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**Right to food**

## **Study on the Promotion of Human Rights of the Urban Poor: Strategies and Best Practices**

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right to food of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee**

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## I. Introduction

1. Half of the current global population live in cities, and one third of all urban-dwellers are poor. The urban poor represent one quarter of the world's poor population,<sup>1</sup> a number that is expected to rise dramatically with continued urbanization, making poverty an increasingly urban phenomenon.<sup>2</sup> The pace of urban poverty reduction has also been slower than rural poverty reduction, indicating an overall urbanization of poverty. The higher the level of urbanization, the larger the effect on the proportion of the poor living in urban areas.<sup>3</sup> Thus, urban poverty poses particular challenges to the basic human rights of the population it affects.

2. In its resolution 16/27 of 25 March 2011, the Human Rights Council requested the Advisory Committee to undertake, as appropriate, comprehensive studies on the urban poor and their enjoyment of the right to food, including strategies to improve their protection and best practices. At the eight session of the Advisory Committee, a preliminary study (A/HRC/AC/8/5) was prepared by the drafting group on the right to food, consisting of José Bengoa Cabello, Chinsung Chung, Latif Hüseyinov, Jean Ziegler and Mona Zulficar.<sup>4</sup>

3. At its eighth session in February 2012, the Advisory Committee adopted recommendation 8/2 by consensus, welcoming the preliminary study on the theme "promotion of human rights of the urban poor: strategies and best practices" and assigned the completion of the above-mentioned study to the drafting group on the right to food, to be presented to the Advisory Committee at its ninth session for submission to the Human Rights Council at its twenty-second session.

## II. Causes of urban poverty

### A. Urbanization and poor infrastructure

4. A defining characteristic of contemporary urban poverty is that low- and middle-income countries bear the brunt of both the current and projected population of poor city dwellers: 80 per cent of the world's urban poor live in developing countries,<sup>5</sup> and the developing world will continue to see the highest rate of urban growth. By 2030, 93 per cent of the world's urban population will live in the developing world, 80 per cent in Africa and Asia alone.<sup>6</sup> The ability of cities to provide basic infrastructure and services has not, however, kept pace with the rate of urbanization.<sup>7</sup> In 2001, approximately 78 per cent of

<sup>1</sup> Judy L. Baker, "Urban poverty: a global view", Urban Papers, UP-5 (Washington, D.C., The World Bank, 2008), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> By 2025, two thirds of the world's people will live in urban areas. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Ravallion, "On the Urbanization of Poverty", Policy Research Working Paper, No. 2586 (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2001), p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> The drafting group on the right to food would like to thank Chanmi Kim and Sunkyo Im for their important contribution during the drafting of the present study. The drafting group also thanks Mouvement Mondial des Mères International/Make Mothers Matter International for sending its valuable comments.

<sup>5</sup> Baker, "Urban poverty", p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), *State of World Population 2007: Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth* (2007), p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> See Pietro Garau and others, *A Home in the City: Task Force on Improving the Lives of Slum Dwellers* (London, Earthscan, 2005).

urban residents in least developed countries lived in slums, compared with 6 per cent in the developed world.<sup>8</sup>

5. Developing countries have a disproportionate amount of urban poverty because urbanization today is spreading at a different speed and scale than that of the forces that shaped cities of the now-developed world. The current trend, which the United Nations Population Fund's report *State of the World's Population 2007* describes as the "second wave" of urbanization, is faster and larger in scale than the urban growth witnessed in Europe and North America. The first wave was relatively gradual, occurring over 200 years from around 1750 until 1950. Over two centuries, 15 million city dwellers, accounting for 10 per cent of the population, grew to 423 million, or 52 per cent of the total population. By contrast, the current wave of urbanization is relatively rapid and large. The urban population in the developing world will continue to grow from 309 million in 1950 (about 18 per cent of the total population) to a projected 3.9 billion by 2030 (about 56 per cent).<sup>9</sup>

6. Different demographic and socioeconomic forces drive the second wave of urbanization. In Europe and North America, industrialization drew large numbers of rural dwellers to cities in search of job opportunities. However, migration into urban areas accounts for less than half of the current rate of growth in developing countries; natural population growth and the incorporation of peripheral areas into cities account for the greater part of urban growth.<sup>10</sup> In fact, while megacities have tended to attract more attention, research indicates that much of the urban growth witnessed is centred in smaller cities and towns throughout the developing world.<sup>11</sup>

## **B. Adverse effects of globalization and dislocation of rural communities**

7. The highly visible inequalities between the urban poor and higher-income city dwellers are made starker by the effects of globalization in cities.<sup>12</sup> For instance, in the slum areas of big cities in both developed and developing countries, including Los Angeles, Nairobi, New York or other cities where globalization has "aggravated inequality", the poor live directly adjacent to or amidst expensive high-rise buildings. In developed countries, many industrialized cities have communities of foreign migrant workers living in poverty.

8. Movements of rural dwellers relocating to cities in search of education and employment do certainly play a significant role. Some scholars argue that the increasing economic integration of the world's economies has turned both large and small cities into the main beneficiaries of growth and opportunity,<sup>13</sup> and since jobs grow where there is economic activity, people follow the promise of employment into cities. Globalization has inflicted hardship on the urban poor, often exaggerating stark inequalities, challenging

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<sup>8</sup> The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) defines a slum household as one that faces any or all of five shelter deprivations: lack of access to improved water supply; lack of access to improved sanitation; overcrowding (three or more persons per room); dwellings made of non-durable material; and insecurity of tenure (lack of evidence of documentation to prove secure tenure status or de facto or perceived protection from evictions). See UNFPA, *State of World Population 2007*.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> Deniz Baharoglu and Christine Kessides, "Urban poverty" in *A Sourcebook for Poverty Reduction Strategies*, vol. 2, chap. 16 (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2002), p. 127.

