)—attempted to balance development objectives with social impact mitigation through Community Resettlement Committees (CRCs), participatory consultations, and livelihood diversification programs, continue facing significant challenges in land tenure complexity and limited institutional capacity (AFDBG, 2019). Angola's GTRUCS programme in Luanda was concluded short of its

objectives, despite aspects of community involvement in the process, the programme face credibility issues surrounding alleged house redistribution to outsiders rather than original dwellers (Albuquerque, 2018; Allan Cain, *personal communication*, May 1, 2025).

Resettlement typically involves relocating households to city outskirts through serviced plots or completed housing units, yet programs often overlook crucial social, economic, and cultural factors (Shabbir et al., 1987; Arimah, 2011). These patterns persist across colonial boundaries: Francophone Rwanda revealed culturally insensitive housing designs despite improved safety, Lusophone participatory mechanisms face persistent challenges in tenure complexity, and Anglophone programmes struggle with legal framework integration. Comparative analysis also reveals environmental gains alongside severe social costs. For example, in South Africa's Cosmo City Relocation Project achieved environmental improvements but experienced dramatic social capital loss, whilst Ethiopia's Addis Ababa Grand Housing Program reduced resource consumption (35% less water, 16% less solid waste) but suffered devastating social disruption, with neighbour trust declining from 97% to 34% (Adegun, 2019). Contemporary evidence emphasises addressing 'invisible losses' of social networks and cohesion practices (Haman, 2025). Persistent challenges include inadequate planning, limited community engagement, poor spatial planning, social capital disruption, and minimal livelihood reconstruction consideration (Arimah, 2011; Mkasanga, Kyessi, & Magembe-Mushi, 2025). These challenges partly stem from the tenure security issues discussed in section 1.2.1, as residents without formal land rights have limited negotiating power in resettlement processes. Current recommendations position resettlement as last resort, only to be implemented when alternatives are exhausted, prioritising community preservation, meaningful resident involvement, and focused social capital rebuilding efforts in new locations.

1.2.3. *Participatory Governance Models*

Participatory approaches emerged in response to failed top-down interventions and displacement-based slum clearance across Africa. Rooted in Lefebvre's "Right to the City" concept (Lefebvre, 1968), these models emphasise resident involvement in shaping their urban environments (Marcuse, 2011), as well as recognising slum communities diversity and complex socio-spatial challenges (Brenner, Marcuse & Mayer, 2011). However, implementation faces persistent challenges including power imbalances and difficulties translating community input into policy (Wittels, 2022). Hassan et al. (2011) identify trust, transparency, and diverse engagement opportunities as crucial for successful participatory planning.

The influence of colonial heritage in participatory governance approaches is shaped by different administrative traditions and post-independence experiences. One of the earliest Lusophone countries representations of a participatory approach is Angola's Luanda Urban Poverty Programme (LUPP) dated 1999, which established the Kilamba Kiayi Development Forum (KKDF) with 500 community representatives managing basic services through water committees and community quarterly consultative boards (LUPP, 2005). Lusophone

countries continued expanding participatory frameworks through national programs. For example, Cabo Verde's PNDUCC programme demonstrated scaled participatory planning through 400 participants across 23 public consultation sessions, whilst The Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (PSUP) created comprehensive urban profiles through participatory approaches that ensured citizens could engage constructively with local authorities (UN-Habitat, 2016).

Francophone Senegal developed systematic legal frameworks following the 1985 forced eviction experiences. This transformation led to the establishment of the Fondation Droit à la Ville (FDV) in 2000, establishing formalised participatory mechanisms in slum-upgrading through government decree, and establishing restructuring procedures with community involvement at multiple levels during planning phases (Tall, 2016). The UN-Habitat PSUP further reinforced this approach in settlements like Grand Médine and Arafat Grand Yoff, conducting comprehensive surveys with resident involvement to provide foundations for inclusive planning (Tall, 2016). More recently, Madagascar's Lalankely program, targeting flood-prone vulnerable population, shows inclusive planning by direct consultation with local communities (AFD, 2020). However, it operates within broader governance constraints and challenges with elite capture limit the depth and long-term sustainability of the participatory approaches (Nogueira-Budny & van der Werf, 2022).

