

ADITYA KUMAR

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professional experience

2022-Current **Executive Director, Ndifuna Ukwazi (NU)**

Ndifuna Ukwazi is an activist organisation and law centre that combines support to social movements, research and litigation. Using the tactics, the organization challenges the systemic issue related to equitable access to land and housing in South Africa. NU, over the last five years, has changed the entire discourse around land and housing giving meaning to Section 25 and Section 26 of the constitution. As Executive Director, I have given deeper meaning to its strategic areas of work, and restructured the organisation campaign effectively.

- Spearheading the development of strategy for the coming five years, based on an internal assessment;
- Advancing equitable access to land and housing: developing a programme that addresses dispossession of land in Cape Town, while advocating for public land to be used for public good;
- Regulating the private sector through development application objections that seek to provide affordable housing in large exclusionary well located private developments;
- Resisting evictions and displacement, particularly developing content for political and popular education programmes that seek to provide necessary protections for tenants facing market related evictions;
- Promote and encourage accountability in the public and private sector using political protests, disruptions in council, public walks in gentrified neighborhoods etc.
- Establishing a new area of work around securing tenure for poor and working class households using litigation and research to advance social justice;
- Managing everyday governance and operational responsibilities, including fundraising to allow for activists and movements to function;
- Extensively involved in public media and communication promoting a human rights approach to land and housing.

2016-2021 **Executive Director, Development Action Group (DAG)**

Under my leadership, DAG re-established itself as a leading urban sector NGO addressing land and housing rights. When I started at DAG, the organisation was experiencing severe financial crisis with only 25% income against budget and a general lack of confidence and strategic direction. Under my leadership, DAG has grown as a key civil society and knowledge partner in the urban development sector. Through my direct contribution and leadership, DAG doubled in both size (from 12 staff members to 28 staff members) and income, significantly investing in younger women staff members along with significant improvement in organisational function, efficiency and M&E.

- Spearheaded the overall strategy direction for DAG and expanding its advocacy work on land and housing rights;
- Raising significant resources and strengthening DAG's financial situation. At the beginning of my tenure, the organisation was operating under major deficit. At the end of my five years, over and above the annual budget of R12 million (USD850 000), the organisation developed strong operational and sustainability reserves;
- Under my leadership, DAG fostered a stronger civil society sector. This translated in strong relationships and partnerships across the board including key international & local funders, civil society organisations, academic institutions, international advocacy organisations etc. As a result, DAG is now a member of GLTN (Global Land Tool Network) and HIC (Habitat International Coalition);
- Crafting and coordinating key pieces of policy advocacy work for housing and land issues including urban land reform, expropriation without compensation, housing policy & research. I convened several national level dialogues with sector NGO's, National, Provincial departments and local municipality to advocate for policy reform and implementation;
- Conceptualised, resourced and established several new programmes at DAG including a three-year partnership with National Treasury and Lincoln Institute of Land Policy on land value capture with a critical focus on inclusionary housing, land leasing and land assembly;
- I conceptualised, resourced and developed a dedicated programme on low-income affordable housing delivery model through the Contractor and Developer Academy (CDA). Despite the CDA incubated in 2018, it has spearheaded eight rental housing projects and provided various forms of

- support and training to contractors, micro-developers and various finance institutions. The programme has been hugely successful and likely to be mainstreamed nationally;
- Following on Informal Settlement Support Plan(see work as independent consultant), I successfully packaged the implementation plan for fifteen informal settlements in the Western Cape Province, including capacity development programmes, technical support etc. DAG's approach and model for community participation and support is being shared at many national and provincial forums.;
 - Establishment of neighborhood development programmes in order to support community led housing and land initiatives. This included advocacy and implementation of inner-city social housing programme, support for leaders and activists across Cape Town, research & advocacy on sale of public rental stock, public sector budget transparency etc.;
 - Managing all governance aspects of the organisation, including Board of Directors, compliance, funder relations etc.
 - Raised the overall public and national profile of DAG through significant advocacy in print media, radio and television. I wrote extensive opinion editorials and media interviews on public land, urban land reform, national housing policy submissions etc.
 - Developing several internal programmes of learning, organisational developments, supporting young practitioners & activists and succession planning for key positions. I successfully managed a process of organisation strengthening, including financial and management systems to ensure shared responsibility and internal capacity development.

2016

Independent consultant

Providing policy research, participatory planning, informal settlement support, climate change adaptation and mitigation to various NGO's, governmental bodies and other community based stakeholders in South Africa.