<sup>11</sup> UNFPA, *State of World Population 2007*, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> See James Holston and Arjun Appadurai, "Cities and Citizenship", *Public Culture*, vol. 8 (Winter 1996).

<sup>13</sup> UNFPA, *State of World Population 2007*, p. 8

governance and undermining rule of law, particularly as the international flow of illicit drugs and goods becomes harder to control.<sup>14</sup>

9. The conversion of small-scale farming to cash-crop plantations has further uprooted many community members from rural to urban areas.<sup>15</sup> Rural communities are also particularly vulnerable to the threats of climate change (including floods, tropical storms, droughts and other natural disasters), which are constantly threatening the livelihoods of the 1.3 billion people who currently depend on subsistence farming.<sup>16</sup> This vulnerability can ultimately lead to dislocation of rural communities and forced migration to cities in search for opportunities.

### C. Poor urban planning and lack of good governance

10. City governments have sometimes exacerbated these risks in their enforcement of urban development policies, where foreign investments are often introduced. According to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, urban development policies often magnify the risk of flash floods, given that the policies are usually planned and implemented without the participation of the urban poor, which also results in their displacement.

11. State authorities fail in their responsibility to “respond effectively to local needs in a participatory, transparent and accountable manner”.<sup>17</sup> While cities are geographically closer to and therefore theoretically offer greater access to the centres of political power, urban poverty excludes a large majority from participation. Cities and towns often do not manage growth by providing good governance and delivering services for households and private-sector enterprises. Policies are not revised, or new policies not implemented, to counterbalance the pressures of population growth on service capacities and address the failures of urban governance. In addition to inappropriate policies at both the central and local level, corruption and cumbersome regulatory requirements in cities also “lead to a variety of deprivations, such as inadequate infrastructure and environmental services, limited access to school and health care, and social exclusion. Better urban governance is therefore a necessary condition for empowering the urban poor and improving their opportunities and security”.<sup>18</sup>

## III. Poor conditions and human rights of the urban poor

### A. Food insecurity and low food quality, and right to food

12. High food prices force the poor to turn to alternatives with little or no nutritional value.<sup>19</sup> Sharp rises in food prices since 2006<sup>20</sup> have led to an increase in the number of

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>15</sup> *State of the World's Indigenous Peoples* (United Nations publication, sales No. 09.VI.13), pp. 229–230.

<sup>16</sup> See Economics of Climate Adaptation Working Group, *Shaping Climate-Resilient Development: A Framework for Decision-Making* (2009).

<sup>17</sup> UNFPA, *State of World Population 2007*, p. 67.

<sup>18</sup> Baharoglu and Kessides, “Urban Poverty”, p. 109.

<sup>19</sup> See IFPRI, “Living in the City”.

<sup>20</sup> For example, in 2010 a series of weather shocks combined with subsequent market tensions and export restrictions curtailed food supply and doubled global wheat prices between June 2010 and year end. Global maize prices also rose about 73 per cent in the six months after June 2010.

hungry people to more than 1 billion.<sup>21</sup> In fact, food prices tend to have the largest direct impact on poverty because many poor households depend on agricultural income and have larger shares of expenditure on food. The 2010 increase in food prices may have raised poverty by 43.7 million globally and disproportionately affected those who are already poor.<sup>22</sup>

13. They are particularly affected by the volatility of food prices as they rely almost entirely on cash transactions to obtain food, owing to their limited ability to grow their food and the higher costs of food transportation. For the urban poor, who are often unable to purchase and store large amounts of food, the stability of prices has a great effect on their food security.<sup>23</sup>

14. Generally, there is a greater variety and quantity of food available in urban areas than in rural areas.<sup>24</sup> Despite this relatively ample supply, however, urban-dwellers tend to pay higher prices that incorporate the cost of transportation along complex distribution chains. This also means that changes in food prices disproportionately affect the urban poor.<sup>25</sup>

15. The availability of biofuels, fluctuating oil prices and inappropriate policy responses exert pressure on commodity prices and increase price volatility.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, affected households often do not employ coping strategies to mitigate the deterioration of their food security, food spending and nutrition. Safety-net systems also remain weak.<sup>27</sup>

16. Another concern is the quality of food to which the urban poor have access. The right to food as defined above encompasses not just access to sufficient caloric intake but also to food that is nutritionally adequate. Those chronically deprived of the essential nutrients suffer from malnutrition (often referred to as “the hidden hunger”), which makes them more vulnerable to disease. For those living in urban poverty, inadequate nutrition may be a problem, since food patterns in urban areas increasingly trend towards prepared or processed foods that are higher in calories but lower in micronutrients.<sup>28</sup>

17. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in its general comment No. 12, defines the right to food as achieved when “every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement”. A former Special Rapporteur on the right to food similarly defines the right to food as “the right to have regular, permanent and unrestricted access,

<sup>21</sup> See World Bank, “Food Price Watch” (Washington, D.C., 2012).

<sup>22</sup> Maros Ivanic, Will Martin and Hassan Zaman, “Estimating the Short-Run Poverty Impacts of the 2010–11 Surge in Food Prices”, Policy Research Working Paper, No. 5633 (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2011), p. 11.

<sup>23</sup> See Armando Mendoza and Roberto Machado, “The escalation in world food prices and its implications for the Caribbean”, Project Documents collection, *Caribbean Development Report*, vol. 2 (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2009).

<sup>24</sup> See IFPRI, “Living in the City”.