Anglophone countries developed some of the most documented participatory approaches during the 2000s. Kenya's Building in Partnership: Participatory Urban Planning (BiP:PUP, 2001-2004) in Kitale became a model for effective participatory slum upgrading, contrasting sharply with problematic top-down initiatives (MacPherson, 2013; Majale, 2008). The BiP:PUP survey approach identified actual resident's needs, employing local labour across three settlements (Czirják, 2019). In Kipsongo, residents prepared strategic infrastructure interventions under the municipal council regulatory aid, and Tuwan's community was involved in the environmental systems implementation decision-making process (Majale, 2008). This contrasted starkly with Kenya's simultaneous top-down Kenya Slum Upgrading Program (KENSUP) in Kibera's Soweto village, which employed minimal community input and focused on middle-class housing standards unaffordable to residents, creating fear of displacement and risking gentrification (MacPherson, 2013). The distinct participatory mechanism in these strategies demonstrates how human capital and local knowledge can lead to more effective outcomes than expensive aesthetic or material focused interventions. This finding directly supports the *in situ* upgrading approach discussed in section 1.2.4, where community-led planning becomes essential for identifying appropriate infrastructure standards and priorities.

Recent research highlights formal-informal actor complementarity – where informal networks provide accessible support but lack resources while formal institutions possess expertise but limited accessibility – and demonstrates how interactions between household practices and broader urban systems challenge traditional formal-informal binaries (Antonio, 2022; Chumo et al., 2023). The Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI) model shows how transnational grassroots networking can scale participatory approaches while building local capacity (Patel et al., 2001). Other key reference cases

also illustrate both potential and limitations. Nairobi's Mukuru Special Planning Area successfully scaled participation through multi-sector consortia despite limited government support (Horn, 2021; Ouma, 2023), but South Africa's CMA initiative faced legal barriers and difficulties translating participation into outcomes within historical inequality contexts (Brown, 2014). Also, the PILaR program (2013-present) across Angola, Kenya, and Djibouti shows varied implementation approaches. Angola's Huambo Province experience, implemented by Development Workshop for post-civil war returnees, demonstrated successful community value creation but highlighted sustainability challenges when financial control and land market mobilisation failed to generate self-sustaining resources (UN-Habitat, 2013). Cain notes that despite positive results, broader implementation depends on government adherence, proving difficult despite the successful programme initiation in Namibia (*Allan Cain, personal communication, May 1, 2025*).

Cross-regional examination reveals converging patterns: Anglophone approaches emphasised practical demonstration projects with comparative frameworks (successful BiP:PUP versus problematic KENSUP); Francophone countries developed systematic legal institutional frameworks for community involvement; and Lusophone countries highlight comprehensive community governance structures, possibly reflecting both Portuguese colonial administrative practices and post-independence socialist community organisation. Despite regional variations, similar challenges are observed: elite capture, marginalisation of vulnerable groups, scale limitations preventing citywide impact, and requirements for government political will enabling decentralised decision-making (Majale, 2008; MacPherson, 2013). These challenges are compounded by the tenure security issues identified in section 1.2.1, as unclear land rights often undermine community authority in participatory processes. Successful approaches require holistic frameworks combining government reform, strong local organisations, inclusive processes, and scaling community models to address actual resident needs rather than externally imposed solutions.

1.2.4. *In situ Upgrading Projects*

The evolution of slum improvement practices towards *in situ*, holistic methodologies reflect a paradigm shift in viewing informal settlements as integral parts of urban fabric rather than anomalies (Davis, 2006; Roy, 2005). This approach combines physical infrastructure improvements with social services and tenure security (Cities Alliance, 2015), while balancing economic, social, environmental, and institutional considerations (Irurah & Boshoff, 2013). World Bank's initial urban sector lending (1972-82) focused heavily on *in situ* upgrading but faced mid-1980s criticism for implementation inefficiencies, inadequate community participation, inappropriate standards, and poor cost recovery (Gulyani & Connors, 2002). Despite criticisms, first-generation projects significantly impacted housing stock and urban poor livelihoods, with recent conceptualisations emphasising resident retention through structured policies and infrastructure improvements (Amorim & Faria, 2023).

Francophone countries developed the most systematic early approaches to *in situ* upgrading. Burkina Faso's NOSSIN project (1982) pioneered "development in phases" approaches where communities selected technical options, self-relocated homes for infrastructure areas, and contributed finances alongside participating in construction (Gulyani & Connors, 2002). Similarly, Senegal's Dalifort Housing Programme (1987) marked a fundamental shift from slum clearance policies following social and economic adversities. The program kept residents in place while providing land tenure security motivation, with residents organising into Economic Interest Groups (GIEs) defining priority needs and contributing financially through equitable systems where households paid for plots including infrastructure costs (World Bank, 2002). The success led to national policy establishment for upgrading uncontrolled settlements through revolving funds fed by resident contributions, government funding, and international donors.