- *Project manager and team leader, Informal settlement support plan, Western Cape government:*
I am managing the drafting of the first informal settlement support plan for the Western Cape government, working as an associate to Isandla insitute in collaboration with Palmer Development Group (PDG) and Habitat for Humanity, South Africa. My responsibilities include overall management of the project, leading on deliverables related to the strategic framework and implementation plan, oversight and coordination. The project also requires me to be involved in high-level Provincial and municipal lobbying and advocacy that will shape the Provincial strategy on informal settlements until 2040.
- *Co- Project manager and Co-team leader, Rapid Appraisal of informal settlements, Western Cape government:*
I am co-managing the compilation, collection and updating of the Provincial database of all metro and non-metro informal settlements, as an associate to Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC). My responsibilities include overall management of project, managing the data and GIS teams, providing overall strategy for ranking, categorization and prioritization. I am directly involved and responsible for interpreting this data in order to deepen the understanding of informal settlements in the Province, with a clear intention to strengthen community needs and priorities.
- *Independent land research and advisory role for other NGOs*
I have initiated a significant land research project, which will add overall value for NGOs and civil society organizations in their struggle for well-located land. I also act as a resource to several organizations involved in this sector as an advisor and sector expert.
- *Exploring the political and value-based dimensions of planning + landscape architecture, Teaching module, Masters programme for University of Cape Town, first year*
My module focuses on civil society, policy environment and government process in South Africa. The intended outcome is to get planning and landscape students engaged in socio-economic and spatial challenges in our cities and linking it to strong civil society and community-based action.

2015-2015 **ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability**

**Manager: Urban sustainability
Energy and Water workstream**

My role involved supporting and managing the water, sanitation and energy workstream including managing large donor funded projects that define the infrastructure landscape of African continent. The role involved managing small team, liasing with multiple governmental and private sector stakeholders, providing capacity support to local municipalities among other things.

- *Climate finance, SURE Water project*
I spearheaded a finance mechanism paper that focused on six cities in the SADC region. My role involved as the primary researcher was to collect baseline finance data and compare with donor, international and private finance.

- *Energy and mitigation workstream*
Directly responsible for managing the Urban LEDs EU funded project on municipal capacity building and small scale implementation programme across South Africa. I also managed the Johannesburg Greenhouse gas inventory, Earth Hour City Challenge 2016 in South Africa, Tanzania and Rwanda among others.
- *Proposal writing and team management*
I spearheaded the writing of 4 proposals to the EU and other donor organisations relating to energy and biodiversity. Also, managed a team of eight people with strong advocacy on issues relating to climate change and sustainability.

2010-2015 **Shack Dwellers International/ Community organization Resource Centre (CORC), Cape Town, RSA, Deputy Director/ Technical coordinator (For CORC)**

Informal Settlement upgrading program

My role involves supporting communities living in poverty-stricken slums in Southern and Eastern Africa, with a strong focus on South African slums, townships, housing and backyard communities. In South Africa, I was responsible for coordinating multi stakeholder partnerships with all levels of Politicians, Government officials, Private sector and Academia; supporting and strengthening community structures; poverty reduction through generating livelihood; capacitating communities and establishing programmes on WASH (water, sanitation, hygiene), shelter and informal settlement upgrading; and managing large donor and Government funded partnership projects; providing programme management and support to community networks.

- *Partnership with local Government:* I was central in formulating and managing an unprecedented 4-year Rand 10.5 mi (\$1.5 mi) partnership between local slum dwellers, NGO and local Municipality in Stellenbosch area. Using these institutional ties, personal management skills and creating strong links with local community, we are targeting 7,000 households living in extreme poverty. A strong WASH component through community designed, built and managed infrastructure is presenting new ways of service delivery in South Africa. This partnership is being used as a model to replicate in the City of Cape Town and several other Municipalities. As part of this process, I was facilitating and managing the upgrading of 22 informal settlements in Cape Town, co-funded through donor and city funding.
- *Impacting local policy:* Through innovative community-based planning and layout strategies, I have lobbied and impacted a reblocking policy at local government level (City of Cape Town). The strategy has allowed improved safety, access to services and most importantly, in-situ development without relocations to periphery of cities.
- *Generating Livelihood and Women centered development:* By building capacity in local community and using 'extended public works program', the slum upgrading projects have created 300 jobs, targeting women headed vulnerable households. This has also allowed communities to contribute towards their own development up to 20% of project cost. Using local knowledge and capacity, I am formulating a wide palette of community driven slum improvement and WASH strategies that addresses wider socio-economic, health and education issues.
- *Partnership with Universities:* By signing a MoU between SDI and African Association of Planning Schools (AAPS), I have institutionalized the relationship between 47 planning universities and slum dweller communities. I successfully facilitated a joint project between academics and SDI, based on which the Rockefeller foundation has funded 6 planning studios in 6 African cities to mainstream informality in the planning curriculum.