<sup>25</sup> See Alberto Zezza and Luca Tasciotti, “Urban agriculture, poverty, and food security: Empirical evidence from a sample of developing countries” in *Food Policy*, vol. 35, No. 4 (2010).

<sup>26</sup> See World Bank and others, “Price Volatility in Food and Agricultural Markets: Policy Responses” (Washington, D.C., 2011).

<sup>27</sup> World Bank, “Food Price Watch”.

<sup>28</sup> For instance, studies conducted in Cameroon and the United Republic of Tanzania show notable differences in the food consumption patterns between urban and rural populations, particularly in the higher amount of starch, sugar, fat and salt of urban residents compared with the high-fibre and micronutrient-rich diets of rural residents. See Gina Kennedy, “Food security in the context of urban sub-Saharan Africa”, submitted for the Food Africa Internet Forum (2003). Available from <http://foodafrica.nri.org/urbanisation/urbanisationpapers.html>.

either directly or by means of financial purchases, to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food corresponding to the cultural traditions of the people to which the consumer belongs, and which ensures a physical and mental, individual and collective, fulfilling and dignified life free of fear” (A/HRC/7/5, para. 17). For the urban poor, tenuous food security and poor quality of food threatens this right.

## **B. Limited employment opportunity and right to work**

18. Unemployment and underemployment are typically higher for the urban poor, and the majority of them work in the informal sector. Many urban poor therefore face unemployment, underemployment, low wages, a lack of social insurance and unsafe working conditions.

19. For those living in urban poverty, not only is unemployment uniformly much higher than for the rest of the urban workforce, but there is also very little protection against unemployment. A 2007 World Bank study found that unemployment among poor men in Dhaka was twice that of non-poor men. These figures were even higher for women, with 25 per cent of poor women facing unemployment compared with 12 per cent of non-poor women.<sup>29</sup> Data from Latin America suggest that the urban poor have disproportionately low skill levels – 70 per cent of poor urban adults in the workforce, against 50 per cent in the overall urban workforce are classified as low-skilled.<sup>30</sup> As low-skilled labourers, many of the urban poor must work in unstable jobs for low wages. These temporary, often informal jobs can vary from one season to the next, and pay tends to fluctuate accordingly.

20. Article 23, paragraph 1, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights specifies the basic right of everyone to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. Article 23, paragraph 2, also articulates that “everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work”, while article 23, paragraph 3, declares that “everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection”. The conditions of the urban poor are rarely sufficient to meet the quality of life described in the Declaration.

## **C. Unequal opportunity of education and right to education**

21. The right to work is closely tied to the right to education; research shows that limited access to quality education for the urban poor means that they cannot gain the necessary skills to secure more stable, higher-paying employment. Studies from Brazil, for instance, suggest that limited access to quality education can account for differences in wages between different groups of varying social marginalization.<sup>31</sup> These patterns can also be generational in some cases; parents who are low-skilled and poorly educated are less

<sup>29</sup> World Bank, “Dhaka: Improving Living Conditions for the Urban Poor”, Bangladesh Development Series, Paper No. 17 (Dhaka, The World Bank, 2007), p. 22.

<sup>30</sup> Lucy Winchester and Racquel Szalachman, “The Urban Poor’s Vulnerability to the Impacts of Climate Change in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Policy Agenda”, paper presented at the Fifth Urban Research Symposium 2009, Marseille, France, June 2009, p. 8.

<sup>31</sup> See Omar Arias, Gustavo Yamada and Luis Tejerina, “Education, Family Background and Racial Earnings Inequality in Brazil” (Inter-American Development Bank, 2003).

able to provide their children with adequate opportunities to secure a poverty-free adulthood.<sup>32</sup>

22. Figures on educational achievement and enrolment in urban areas often hide inequalities that disadvantage the poor. On aggregate, education favours the urban side of the urban/rural divide because schools are closer to where people live.<sup>33</sup> In reality, however, there are stark differences between the ability of the poor and the economically advantaged to access quality schooling. This is true to such an extent that enrolment among the urban poor is decreasing in many places, contrary to rising rural and other urban enrolment rates.<sup>34</sup>

23. Urban poor families' limited access to quality education is owed to several common factors. First, despite free schooling, indirect costs such as uniforms, textbooks and supplies often make it prohibitive for households with very limited economic means. Second, the transition between primary and secondary school is particularly tenuous, as many children leave school to find work in order to supplement household income, illustrating the difficult economic decisions that poor urban families must make.<sup>35</sup> Third, urban poor communities may simply not have access to enough school facilities, such as in the case of Kibera, one of the largest slums of Nairobi. One study revealed that, while there were 14 free primary public schools within walking distance, the facilities could only accommodate 20,000 of the more than 100,000 school-aged children in the area.<sup>36</sup> Fourth, even if they are available, there are often dangers associated with travelling to and from schools, especially in poor urban areas, or at the schools themselves, including sexual abuse and mistreatment.<sup>37</sup> Finally, the quality of education available to poor, urban communities is usually far inferior. For example, door-to-door surveys conducted in Hyderabad and Secunderabad in India indicated that the poor quality of school facilities and teaching was a major factor in family decisions to remove their children from school.<sup>38</sup> It is important to note that these challenges to the right to education disproportionately affect girls.

24. In its general comment No. 13, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights defines education as both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights. It also recognizes education as an "empowerment right" and "the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities". For many of the urban poor, however, unequal access to quality education challenges this right and, by extension, their ability secure a poverty-free life for themselves and the generation that follows them.

#### **D. Poor housing and right to adequate housing**

25. Urban population growth patterns have resulted in the poor being concentrated in areas that are undesirable to others, leaving them vulnerable to heightened risk of disease, disaster and insecurity. In fact, the urban poor "face many of the same challenges in daily

<sup>32</sup> Department for International Development (DFID), "Ending Child Poverty" (London, 2002).