Anglophone countries demonstrated varied implementation outcomes. Kenya's experience proved instructive through PSUP's collaboration between UN-Habitat and government, emerging as one of sub-Saharan Africa's most enduring initiatives and participatory citywide planning (UN-Habitat, 2016). Unlike the resettlement challenges documented in section 1.2.2, PSUP's *in situ* approach maintained social networks while achieving infrastructure improvements. The complementary KISIP program achieved success across several cities despite tenure and land availability challenges (Muraguri, 2011), and Kenya's 2010 Constitution enhanced urban prosperity opportunities through land allocation and community involvement (UN-Habitat, 2015). However, Nairobi's Kambi Moto Upgrading project, despite promoting community-led incremental construction and capacity building, faced constraints from limited formal financing and persistent tenure insecurity (Ettyang, 2011). Other Anglophone experiences revealed implementation complexities: Cape Town's Khayelitsha project involved multiple stakeholders but faced power dynamics and community input translation difficulties, generating demands for budget transparency and faster delivery (Brillembourg, 2022; Lali, 2023). Tanzania's Community Infrastructure Upgrading Programme (CIUP), showed negative impacts through strategic displacement leaving affected populations impoverished and dissatisfied (Mkasanga, Kyessi, & Magembe-Mushi, 2025), and Ghana's Amui Dzor project's mixed-use cooperative model suffered gentrification as rising rents displaced the poorest intended beneficiaries (Gillespie, 2017).

Lusophone countries show limited but documented approaches, primarily in Mozambique. For example, PROMAPUTO developed integrated neighbourhood upgrading methodology in George Dimitrov and Chamanculo C, reducing flooding, decreasing city-centre commuting time, and improving public spaces while issuing thousands of DUATs (land property titles) (World Bank, 2020c). The institutionalisation of the upgrading methodologies enabled replication and external investments, demonstrating how local impact can promote broader institutional adoption (World Bank, 2020c). Maputo's 'Casas Melhoradas' program, promoted low-income housing rehabilitation through alternative construction methods using local materials and improved housing typologies, though limited scalability beyond prototype demonstrations and external investment dependency restricted replication (Mottelson & Andersen, 2018). This approach is

explored in similar formats in Cape Verde's "Operação Esperança" (2003), by benefiting disadvantaged families through home rehabilitation using collaborative "*djunta mon*" (joining hands) strategies uniting beneficiaries, project managers, and local businesses contributing materials and labour (Governo de Cabo Verde, 2014; Rodrigues, 2015). Also, São Tomé and Príncipe's WACA Resilience Investment Project, whilst not technically in situ, promoted vulnerable population resettlement within neighbourhoods—exemplified by Santa Catarina's inland relocation with property titles providing ownership security for continued investment (Arlindo de Carvalho, *personal communication*, May 10, 2025; Vizeu-Pinheiro, 2023).

Experience across regions reveals persistent challenges: standards inflation dramatically increasing costs and reducing coverage; operations and maintenance funding difficulties; cost recovery rates consistently below targets; institutional complexity with overlapping responsibilities; and limited genuine community participation in decision-making (Gulyani & Connors, 2002). Moreover, Yeboah et al. (2021) emphasise social diversity's critical importance, as projects failing to account for resident's diverse needs often resulted in displacement or livelihood loss. Success depends heavily on institutional approaches recognising diversity through comprehensive data collection, representative decision-making, and context-specific planning methodologies. Current best practices emerging from decades of regional experience include: decoupling formal titling from infrastructure upgrading while promoting tenure security; adopting appropriate standards to ensure affordability and wider coverage; designing innovative cost recovery mechanisms with upfront community contributions; strengthening local government capacity while engaging communities meaningfully; and integrating upgrading within broader city development strategies (Gulyani & Connors, 2002). The challenge remains integrating neighbourhood-scale planning with local government institutional frameworks while ensuring long-term sustainability beyond project timelines.