2008-Present **United Nations Relief and Works Agency**

Tripoli, Lebanon

Head of Design and Planning Unit

Reconstruction of Nahr El Bared Palestinian refugee camp

In 2007, Nahr El Bared refugee camp located in the north of Lebanon was completely destroyed in a conflict between Lebanese armed forces and Fatah El Islam. Almost 30,000 people were displaced and 1,700 buildings completely destroyed. As head of design and planning, I lead an unprecedented participatory planning initiative to reconstruct this camp. This project illustrates complex yet ironical cycle of refuge, by reconstructing homes for Palestinians displaced 60 yrs ago and once again in 2007.

- *Mapping 'collective memories':* Due to incremental growth of the camp, there was no mapping of camp. Following the conflict, it was critical to document every square inch of land. Through key community partners, workshops, neighborhood groups and individual interviews, my team is documenting and mapping the lost assets, neighborhood structure, and urban typologies in the camp.

- *Improving the environment by reclaiming identity:* A key challenge for reconstruction was to improve the built environment, while serving the same number of families. By negotiating with the community, we were able to deduct area from their plots, compensate vertically in built floors and contribute to public open space. The open space in the current planning went up from 13% to 35%.
- *Reclaiming identity:* The camp was based on intense family and neighborhood ties. The new plan proposes to retain the extended family model and pre-conflict neighborhood structures. The location of alleys, pathways and public landmarks are retained, as icons and nodes for navigation.
- *Unprecedented participation:* Nahr El Bared Reconstruction Commission (NBRC) is a voluntary communities based partner that is an equal partner in this planning and design. The community, through the NBRC, is directly involved in the decision making at all levels. All 5,000 units are being designed with each and every family, through a number of individual interviews and workshops.
- *Political balancing act:* From negotiating street widths based on tank dimensions to arguing about balconies, negotiation with stakeholders remains a continuing challenge. I have been directly involved in these meetings, balancing all the diverse yet sometimes contradictory requirements.
- *Coordinating with partners:* Providing handicapped accessibility is a key goal of the project. I have successfully managed the relationship with Lebanese Physically handicapped union to ensure that 90% of our ground floor units have handicapped accessibility. Initiatives like Environmental Impact Assessment are ongoing with other partners like UNDP.
- *Leadership and management:* Managing a team of 26 architects, engineers, social workers, data entry/ GIS specialists is a huge challenge. By team building initiatives, internal workshops and open door policy, I have been able to motivate the staff on this tough assignment. The outcome of this team effort has been presented in public exhibitions like Rotterdam Biennale.

2006-2008

**CBT Architects- Childs Bertman Tseckares
Urban Designer**

Boston, MA

- *Strategic planning initiatives:* Boston University master plan is overturning a complex traffic snarling, pedestrian unfriendly, fractured part of Boston into a land of regional opportunity. The strategic analysis unlocked 50 acres of development land within its own footprint, provided a unique solution for a multi-modal public transit facility, while offering an unprecedented 8 acre public space on the River. My responsibilities included master planning, transportation and traffic planning, phasing alternatives and liaising with consultants and clients.
- *Integrating stakeholders:* The Boston University master plan has an unparalleled public process, which has successfully built consensus within 20 city, state and federal agencies. My role included preparing cross-discipline regional arguments and public/ funding presentations.

2004-2006

**Los Angeles Community Design Center (Non Profit)
Project designer**

Los Angeles, CA

- *Balancing affordability and planning:* Las Brisas II is located in a gang-infested neighborhood on the outskirts of Los Angeles. Through sensitive design of 60 affordable housing units, children's park and elderly community center, we transformed the neighborhood into a safer place to live. As project designer, I was responsible for the concept design, construction documents, managing construction, liaising with city and preparing all presentation materials.

2001-2003

**Bhalla Ribeiro Bhalla Architects
Project Manager/ Associate/ Chief Coordinator**

New Delhi, India

- *Project dimensions:* The project entailed the construction of seismically safe 1,700 permanent homes, 6 schools and 3,000 sanitation units in earthquake-hit villages of Gujarat, India. As chief coordinator, I was responsible for managing construction leading a team of 8 architects and engineers, liaising with the clients and EU consultants, conducting design workshops in the villages and ensuring the construction quality.
- *Rebuilding communities:* Overcoming caste diversity and gender barriers we implemented a participatory design and construction process. By providing the necessary construction skills to

the villagers, we were able to generate livelihood and a sense of 'belonging' to their homes. I was responsible for collaborating with the villagers and engaging them to monitor their home through the construction process.