<sup>33</sup> UNFPA, *State of World Population 2007*, p. 28.

<sup>34</sup> Eduardo López Moreno and others, *State of the World's Cities 2006/7* (UN-HABITAT, 2006), p. 128.

<sup>35</sup> UNFPA, *State of World Population 2007*, p. 18.

<sup>36</sup> López Moreno and other, *State of the World's Cities 2006/7*, p. 127.

<sup>37</sup> See UNICEF, "Poverty and exclusion among urban children", *Innocenti Digest*, No. 10 (November 2002), p. 13; UNFPA, *State of World Population 2007*; Human Rights Watch (HRW), "Failing Our Children: Barriers to the Right to Education" (2005).

<sup>38</sup> UNICEF, "Poverty and exclusion", p. 13.

life as the rural poor, with the added burden of overcrowded and often unsanitary living conditions”.<sup>39</sup> Around one third of the urban population in developing countries – nearly 1 billion people – live in slums. In Africa, the proportion of urban-dwellers living in slums is some 71 per cent, and 59 per cent in South Asia. The urban poor are driven to such living conditions due to poorly functioning land and housing markets, as well as the lack of planning for urban development and growth.<sup>40</sup>

26. While 32 per cent of the world’s urban population (roughly 924 million people) live in slums, 6 per cent (54 million people) of the world’s total slum population live in Europe and other developed countries. The number of slum dwellers worldwide will increase to 2 billion in the next 30 years if no firm or concrete action is taken to arrest the situation.<sup>41</sup>

27. Given that the urban poor very rarely own tenure over their land or housing, they often face the constant threat of eviction, are vulnerable to mistreatment owing to the informality of renting agreements, have greater difficulty in obtaining access to credit, and cannot use their homes for income-generating activities.<sup>42</sup> Much of this predicament is due to too few pro-poor policies with regard to urbanization as a permanent pattern that requires acceptance and incorporation into city development strategies. There is a reluctance to integrate poor communities into the larger city, particularly in formalizing informal settlements, providing basic infrastructure or improving land tenure laws.

28. Article 25, paragraph 1, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services”. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights further clarifies, in its general comment No. 4, the right to adequate housing and characterizes adequate housing to include security of tenure, accessibility to services and infrastructure, habitability, affordability, inclusive location, and cultural adequacy.<sup>43</sup> However, for the urban poor, securing adequate housing that meets these criteria in order to achieve such a standard of living is a challenge.<sup>44</sup>

## **E. Poor sanitation, and right to health and right to drinking water**

29. Poor urban settlements are often characterized by three common patterns. First, they form at the edge of cities, where inhabitants incur high costs in travel and time in order to commute to work. Second, they also form in city centres near environmentally unsafe areas, such as waste dumps or industrial sites,<sup>45</sup> where inadequate water and sanitation infrastructure combined with highly concentrated living conditions make them particularly vulnerable to negative health outcomes (including infectious, respiratory and diarrheal diseases). HIV/AIDS prevalence rates are also very high in urban areas, exceeding 50 per cent in some cities. Despite better access to health care in urban areas, morbidity and mortality rates can even be higher for those living in slums than that of rural residents.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Baker, “Urban poverty”, p. 5.

<sup>40</sup> UNFPA, *State of World Population 2007*, p. 39.

<sup>41</sup> UN-HABITAT, *The Human Settlements Statistical Database* (2001). Available from <http://ww2.unhabitat.org/mdg/>.

<sup>42</sup> Baker, “Urban poverty”, p. 6.

<sup>43</sup> See also [www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Housing/Pages/Documents.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Housing/Pages/Documents.aspx).

<sup>44</sup> UN-Habitat.

<sup>45</sup> Baker, “Urban poverty”, p. 9.

<sup>46</sup> For instance, infant mortality is almost 2.5 times higher in Nairobi’s slums than in all of Nairobi (151 deaths per 1,000 against 62 in the rest of the city). African Population and Health Research Center,

Third, the urban poor often settle in areas at higher risk of floods, landslides and other disasters, where inadequate resources and safety nets make recovery more difficult.

30. There is a large body of evidence suggesting that urban areas on average enjoy much higher health indicators than rural areas. However, when disaggregated, it is clear that there are wide disparities between the socioeconomic fragments that exist in cities, and that the urban poor suffer from health risks that are comparable with, and sometimes worse than, those of their rural counterparts.<sup>47</sup>

31. Beyond these physical health indicators, there is also growing evidence that mental illness, particularly depression and anxiety, is more prevalent among the urban poor than their higher income counterparts. Though more research is required, current hypotheses draw connections between mental illness and the stress of survival in resource-constrained, often violent, and marginalized contexts.<sup>48</sup>

32. In addition to the above-mentioned health burdens, poverty in urban areas is intertwined with the problem of environmental degradation, where poor air and water quality are particularly hazardous and pervasive. The urban poor are often exposed to especially high degrees of outdoor air pollution from traffic and industry. Airborne particulates and pollutants have been linked to respiratory illness, particularly in cities in Latin America, but with growing evidence of similar patterns in China and India.<sup>49</sup> Indoor air pollution caused by the intensive use of solid fuels, cooking stoves and open fires among the urban poor, combined with inadequate ventilation in poorly constructed shelters, are also believed to substantially raise the incidence of acute respiratory infections and chronic obstructive pulmonary disorders among the urban poor.<sup>50</sup> Poor families in cities are more likely to rely on these forms of fuel for their lighting and cooking needs than those with higher incomes.