The complexity of slum challenges in sub-Saharan Africa requires a nuanced, region-specific approach to urban development. This study presents a strategic framework for addressing slums, tailored to the unique characteristics and challenges of African regions. By cross-examining regional challenges with the four primary slum upgrading approaches—tenure security, resettlement initiatives, participatory governance, and in situ upgrading—the aim is to identify the most effective strategies for each context. This analysis seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical best practices and the practical realities faced by different African regions in their efforts to improve informal settlements.

2. Methodology

This study develops a diagnostic methodology for identifying the most effective slum improvement approaches within specific contextual frameworks. This methodology provides a systematic tool for practitioners to assess local challenges and identify

context-appropriate physical interventions while acknowledging broader socio-economic influences. A cross-examination matrix evaluates slum improvement strategies through qualitative parameters¹ including mobility, socio-economic development, participation, environmental impact, infrastructure, tenure security, and scalability.

This assessment combines colonial-historical analysis, systematic review of four slum strategies in sub-Saharan Africa (Table 1) and empirical case studies to determine which strategy components most effectively address specific regional challenges. The diagnostic matrix employs a three-layered analytical structure: (1) Regional Challenge Assessment, (2) Approach Effectiveness Evaluation, and (3) Best Practices Applicability.

1. Regional Challenge Assessment: Utilises the framework developed by Kamana et al. (2023) and colonial-historical analysis to identify and categorise primary urban challenges within specific contexts. Scores derive from literature review synthesis and empirical studies documenting challenge severity and prevalence.
2. Approach Effectiveness Evaluation: Each intervention strategy is evaluated against identified contextual challenges, considering potential impact and implementation limitations based on case study examination and documented intervention outcomes.
3. Best Practices Applicability: Analysis of how successful practices align with contextual needs and institutional frameworks, centred on synthesis of successful interventions and long-term impact assessment.

The cross-examination is conducted using a scoring system (1-5) represented visually through heat maps, that rates the relevance and potential impact of each aspect (challenges, approaches and best practices). The scoring criteria (see Table 2) were developed through systematic literature review and validated against documented intervention outcomes.

To demonstrate methodology flexibility, a secondary analysis examines three Lusophone cities: Luanda (Angola), Maputo (Mozambique), and São Tomé (São Tomé and Príncipe), showing how the framework adapts across scales while maintaining analytical coherence within shared colonial-historical contexts.

1. The selection of qualitative parameters were theoretically grounded and empirically validated through documented case studies across the four primary intervention approaches. Mobility (addresses spatial justice and accessibility rights), Socio-economic development (captures livelihood impacts and economic inclusion), Participation (reflects democratic engagement and community agency), Environmental impact (considers climate resilience), Infrastructure (addresses basic service provision), Tenure security (captures legal protection and investment incentives) and Scalability (evaluates replication potential).

TABLE 2
Criteria Rationale for the three layers of the Heat Map Matrix, including Regional Challenges, Approach Effectiveness and Best Practices Applicability. Source: Author.

| Criteria Rationale for Heat Map Matrix | |
|--|--|
| Regional Challenges | |
| 1 | Minimal: Issue is present but has a limited impact on urban development. |
| 2 | Minor: Issue affects a small portion of the population or have a low impact. |
| 3 | Moderate: Issue affects a big portion of the population or has a noticeable impact. |
| 4 | Significant: Issue affects most of the population or has a substantial impact. |
| 5 | Critical: Issue is pervasive, affecting most of the population, or having a severe impact. |
| Approach Effectiveness | |
| 1 | Approach is ineffective in this context. |
| 2 | Approach shows limited effectiveness, with marginal improvements. |
| 3 | Approach shows moderate effectiveness, with some improvements. |
| 4 | Approach is effective, showing considerable improvements in targeted areas. |
| 5 | Approach is very effective and have potential for transformative improvements. |
| Best Practices Applicability | |
| 1 | Practice is not applicable in this context. |
| 2 | Practice has limited applicability, with minimal positive impact. |
| 3 | Practice is applicable and shows some positive results. |
| 4 | Practice is applicable and shows clear positive impacts when implemented. |
| 5 | Practice is crucial for success and yields significant positive outcomes. |

3. Results

3.1. Best Practices and Challenges

Through examination of documented cases across Anglophone, Francophone, and Lusophone contexts, each approach demonstrates distinct strengths while revealing common obstacles shaped by colonial institutional legacies. The analysis reveals how different colonial planning traditions influence intervention effectiveness: Anglophone countries early formalisation experiences inform tenure security innovations; Francophone systematic approaches enable coordinated participatory frameworks; while Lusophone unofficial arrangements suggest community-led solutions prove more suited.