- *Overcoming 'cookie cutter housing'*: Instead of producing generic homes for the community, we incorporated common structural grids within the design of the units, such that they could be joined in several permutations and combinations. Furthermore, creative incentives were given within the villages to combine units, which revealed a diverse village fabric. I was responsible for leading the customization process of the homes and encouraging better design choices.
- *Innovative construction*: Learning from the housing rehabilitation, we designed a unique and custom prefabricated panel system for the toilets, which could be easily implemented by 2 unskilled laborers in a single day. This innovation helped maximize water efficiency and conservation in this dry region. I was responsible for the design of the panels, construction process and implementation on the field.
- *Managing funding and deliverables*: The earthquake rehabilitation project cost was estimated at Rs 300,000,000 (\$6.0mi) and was delivered in less than 2 years. I was responsible for cost estimation, billing cycles, managing the agency funds and meeting the tight project schedule.

2000-2001

**Prof. I M Chishti, School of Planning & Architecture
Designer/ Junior architect**

New Delhi, India

- *Multidisciplinary approach*: This period signified an all-inclusive approach towards design including single-family homes, exhibition spaces, set design and theatrical performances.

education

2003-2004

**Masters of Architecture, MR+D (Metropolitan Research and Design)
Southern California Institute of Architecture, Los Angeles**

Specialization in strategic and scenario planning.

Design work displayed in 'Architectural biennial' in Florence, Italy and Bank Gallery in Los Angeles.

1995-2000

**Bachelors of Architecture
Sushant School of art and architecture, Delhi, India**

Cultural secretary of Student body.

Selected for exchange study program to the University of Montreal.

2018

**The Prince of Wales Business and Sustainability Programme
University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainable Leadership**

summary of skills

I am a hands-on, high energy individual, with strong leadership qualities and communication skills. I have 18 years of invaluable interdisciplinary experience in program management, urban planning, community participation and project implementation. My strengths lie in keen sense of learning, positive outlook and ability to think through complex issues. I also thrive under extreme stress and pressure. I am fluent in Hindi and English and basic knowledge of French. I am affiliated with Indian institute of architects as a licensed architect.

academic alliances, media articles, awards and publications

- **Nahr El Bared Reconstruction is shortlisted for the prestigious Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 2013 cycle**
- **Publication and anthology on the work of Late Prof Vanessa Watson for the Association of European Schools of Planning** https://aesop-planning.eu/images/uploads/watson_booklet_final-2.pdf
- **Publication on 'Commons in Cape Town' with Stockholm Institute of Art, partner organization and contributor** https://www.academia.edu/42946697/Commons_in_Cape_Town
- **Langrug project received the 2012 South African Planning Institute award for best community led planning project in South Africa**
- **Mashiniwami project received 2013 Gold Imphumelele award for reblocking and innovative community based slum upgrading.**
- **Extraordinary Lecturer at School of Public Leadership, Stellenbosch University, 2012-2015**
- **Visiting lecturer at the Mundus Urbano urban planning programme in Darmstadt, Germany and Barcelona, Spain focusing on informal settlement upgrading and post disaster reconstruction.**
- **Participated and published reframing of the Sustainable Development Goals with global activists Habitat III: Different Urbanisations published through IASS Potsdam Germany 2015**
- https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SVS49MEASxtqwApRULzHQUole6sa3bTf/view?usp=share_link
- **Integrity In Urban Development- African Centre For Cities Blog – By WUF10 Cities of Integrity panel moderator, Adi Kumar, DAG Executive Director -18 February 2020** <https://www.africancentreforcities.net/integrity-in-urban-development/>
- **De-densification of informal settlements as a crisis response is bad short-term thinking – 14 Civil Society groups- By Daily Maverick Staff Writer • 20 April 2020** https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-04-20-de-densification-of-informal-settlements-as-a-crisis-response-is-bad-short-term-thinking-14-civil-society-groups/?fbclid=IwAR1BRqtMezwRd1j8Dc0ze2g8JlKmvwP-ZN_C9Er_1VOICxSKaJqvVlNjQ
- **Asivikelane campaign gives a voice to those living in informal settlements – By Aditya Kumar & Phumeza Mlungwana-Mail & Guardian •30 May 2020** <https://mq.co.za/coronavirus-essentials/2020-05-30-asivikelane-campaign-gives-a-voice-to-those-living-in-informal-settlements/>
- **Covid-19: State should use Cape Town's military airports for housing- By Adi Kumar, Querida Saal & 4 others- GroundUp •01 June 2020** <https://www.groundup.org.za/article-print/covid-19-state-should-use-cape-towns-military-airports-for-housing/>
- **TTPod COVID Diary Entry Number 8: "Deciphering De-densification" Spatial and socio-economic. Talking Transformations Podcast- 01-May 2020** <https://anchor.fm/talking-transformation-po/episodes/TTPod-COVID-Diary-Entry-Number-8-Deciphering-De-densification-Spatial-and-socio-economic-implications-of-urban-density-and-accelerated-informal-settlement-relocations-edg37e/a-a230hsb>
- **Executive Director At Development Action Group, Aditya Kumar Joins Stephen Grootes •Newzroom Afrika –The Pulse-May 7, 2020** https://youtu.be/3rfKJiXXR_M
- **How to respond to Cape Town's surge in land occupations- By Adi Kumar- GroundUp - July 27, 2020**
- https://www.groundup.org.za/article/how-to-respond-to-cape-towns-surge-in-land-occupations/?fbclid=IwAR22UEaqqz6-i-TtsN-OB0EvLSE7_9GRqFt5NIKlqCPCIRJ50A4bulKypVI
- **How to respond to Cape Town's sudden increase of land occupations-Guest Adi- SAfm- July 29,2020** <https://loom.ly/nySVngc> **LISTEN: DAG's Executive Director, Adi Kumar talks to SAfm's Phemelo Motene**
- **Publication in Indian publication 'Context'- 'Still waters run deep': Countering urbanization through community action, 2013**
- **Publication on Habitat III: Different Urbanisations published through IASS Potsdam Germany 2015**
- **Previously, SDI Coordinator, with Association for African Planning Schools. Funded by Rockefeller Foundation, I will coordinate and mediate 6 planning studios in 6 African cities in slum communities.**
- **Cape Times article: 'Who solves what': Building partnerships with slum dwellers, 2011**
- **Rotterdam Biennale 2009 Publication: Nahr El Bared reconstruction and camp improvement project.**
- **Forthcoming article on Refugee camp reconstruction: Edited volume by Ismael Sheikh Hassan. 'Design and planning of Nahr El Bared'**
- **Forthcoming article: 'Who needs partnerships' in edited volume being published by Isandla institute/ African center for cities co-authored by Johru Robyn**