33. Settlements of the urban poor often lack access to water and sanitation infrastructure. These communities exist off the grid and rely on private, small-scale distributors of water, such as vendors or public taps. The result is that most urban slum dwellers pay several times more than their higher income counterparts, not just in absolute terms but also as a share of household expenditure. In Nairobi, for instance, residents of informal settlements pay five to seven more times per unit than the official tariff levied on households with a connection to the water network.<sup>51</sup> In Argentina, poor urban households spend 16 per cent of all expenditure on utilities, compared with only 11 per cent of the wealthiest 25 per cent.<sup>52</sup> For residents of Kibera in Kenya, one of the most well-known slums on the continent, waiting times for access to communal taps exceed one hour on average, and are much longer during the dry seasons.<sup>53</sup> According to a study conducted in 47 different countries and 93 locations, this pattern holds across countries; it in fact

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“Population and Health Dynamics in Nairobi’s Informal Settlements”, report of the Nairobi Cross-Sectional Slums Survey (Nairobi, 2002).

<sup>47</sup> See Mark R. Montgomery, “Urban Poverty and Health in Developing Countries”, *Population Bulletin*, vol. 64, No. 2 (June 2009)

<sup>48</sup> See Naomar Almeida-Filho and others, “Social inequality and depressive disorders in Bahia, Brazil: interactions of gender, ethnicity, and social class” in *Social Science and Medicine*, 59, No. 7, 2004.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> UN-Habitat.

<sup>51</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2006: Beyond scarcity: Power, poverty and the global water crisis* (Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 7, 52 and 83.

<sup>52</sup> Baker, “Urban poverty”, p. 8.

<sup>53</sup> UNDP, *Human Development Report*, p. 38.

revealed that average water prices ranged from 1.5 to 12 times higher than in the formal network.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, these sources are often not monitored for quality.

34. The painful irony is that urban areas enjoy better access to health services compared to rural areas – at least geographically. But for the urban poor, such services are often prohibitively expensive. For much of the developing world, health services in urban areas are largely fee-for-service, making reliable access cost-prohibitive for the urban poor. However, even when subsidies are implemented to remove the cost barrier, often the system is inaccessible to the urban poor who face difficulty navigating the processes. Furthermore, the spatial and social marginalization of the urban poor affects their health-seeking behaviour such that many health-care providers have come to expect urban poor users to seek treatment only when conditions become severe, to fail to follow prescriptions in order to save costs on medicines, and to sometimes display limited will to engage in robust health-seeking behaviour.<sup>55</sup>

35. The right to health is articulated in the Constitution of the World Health Organization, which defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”, and declares that “the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition”. In addition to the challenges posed to health by inadequate access to water and sanitation, the right of the urban poor to this right, reaffirmed in article 12 of the International Covenant of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, is challenged by their exposure to environmental hazards and their limited access to health services.

36. In its resolution 15/9, the Human Rights Council affirmed that the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation is derived from the right to an adequate standard of living and inextricably related to the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, as well as the right to life and human dignity.

## **F. Insecurity, exclusion and discrimination, and right to political participation**

37. The urban poor suffer from economic, social and political exclusion. The resulting stigma and discrimination is a feature of daily life for many slum dwellers.<sup>56</sup> Children are especially aware of their harsh, often dilapidated surroundings and experience them as shameful reflections of their own self-worth.<sup>57</sup> Research shows that this stigma manifests itself in job interviews and employment opportunities that discriminate against the poor because of where they live. A study conducted in France, for example, found that job applicants from low-income addresses were less likely to be selected for interviews than candidates from higher-income areas.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, a study in Rio de Janeiro revealed that

<sup>54</sup> Mukami Kariuki and Jordan Schwartz, “Small-Scale Private Service Providers of Water and Electricity Supply: A Review of Incidence, Structure, Pricing and Operating Characteristics”, Policy Research Paper, No. 3727 (World Bank, 2005), p. 26.

<sup>55</sup> See Montgomery, “Urban Poverty”.

<sup>56</sup> See Janice Perlman, “The Metamorphosis of Marginality: Four Generations in the Favelas of Rio de Janeiro”, and Douglas S. Massey and others, “Chronicle of a Myth Foretold: The Washington Consensus in Latin America”, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 606 (July 2006).

<sup>57</sup> See Louise Chawla, *Growing up in an Urbanising World* (Earthscan Publications and UNESCO, 2002).

<sup>58</sup> López Moreno and others, *State of the World's Cities 2006/7*, p. 5.

living in a slum was a greater barrier to employment than gender or ethnicity.<sup>59</sup> Such conditions can also lead to social unrest.

38. This exclusion is even greater for migrant and undocumented workers who, for instance, have access to very few legal rights and services. The urban poor have been generally excluded from the processes by which decisions affecting them are made. Since the urban poor are particularly disadvantaged with regard to health and opportunities for education, work and political participation, their exclusion hampers their ability to influence policies that could improve their lives, hold Government officials accountable and contribute their valuable knowledge to development efforts.<sup>60</sup>

39. Several factors conspire to marginalize political voice and civic participation among the urban poor. Firstly, the lack of responsiveness of Governments to their needs, as reflected by gaps in basic services, undermine the contract with the Government and reinforce the idea that the urban poor are not full citizens of the cities they inhabit.<sup>61</sup> Secondly, there is a demonstrated reluctance to incorporate the needs of poor urban citizens into larger city policies, sometimes from a limited understanding of the extent of urban poverty, other times from a misunderstanding of how to address it.<sup>62</sup> Finally, though some cities have adopted ways to incorporate the political voice of poor urban-dwellers into decision-making, they are still the exception and not the rule in a context where votes alone are not enough to ensure sustained and structural change for the urban poor.<sup>63</sup>

40. Political marginalization also means that the poor often face greater insecurity and violence, as policing and the rule of law often do not extend into settlements where the poor are concentrated;<sup>64</sup> violence and criminality in poor urban communities therefore tend to be higher. Here, too, the effects of globalization disproportionately affects the urban poor, as international networks of drugs and other illicit economies are thought to flourish where governance is weak.<sup>65</sup>

41. The right to political participation is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: article 21 states that “everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives” and that “the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government”. For poor city-dwellers, the right to political participation is closely related to urban governance practices. The Habitat Agenda defines governance as “the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences” and good urban governance as “characterized by the principles of sustainability, subsidiarity, equity, efficiency, transparency and accountability, civic

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> UNFPA, *State of World Population 2007*, pp. 30–31.