While no single approach proves universally effective, successful interventions require context-specific adaptation, meaningful community engagement, and integration with broader urban strategies (see Table 3). Evidence strongly supports abandoning demolition for improvement approaches, with participatory governance and *in situ* upgrading showing greatest promise. Tenure security works best when prioritising perceived security and immediate quality improvements while pursuing long-term legal

recognition. Resettlement programs show limited success, while participatory governance models, particularly multi-sector consortia approaches, prove more promising. *In situ* upgrading requires strong political and institutional support, sustained community participation, and rights-based approaches.

TABLE 3
Table of content synthesis
concerning best practices
and challenges of each
approach. Source: Author:z

| | BEST PRACTICES | CHALLENGES |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| Tenure Security | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emphasise strategies like Community Land Trusts and peer exchanges that prioritises community needs and knowledge. 2. Prioritise perceived security through administrative recognition and basic services over formal titling. 3. Implement incremental approaches that build security over time and involve the community members at all project stages. 4. Integrate infrastructure improvements with tenure security efforts. 5. Develop flexible governance structures accommodating formal-informal arrangements. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Navigate complex stakeholder claims in densely populated areas 2. Overcoming financial and bureaucratic barriers of formal titling programs while ensuring that initiatives can be scaled up and maintained long term. 3. Bridge formal-informal system gaps across diverse political contexts. 4. Maintain active involvement of all community members, including marginalised groups, beyond initial project phases. 5. Address infrastructure issues while pursuing tenure security and prevent displacement through gentrification or land speculation. |
| Resettlement | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Integrate livelihood considerations (transport, employment, services) into housing policy. 2. Involve affected populations in the planning and implementation process. 3. Adjust strategies to local social, economic, and cultural conditions, while also considering both physical and socio-economic aspects of resettlement. 4. Ensure that new housing units are within financial reach of the target population. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inadequate planning and insufficient consideration of long-term impacts and community needs. 2. Social and cultural disruption of livelihoods, since relocation often severs economic and social ties. 3. Lack of infrastructure in new sites, such as essential services and amenities. 4. Financial constraints exacerbated by high housing costs, often excluding intended beneficiaries. 5. Implementation failures due to corruption and resource constraints. |
| Participatory Governance | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foster trust, transparency, and effective communication throughout the process. 2. Establish diverse engagement platforms (mapping, assemblies, digital tools). 3. Promote collaboration among community organisations, local authorities, and NGOs. 4. Build local capacity and address context-specific needs. 5. Integrate formal-informal actors in collaborative frameworks. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Power imbalances and institutional resistance to decentralised decision-making. 2. Difficulty in translating community input into actionable policy. 3. Ensure inclusive representation and sustained engagement. 4. Limited government support and political will for genuine participation. 5. Elite capture and marginalisation of vulnerable groups. 6. Balancing long-term sustainability with political and economic fluctuations. |
| In situ Upgrading | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community-led initiatives and meaningful participation throughout the process. 2. Holistic approach balancing physical, social, economic, and environmental considerations. 3. Preservation of existing spatial structure and social networks. 4. Adaptation to local contexts and diverse needs of slum residents. 5. Secure land tenure and adopting flexible ownership models. 6. Foster partnerships between government, expert-technicians, civil society, and local communities. 7. Continuous training of technical staff. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Power imbalances and institutional restrictions. 2. Difficulty in translating community input into actionable policies. 3. Overemphasis on physical improvements at the expense of socio-economic challenges. 4. Complex tenure arrangements and lack of adequate land for redevelopment. 5. Limited government involvement and resource constraints. 6. Ensure community engagement and capacity building. 7. Balancing diverse needs and capabilities within slum communities. |

3.2. Common Patterns and Variations

Analysis reveals significant interconnections across approaches (see Table 4), with successful interventions incorporating complementary elements tailored to institutional contexts. Participatory governance and *in situ* upgrading show strongest synergies, while resettlement frequently conflicts with other strategies. Effective strategic combinations include: (1) tenure security with *in situ* upgrading preserving communities while encouraging investment; (2) participatory governance enhancing *in situ* upgrading through community ownership; (3) participatory methods mitigating resettlement impacts; (4) participatory approaches facilitating tenure negotiations reflecting community realities; and (5) combined *in situ* upgrading with partial resettlement addressing infrastructure needs in dense or unsafe areas.

