Transforming Urban Futures: A Scalabe Housing Model for Africa

Submitted By: Mitrelli



Organization Profile

Organization Name: Mitrelli

Organization Type: Private sector

Website: https://mitrelli.com/

Practice Details

Country(ies): Angola

City(ies): Bengo

Start Year: 2009

Ongoing: Yes

End Year: N/A

Main Adequate Housing Components:



Housing Thematic Areas:

Housing Affordability & Financing

Housing, Land & Spatial Planning

Relevant SDGs:



UN-HABITAT

Problem & Context

The housing challenge in Angola, and particularly in the peri-urban regions surrounding Luanda, represents one of the most complex structural problems facing Sub-Saharan Africa today. It arises from a convergence of historical, socio-economic, and institutional factors that have shaped Angola's urbanisation patterns over several decades. At the heart of this challenge lies the interplay between rapid population growth, the absence of comprehensive spatial planning, inadequate public investment in infrastructure, and fragmented policy frameworks, all of which have contributed to precarious living conditions and widespread socio-spatial inequalities. It is within this context that the Teresa Afonso Gomes Centrality, located in Bengo Province, emerges as a strategic response designed to confront systemic urban vulnerabilities while advancing inclusive and sustainable urban development.

Solution Developed

The impacts achieved by the practice reflect the breadth of its objectives and innovations. Among the most significant outcomes was the transition from precarious living conditions to safe, serviced, and legally recognised housing. Over 3500 residents directly benefited from improved access to essential services, with 94% now connected to piped water, replacing previous reliance on unsafe or distant sources. Sewerage systems were standardised, replacing rudimentary septic pits and substantially improving public health indicators by reducing waterborne diseases. Electrification, street lighting, and integrated waste management systems contributed to safer, healthier, and more dignified environments, particularly for women and children. Social outcomes were equally notable: with schools such as the Lucrécia Pedro Gaspar Educational Complex located within walking distance, enrolment rates among school-aged children reached 70%, demonstrating the role of spatial planning in unlocking access to education.

Economically, the centrality catalysed new opportunities for livelihoods and microenterprise. Local markets, and vocational training programmes, particularly among women and youth.

Implementation

Local Government :

- Coordinated the local execution, supervised the allocation of land and approved the urban framework.
- Articulated with the education, health and water sectors to ensure the functioning of social equipment.

Municipal Administration :

- Responsible for the selection process and allocation of housing to beneficiaries.

- Established eligibility criteria, monitored occupation and supported social integration programs.
- Mitrelli Group - Design, planning and construction of the centrality using integrated urbanism and modular construction methodologies. Implementation of critical infrastructures: electricity network, basic sanitation, drinking water distribution, telecommunications.

Financial Institutions :

- Support for the mobilisation of funds, especially in the reinforcement of complementary infrastructure.
- Creation of subsidized housing credit lines (with low penetration, but relevant for young couples).
- Community - local leaders: Mediators between the administration and the beneficiaries, ensuring permanent dialogue.

Timeline: Strategic Planning (2008–2009); Project Conception and Design (2009–2010) to Delivery and Progressive Occupation (2015–2016)

Enablers & Obstacles

Key drivers and enablers that supported the implementation: Ministry of Urbanism and Housing: Conceived the National Program of Urbanism and Housing (PNUH), defining the goals (1 million dwellings) and legal framework.

Ministry of Finance: Secured public funding through the General State Budget, also negotiating with financial institutions to support implementation.

Ministry of Territorial Administration and State Reform (MAT): Ensured the articulation with the spatial planning plans and the integration into the instruments of local governance.

Obstacles: Bureaucracy and Administrative Procedures; Logistics and Infrastructure; Social Acceptance and Community Integration; Social Acceptance and Community Integration; Economic Sustainability; Technical Training and Urban Management.

Results & Impact

This initiative reflects a transformative vision of inclusive urbanisation, where housing, social infrastructure, and community dynamics converge to create vibrant, resilient, and people-centred neighbourhoods. Through thoughtful design and integrated services, the project fosters belonging, security, and opportunity, setting a benchmark for replicable and sustainable housing models across Africa.

Quantitative impact: Living with dignity: the direct impact on housing; A neighborhood where everything is close; Communities that organize, participate and lead; A new economic horizon

for those who have always been on the margins; Ties, memories and belonging: the invisible fabric of the city. Total direct beneficiaries: 3500 people, organized into 500 families.

Qualitative impact: The Centrality was designed to welcome lives. Every building, street, and public space was carefully planned to serve families who, for years, had lived on the margins of urban dignity.

The project primarily targets low- and middle-income households that faced housing insecurity, social instability, and the absence of permanent and safe solutions. It also accommodates public sector employees and formal sector workers in need of decent, stable housing located close to their workplaces.

Families displaced from informal neighbourhoods and vulnerable areas; Young couples looking for their first home; Public servants on the move; Vulnerable social groups.

Replication & Scale Up

The experience of the Teresa Afonso Gomes Centrality demonstrates that an integrated urban model, when properly articulated with public policies, technology and community participation, can redefine social housing paradigms in Africa. This project goes beyond the simple provision of housing: it creates territories of inclusion that combines modern infrastructure, digital tenure security, full social services and structured community governance.

The model under consideration proves that transforming the African housing paradigm is possible.

Scaling up the solution as a housing practice requires a comprehensive, multidimensional strategy that integrates institutional innovation, sustainable financing, adaptive planning, and community engagement while aligning closely with national priorities and international frameworks such as the SDG and the New Urban Agenda. To achieve impact at scale, replication must be framed not merely as duplicating a housing typology but as extending an integrated model of sustainable urbanisation adapted to the diverse socio-economic and ecological realities across Africa.

Policy Uptake

This housing practice has been fully adopted into formal policy frameworks and legislation, and is being implemented at scale with institutional support.

The Teresa Afonso Gomes Centrality has already played a significant role in shaping policy discussions and influencing strategic frameworks within Angola's national urban development agenda. As part of the National Urbanism and Housing Programme (PNUH), the project serves as a pilot-level demonstration of how planned, multifunctional, and socially inclusive

urbanisation models can address the country's housing deficit while fostering territorial rebalancing and social integration.

Lessons & Takeaways

Firstly, the post-occupancy management framework could have been more robust; Secondly, affordability mechanisms require optimisation. While the centrality successfully addressed housing deficits, more diversified financing options; Thirdly, the integration of smart technologies and digital monitoring tools could have been introduced earlier, allowing for real-time data collection on infrastructure usage; Lastly, greater alignment with climate resilience strategies would have been valuable, especially in optimising energy efficiency, water reuse, and green infrastructure.