<sup>61</sup> See Loren B. Landau, “Shaping Urban Futures: Reflections on Human Mobility and Poverty in Africa’s Globalizing Cities” in Allison M. Garland, Meigan Massoumi, and Blair A. Ruble, eds., *Global Urban Poverty: Setting the Agenda* (Washington, D.C., Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2007).

<sup>62</sup> For instance, forced evictions or other policies designed to halt the flow of rural-urban migration.

<sup>63</sup> Research among poor urban communities does reflect a high rate of electoral participation (see John Harriss, “Political Participation, Representation, and the Urban Poor: Findings from Research in Delhi”, *Economic and Political Weekly* (March 2005)). However, there are also indications of the voting process being co-opted by client-patron relationships and short-term material promises that do not affect structural changes for the urban poor.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> UN-Habitat.

engagement and citizenship, and security”.<sup>66</sup> These characteristics do not apply to the political reality of most poor urban communities, who have yet to realize their rights fully or to enjoy a relationship with decision makers that is accountable, transparent or inclusive.

## IV. Situation of more vulnerable groups

### A. Women and girls

42. Women and girls in the urban poor population face particularly stark challenges. They are victims to even further marginalization, particularly a gender gap in education, political participation and employment. They also suffer disproportionately from health and security threats, many of which are related to life in slums.

43. Globally, in 2010, 56.3 per cent of young males participated in the labour force, compared to 40.8 per cent of young females. Young women who participate in the labour market often face greater challenges in accessing jobs, including higher unemployment rates compared to their male counterparts. When employed, they are also more likely to be in unstable, part-time and lower-paid jobs.<sup>67</sup>

44. The conditions of the urban poor also add a distinctive gendered dimension by disproportionately increasing the unpaid care work burden of women. As the primary duty-bearers of care and reproductive activities, women are especially affected by limited access to basic services, essential infrastructure, water, sanitation, inadequate shelter and restricted mobility. These restrictions all contribute to increasing the burdens related to unpaid care work such as cleaning, cooking and looking after children, the elderly and the sick, thus deepening a gender-based disadvantage. Unfortunately, this issue of “time poverty” faced by women has not yet been adequately addressed by policymakers.<sup>68</sup>

45. Women in poor urban communities are also more likely to be exposed to gender-based violence. Research indicates that, in some countries, poor urban women are more likely to experience intimate-partner violence than rural or higher-income urban women.<sup>69</sup> This fact has also been closely linked in some cases to a higher incidence of mental illness; for instance, a study by the World Health Organization showed that women who had experienced intimate-partner violence were significantly more likely to report thoughts of suicide.<sup>70</sup> This is consistent with some indicators that show a higher prevalence of poor mental health among poor urban women.

46. Women experiencing urban poverty are also particularly vulnerable to health risks associated with maternal care. Women living in slums were consistently found to have much lower access to prenatal and antenatal care than those in other urban areas with higher

<sup>66</sup> UN-Habitat, “The Global Campaign on Urban Governance: Concept Paper”, second ed. (Nairobi, 2002), p. 12.

<sup>67</sup> See *World Youth Report 2011: Youth and Climate Change* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 10.IV.11).

<sup>68</sup> Cecilia Tacoli, “Urbanization, gender and urban poverty: paid work and unpaid carework in the city”, *Urbanization and Emerging Population Issues, Working Paper, No. 7* (London and New York, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and UNFPA, 2012), p. 20.

<sup>69</sup> Montgomery, “Urban Poverty”, pp. 10–11.

<sup>70</sup> World Health Organization, *Multi-country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence against Women: Summary report of initial results on prevalence, health outcomes and women’s responses* (2005), p. 16.

incomes.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, women and girls in urban poor populations also tend to be subject to a higher prevalence of HIV/AIDS than women living in rural and other urban areas, which is perhaps linked to the findings that suggest that, for women in the urban poor population, forced or traded sex is often more prevalent than for their higher-income or rural counterparts.<sup>72</sup> There are some indications that for some socioeconomic groups, such as adolescents and women, poverty may be linked to HIV prevalence, owing to higher rates of early sexual initiation and reports of forced or traded sex.<sup>73</sup>

47. The effects of urban poverty on women are often compounded by the fact that, in many contexts, women already face social and political marginalization. For instance, while insecurity of land tenure and inadequate shelter is a challenge for both men and women living in urban poverty, women are particularly disadvantaged because they are often denied rights to property owing to cultural norms and discriminatory legal mechanisms.<sup>74</sup>

48. Marginalization may also be seen in unequal rates of educational attainment between girls and boys in urban areas. Research shows that, while in past decades progress has been made in increasing overall school enrolments in rural areas, rates in poor urban areas have actually decreased, a pattern that has disproportionately affected poor urban girls.<sup>75</sup> Studies suggest that social norms that disadvantage girls, such as expectations regarding their domestic role in the home, early marriage and limits to their independent movement, all act as barriers to their education, especially when household income is limited.<sup>76</sup>