TABLE 4
Matrix visual representation of interactions between the four different approaches to slum development. ++ Strong positive interaction, + Positive interaction, – Potential conflict, X Self-reference.
Source: Author.

| | TS | RR | PG | IS U |
|-----------------------------|----|----|----|------|
| TENURE SECURITY | X | - | ++ | ++ |
| RESETTLEMENT AND RELOCATION | - | X | + | - |
| PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE | ++ | + | X | ++ |
| IN SITU UPGRADING | ++ | - | ++ | X |

Common best practices (Table 5) include community participation, context-specific solutions, integrated planning, and flexible tenure arrangements promoting sustainable, locally appropriate interventions. Additionally, persistent challenges (Table 6)—such as power imbalances, limited resources, complex tenure arrangements, and displacement risks—appear across approaches but manifest differently across colonial-historical contexts. These patterns suggest that effective slum improvement requires hybrid approaches combining participatory governance with *in situ* upgrading, supported by flexible tenure arrangements and strategic use of resettlement only when inevitable. The colonial-historical framework provides crucial guidance for adapting these combinations to local institutional capacities and planning traditions.

TABLE 5
Common best practices by approach.

| Common Best Practices | TS | RR | PG | ISU |
|--|----|----|----|-----|
| 1. Community participation | | | | |
| 2. Context-specific solutions | | | | |
| 3. Integrated planning (socio-economic factors) | | | | |
| 4. Capacity building | | | | |
| 5. Flexible and innovative tenure arrangements | | | | |
| 6. Preservation of social networks and livelihoods | | | | |
| 7. Collaboration between stakeholders | | | | |

| Common Challenges | TS | RR | PG | ISU |
|--|----|----|----|-----|
| 1. Power imbalances and institutional restrictions | | | | |
| 2. Limited financial resources | | | | |
| 3. Translating community input into policy | | | | |
| 4. Complex land tenure arrangements | | | | |
| 5. Risk of displacement | | | | |
| 6. Balancing physical and socio-economic development | | | | |
| 7. Ensuring long-term sustainability | | | | |

TABLE 6
Common challenges by approach. Source: Author

3.3. Cross Examination Findings

The heat map (Figure 1) analysis provides visual representation of cross-examination between colonial-historical contexts, regional challenges, slum approach effectiveness, and best practices applicability, with detailed city-scale analysis of Luanda, Maputo, and São Tomé² demonstrating methodology flexibility across scales.

| | Regional Challenges | | | | Approach Effectiveness | | | | Best Practices Applicability | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|----------------|------------|----------------|------------------------|--------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Region | Environmental | Socio-economic | Governance | Infrastructure | Tenure Security | Resettlement | Participatory G. | In situ Upgrading | Community Participation | Context-specific solutions | Integrated Planning | Capacity Building |
| Anglophone Africa | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Francophone Africa | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lusophone Africa | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Luanda | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Maputo | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| S. Tomé | | | | | | | | | | | | |

FIGURE 1
Heat map visual representation of the results of the cross examination between regional challenges, slum approaches effectiveness and best practices applicability. The darker colours reveal higher levels, and the lighter colours reveal lower levels in the spectrum of magnitude comparability. Source: author.

2. Detailed urban development analysis were further informed by assessments documented in Raposo et al. (2012), Fernandes & Mendes (2012), Viana (2015), Silva (2016a; b; c), Milheiro (2016), Lage (2018), Fernandes & Nascimento (2018), Braz & Raposo (2021).

3.3.1. Regional Challenge Patterns

- Anglophone contexts: Moderate challenges across categories (socio-economic and infrastructure: 4; environmental and governance: 3)
- Francophone contexts: Highest environmental challenges (4), lowest governance challenges (2), moderate socio-economic and infrastructure (3)
- Lusophone contexts: Most severe challenge profile (socio-economic and infrastructure: 5; environmental and governance: 4)

3.3.2. Approach Effectiveness Patterns

- Tenure security: Highest effectiveness in Anglophone contexts (4), moderate in Lusophone (3), lowest in Francophone (3)
- Resettlement: Limited effectiveness across all regions (Francophone: 3; Anglophone and Lusophone: 2)
- Participatory governance: High effectiveness in Anglophone and Francophone contexts (4), moderate in Lusophone (3)
- *In situ* upgrading: Highest in Francophone contexts (5), consistent in Anglophone (4), moderate in Lusophone (3)