presentations and seminars

- **Keynote speaker at Hakijami Land and Housing conference 2019, Kenya**
- **Facilitated, organized and participated at several sessions at the World Urban Forum on land value capture, tenement developments in Kenya and South Africa, informal settlement upgrading programmes , social production of habitat etc.**
- **Participated in meeting of global activists organized through IASS Potsdam to discuss Habitat III agenda, 2015**
- **Provocateur for MAPS project on DEVMIT (Development and Mitigation) to provide insight into informal settlements thinking into mitigation projects, 2016**
- **Provocateur for energy workshop between academics and civil society members under the SALED's project, 2016**
- Public lecture to School of Architecture, Polytechnic of Windhoek, Namibia
- Mainstreaming planning for the urban poor: NTNU University seminar, Trondheim, Norway 2012
- Community Driven sustainability: NTNU student faculty lecture, Trondheim, Norway 2012
- Building partnerships for change: Presentation to Municipality forum, Western Cape Province, Cape Town 2012
- Upgrading of informal settlement, Presentation to Western Cape Province, Cape Town 2012
- Round table presentation, Amandla Imali Nolwazi- Knowledge is power and Money: World Planning Schools Congress, Perth, 2011
- Keynote speaker, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Awards presentation, 2011
- Urban poverty and informal settlement upgrading: Presentation at World Town Planning Day, Cape Town, 2011
- Irene Grootbloom Lecture series: an open public lecture series held at Sea Point, Cape Town. Presentation on Urban Poverty and Upgrading, Cape Town 2011
- Presentation on 'water and Sanitation' to African Center for Cities, MPhil program on Urban Infrastructure, University of Cape Town, 2011
- Design for the other 90%: Cities, Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt Design Museum: Sheffield Road Upgrade: Community Mapping, 2011
- Presentation on Informal Settlement upgrading to FIG (International Federation of Surveyors), Cape Town, 2011
- Curriculum design on 'Informality' for Association of African Planning Schools (AAPS), 2010
- Presentation: Informal settlement upgrading to Masters students, Department of City and Regional Planning, University of Cape Town, 2010
- Rotterdam Biennale: Exhibition on Camp Improvement initiatives: Nahr el Bared camp reconstruction, 2009

personal

I am an avid cyclist and enjoy traveling, photography and cooking a mean curry.