## B. Children and youth

49. Slum settlements are hazardous environments that expose children to elements that may affect their health; for instance, poor urban children often suffer a disproportionately high incidence of diarrhoeal and respiratory disease than children living in rural or higher-income urban areas. A survey conducted by the United States Agency for International Development of existing studies on children's health in urban areas in Asia and the Near East revealed that child mortality was startlingly higher in slums than in other parts of the same city – in some cases, such as in Manila, up to three times higher.<sup>77</sup> Poor urban communities also often lack facilities or safe recreational spaces for children.<sup>78</sup> In addition, inequalities between poor and higher income urban areas affect children from the outset. Limited access to quality education can entrench generational poverty by hampering children's ability to acquire skills and to secure higher-paying jobs as adults.<sup>79</sup>

50. Urban unaccompanied minors, such as orphans, runaways or “street children”, are affected even more acutely by the challenges of poverty. Many of these children are pushed

<sup>71</sup> Monica Akinyi Magadi and others, “The inequality of maternal health care in urban sub-Saharan Africa in the 1990s”, *Population Studies*, vol. 57, No. 3 (2003), pp. 353 ff.

<sup>72</sup> See Montgomery, “Urban Poverty”; Kelly Hallman, “Socioeconomic Disadvantage and Unsafe Sexual Behaviors Among Young Women and Men in South Africa”, Policy Research Division Working Papers, No. 190 (New York, Population Council, 2004).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> UN-Habitat, “Case Study: Women-Headed Households Suffer Disproportionately from Inadequate Housing” (2008).

<sup>75</sup> UN-Habitat.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Sarah Fry, Bill Cousins and Ken Olivola, “Health of Children Living in Urban Slums in Asia and the Near East: Review of Existing Literature and Data”, prepared for the Asia and Near East Bureau of USAID under EHP Project 26568/OTHER.ANE.STARTUP, 2002.

<sup>78</sup> UNICEF, “Poverty and exclusion”, p. 13.

<sup>79</sup> DFID, “Ending Child Poverty: the Challenge”.

into the streets by the household's need for more income, while others leave homes to escape abuse or in the hope of finding better income opportunities.<sup>80</sup> Regardless of how they arrived there, life on the street leaves them without a social safety net, rendering them particularly susceptible to physical and sexual abuse at the hands of police, exploitation by organized begging or waste-picking rackets, and exposed to harsh conditions without access to reliable shelter.<sup>81</sup>

51. Youths (ages 15–24) are nearly three times as likely as adults to be unemployed. The recent financial crises led to a 4 million increase in the number of unemployed youth since 2007: in 2011, 74.8 million youths were unemployed. In fact, the global youth unemployment rate of 12.7 per cent remains a full percentage point above the pre-crisis level (11.7 per cent in 2007). The International Labour Organization (ILO) reported that “in addition to the 74.7 million unemployed youth around the world in 2011 – a growing number of whom are in long-term unemployment – an estimated 6.4 million young people have given up hope of finding a job and have dropped out of the labour market altogether”.<sup>82</sup> Youth also represent 23.5 per cent of the total working poor, compared with just 18.6 per cent of non-poor workers.<sup>83</sup>

52. High (and rising) youth unemployment and underemployment, the unavailability of housing and support services, overcrowding in urban areas, the disintegration of the family (often a result or side effect of poverty), ineffective educational systems and general socioeconomic instability can all contribute to juvenile delinquency in the forms of increased crime, violence and drug and alcohol abuse among youth. Research indicates a universal increase in juvenile crime, especially among the urban poor. Street children can later become young offenders, having already experienced violence in their immediate social environment. Furthermore, cities in developed and middle-income countries are facing crises related to drug abuse, particularly among youth, threatening the gains against poverty that had previously spurred the countries' growth. In Rio de Janeiro, for example, a recent analysis of crime reports found that 57 per cent of drug users are under the age of 24. Increased drug abuse also leads to increased violent crime.<sup>84</sup>

53. Urbanization and rising urban poverty contribute to juvenile involvement in criminal behaviour because the basic features of the urban environment foster the development of such forms of behaviour.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, young people are increasingly moving to cities for greater job opportunities, not only separating themselves from their families and social support networks<sup>86</sup> but also making them susceptible to discrimination by native urban populations, who tend to view these “immigrants” as obvious deviants. This perception, in turn, becomes a main source of juvenile criminal behaviour.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>80</sup> See UNICEF, “Poverty and exclusion”.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. See also Jo Becker, *Easy Targets: Violence against Children Worldwide* (HRW, 2001); and “*Off the Backs of Children: Forced Begging and Other Abuses against Talibés in Senegal* (HRW, 2010).

<sup>82</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO), *Global Employment Trends: Preventing a deeper jobs crisis* (Geneva, 2012), p. 84.

<sup>83</sup> In the Middle East and North Africa region, the recent Arab Spring uprisings is one of the contributing factors to the disturbingly high levels of youth employment. The total unemployment rate in 2010 was 25.5 per cent in the Middle East and 23.8 per cent in North Africa, with female youth unemployment at 39.4 per cent in the Middle East and 34.1 percent in North Africa. See *World Youth Report 2011*.

<sup>84</sup> Kristina Rosales and Taylor Barnes, “New Jack Rio”, *Foreign Policy* (September 2011).

<sup>85</sup> *World Youth Report 2003: The global situation of young people* (United Nations Publication, Sales No. E.03.IV.7).

<sup>86</sup> See *World Youth Report 2011*.

<sup>87</sup> See *World Youth Report 2003*.