3.3.3. City Variation Within Lusophone

- Luanda: Most severe profile requiring incremental community-managed improvements (Infrastructure: 5, Socio-economic: 5, Governance: 4)
- Maputo: Moderate challenges enabling systematic tenure security programs (scores: 2-3 across categories)
- São Tomé: Intermediate challenges necessitating intensive *in situ* upgrading (consistent scores: 3-4)

3.3.4. Best Practices Applicability

Community participation shows universally high applicability. Context-specific solutions demonstrate highest applicability in Lusophone contexts (5), while integrated planning shows highest applicability in Francophone contexts (4). The city-scale analysis reveals significant intra-regional variation, with Maputo outperforming regional averages

through structured legal frameworks, while Luanda faces challenges exceeding regional severity due to rapid urbanisation and institutional constraints. São Tomé demonstrates intermediate performance with island-scale dynamics enabling intensive community-based approaches despite territorial limitations.

4. Discussion

The analysis reveals that slum intervention effectiveness depends on institutional frameworks, which vulnerabilities are shaped by distinct colonial planning traditions and post-independence development trajectories. While the theoretical framework emphasises democratic solutions, implementation occurs within diverse political landscapes where ‘informality’ often represents resistance to elite accumulation rather than mere regulatory non-compliance.

4.1. Regional Challenges and Approach Effectiveness

The heat map (Figure 1) analysis reveals distinct regional variations in intervention effectiveness, with community participation emerging as universally applicable and *in situ* upgrading showing consistently high effectiveness, while resettlement demonstrates limited success across all settings. Colonial legacies significantly shape challenge frameworks and intervention effectiveness: environmental challenges are most pronounced in Francophone and Lusophone contexts requiring climate-adaptive approaches; socio-economic and governance challenges reach critical levels in Lusophone contexts reflecting post-independence conflict impacts and limited state capacity; while infrastructure deficits are most severe in Lusophone contexts, suggesting *in situ* upgrading should prioritise incremental improvements over comprehensive replacement. Participatory governance and *in situ* upgrading demonstrate strong applicability across diverse colonial-historical contexts, while resettlement emerges as a strategic intervention suitable only for specific circumstances rather than large-scale application, aligning with Montaner’s (2020) affirmation that interventions should prioritise existing slum improvement and implement resettlement only when necessary.

The Lusophone city-scale application reveals intra-regional variation that regional averages conceal, showing the methodology’s capacity to identify locally appropriate strategies where colonial-historical heritage provides institutional foundations while local factors significantly influence intervention effectiveness. (1) Luanda matches or exceeds regional challenge severity across all categories due to rapid oil-driven urbanisation overwhelming institutional capacity and complex post-conflict land tenure struggles that, combined with highly centralised presidential governance, severely limit participatory approaches and constrain community-led intervention effectiveness. (2) Maputo outperforms most regional averages with structured legal frameworks and decentralised municipal governance enabling better tenure security and participatory governance effectiveness. The city’s concentric ring structure planned colonial grid foundation, and successful post-independence programs like “Reordenamento” provide

institutional capacity for systematic intervention replication across formal centre and peripheries. (3) São Tomé presents unique island-scale dynamics with limited territorial expansion and coastal erosion supporting strategic but limited resettlement options while enabling *in situ* upgrading effectiveness through intensive community-based approaches. The island's distinct spatial management units and predominant traditional wood construction practices enable small-scale approaches that maximise density through potential vertical improvement.

This variation demonstrates how post-independence experiences interact with colonial legacies to either enhance or limit contemporary intervention opportunities, with local factors—urban scale, institutional capacity, post-conflict trajectories, and geographic constraints—significantly modifying inherited institutional foundations.

4.2. Best Practices and Recommendations

Given these colonial-historical patterns and city-scale variations, the application of best practices becomes crucial for successful implementation (see Table 5 and Figure 1). Community participation and context-specific solutions show universally high applicability, confirming their importance regardless of city scale or specific challenges. Integrated planning shows varied applicability, with institutional capacity constraints in contexts like Luanda limiting comprehensive planning approaches, while structured governance systems in Maputo enable better integration.

For Regional Contexts:

- Anglophone contexts should prioritise innovative tenure security models and participatory governance frameworks, leveraging civil society capacity for flexible regulatory systems accommodating diverse local solutions. These approaches suit characteristic sprawling development patterns where leapfrog development requires flexible frameworks adapting to dispersed settlements across extensive territories.
- Francophone contexts should implement systematic *in situ* upgrading programs and coordinated territorial planning, utilising centralised administrative traditions to standardise successful methodologies across municipalities. Compact development patterns and grid-like street systems inherited from colonial planning provide structured foundations for systematic intervention replication.
- Lusophone contexts require community-led flexible approaches emphasising regulatory flexibility and institutional arrangements strengthening existing informal systems rather than replacing them. These address persistent spatial duality between formal centres and extensive peripheral settlements, where interventions must work within existing informal governance structures rather than attempting comprehensive formal transformation.

City-Specific Strategies:

- Luanda (Infrastructure: 5, Socio-economic: 5, Governance: 4, with low institutional capacity): Requires incremental community-managed infrastructure improvements and flexible tenure arrangements working within existing informal systems, avoiding large-scale interventions exceeding institutional capacity. Prioritise community-led initiatives navigating complex network of narrow streets and small squares; favour *in situ* upgrading preserving social networks; implement flexible tenure building upon informal receipt systems; and establish community-managed service delivery bypassing institutional obstacles.
- Maputo (Infrastructure: 3, Socio-economic: 3, Environmental: 3, Governance: 2, with functional municipal capacity): Enables systematic tenure security programs and coordinated multi-sector upgrading, leveraging municipal frameworks for integrated planning. Utilise municipal governance structures for multi-sector interventions; implement systematic tenure programs building on 1997 Land Law frameworks; scale pilot projects through institutional replication; and integrate upgrading with metropolitan planning building upon concentric development patterns.
- São Tomé (Infrastructure: 4, Socio-economic: 4, Environmental: 4, Governance: 3, with strong community capacity): Necessitates intensive *in situ* upgrading and community-managed densification, eliminating resettlement entirely favouring vertical improvement and local resource optimisation. Maximise density through vertical improvement respecting traditional techniques; implement strategic resettlement in communities affected with environmental crises and keep them nearby; and create replicable small-scale housing models optimising local materials.

The diagnostic methodology provides replicable framework for identifying locally appropriate strategies within colonial-historical contexts, enabling evidence-based resource allocation and strategy prioritisation beyond generic recommendations toward context-specific guidance aligned with institutional capacity and challenge severity.

4.3. Conclusion

The analysis reveals that intervention effectiveness depends on shared institutional legacies and inherited planning traditions. While solutions must be tailored to local specificities, the colonial-historical framework–Anglophone, Francophone, and Lusophone contexts–provides more analytically relevant foundations for intervention selection. The cross-examination of approaches show that community participation and context-specific solutions emerge as universally applicable across all contexts, while approach effectiveness varies significantly based on institutional capacity and inherited administrative traditions.

The diagnostic methodology developed through this research provides systematic framework for evidence-based intervention selection, addressing the gap between theoretical best practices and practical implementation realities. The colonial-historical analysis reveals distinct patterns: Anglophone contexts benefit from innovative tenure arrangements and participatory governance; Francophone contexts excel at systematic *in situ* upgrading and coordinated planning, while Lusophone contexts require community-led flexible approaches working within existing informal systems.

The methodology's scalability is demonstrated through city-scale analysis, where Luanda, Maputo, and São Tomé, despite sharing colonial heritage, require differentiated intervention strategies based on specific challenge profiles and institutional capacities. The methodology provides practical value by enabling evidence-based intervention selection that eliminates ineffective approaches (large-scale resettlement consistently scoring 1-2) and prioritises demonstrated success patterns (hybrid strategies combining participatory governance with *in situ* upgrading).

Looking forward, implementing a diagnostic framework in slum improvement initiatives can enable better adaptation to local contexts before intervention selection, ensuring evidence-based approaches that maximise effectiveness while minimising resource waste. By utilising diagnostic assessment tools, sub-Saharan African cities can move beyond generic best practice applications toward targeted interventions aligned with specific institutional legacies and challenge profiles, ultimately achieving more sustainable and equitable urban development outcomes.

4.4. Limitations

While this methodology provides tangible perceptions, it is important to note its limitations, including the reliance on qualitative assessments and the potential for oversimplification of complex regional dynamics. Future work could address these limitations through incorporating quantitative statistical data and more detailed local case studies.

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