### C. Other minority groups

54. The hazards of urban poverty are particularly challenging for a number of other groups, such as persons with disabilities. It is important to note that data regarding the dynamics of poverty and disability are relatively limited, particularly in developing countries.<sup>88</sup> It is clear, however, that households with disabled members are more likely to experience poverty owing to a host of factors. These include the effects on already economically unstable families that the extra financial burden of catering to the special needs of disabled members can have, and the relationship between low employment and education rates for those living with a disability.<sup>89</sup> As the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons noted, employment is particularly difficult for persons with disabilities, and the stigma sometimes associated with disabilities results in their relegation to the margins of society. Thus, while data are scarce and the relationship requires more research, there appears to be significant links between disability and extreme poverty.<sup>90</sup>

55. The elderly living in urban poverty are similarly vulnerable. The social exclusion of the elderly is context-specific and varies across different cultures. For instance, in many African, Latin American and Asian countries, the elderly are treated with deference and respect, while they fall into a marginalized category in other regions, such as in Eastern Europe, where the State is responsible for their welfare.<sup>91</sup> While data are once again scarce, there are indications that, especially for those without the social protection of a family, the elderly poor are a particularly vulnerable population.<sup>92</sup>

56. In urban poor communities, groups that are victims of additional stigma or marginalization are particularly vulnerable to the hazards of urban poverty. This includes ethnic or religious minorities, migrants and disadvantaged castes. Combined with even more constrained access to education, employment and health care, the marginalization due to their minority status can make survival strategies for these groups much more complex.<sup>93</sup>

57. Poor urban communities as a whole are made particularly vulnerable in post-conflict and post-disaster situations owing to the marginalization faced on three fronts. First, communities of urban poor form in marginalized areas that often are more vulnerable to disaster and without adequate planning and infrastructure to decrease their vulnerability to events such as flood, earthquakes, fires and storms. Second, very few services are available for poor urban communities to strengthen their resilience to such shocks.<sup>94</sup> Safety nets typically available to higher-income families, such as insurance or savings, are not usually available much of the urban poor. Third, even when recovery efforts are under way,

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<sup>88</sup> This may be due to the difficulty of collecting disaggregated data and interpreting for the way disability affects poverty within households. See Jeanine Braithwaite and Daniel Mont, "Disability and Poverty: A Survey of World Bank Poverty Assessments and Implications", SP Discussion Paper, No. 0805 (World Bank, 2008).

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> See Braithwaite and Mont, "Disability and Poverty".

<sup>91</sup> Deepa Narayan and others, *Can Anyone Hear us? Voices from 47 Countries* (New York, World Bank, 1999), p. 200.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> See Landau, "Shaping Urban Futures" for the treatment of undocumented immigrants in informal settlements. For a case study on the persistent exclusion of the Roma minority, see Christian Bodewick and Akshay Sethi, *Poverty, Social Exclusion and Ethnicity in Serbia and Montenegro: The Case of the Roma* (New York, World Bank, 2005).

<sup>94</sup> See M. Fay, and others, "Natural disasters and the urban poor", *En Breve*, No. 32 (2003).

resources and attention are frequently focused on other parts of the city and diverted from the communities that may need them the most.<sup>95</sup>

## V. Good practices

58. Various efforts for the enjoyment of rights of the urban poor have been made by local authorities, national Governments, civil society groups, intergovernmental organizations and the private sector at the national, regional and international levels. Partnerships between these actors have taken many forms.

### A. National and city Governments

59. Anti-poverty efforts made by the Government of China serve as a useful example of a long-term, phased and integrated approach.<sup>96</sup> Beginning with its rural-oriented development strategy in 1984, it has undergone four phases. Since 2000, the second phase established and improved urban and rural social security systems, and began making investments in human capital. Phase three, beginning in 2006, was characterized by the consolidation and enhancement of human capital investments. The most recent phase, beginning in 2011, is an integrated strategy that combines three components: investment in infrastructure; social security interventions; and measures to empower poor communities through human capital investments.

60. Brazil pioneered the concept of participatory budgeting in the city of Porto Alegre in 1989.<sup>97</sup> The initiative was designed to enhance accountability and transparency, and allow citizens greater influence on how municipal budgets were spent. The model allows citizen representatives of neighbourhood associations from throughout the city, including the favelas, to participate in meetings where they influence how available investment funds (usually 15 per cent of the overall budget) will be spent. Since its establishment, most figures cite impressive improvements in water and sanitation indicators. For instance, in the first 10 years since the introduction of participatory budgeting, the share of households in the city with water connections increased from 75 to 98 per cent, and sewage coverage rose from 46 to 98 per cent.<sup>98</sup> The Porto Alegre model has since been replicated throughout Brazil, the rest of Latin America and elsewhere. While the model has its own limitations,<sup>99</sup> its innovation and effectiveness is clear when combined with a strong commitment to transparency and improved urban governance, as well as investments in educating the urban poor participants.

61. In Thailand, the national Government enhanced urban governance by nurturing and collaborating with community-based networks or federations, such as by merging two offices (the Urban Community Development Office and the Rural Development Office) to form a single body to respond to the reality that poor urban communities were being left out of the economic growth of previous decades. The Urban Community Development Office had been providing low-interest loans for community-based savings and credit groups who

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> See Lu Mai, "Poverty Eradication in China: A New Phase" for the China Development Research Foundation, 2011. Available from [www.un.org/esa/socdev/csocd/2011/Lu.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/csocd/2011/Lu.pdf).

<sup>97</sup> Donald P. Moynihan, "Citizen Participation in Budgeting: Prospects for Developing Countries", in *Participatory Budgeting*, Anwar Shah, ed. (New York, World Bank, 2007), p. 66.

<sup>98</sup> See Gianpaolo Baiocchi, "Participation, activism, and politics: the Porto Alegre experiment and deliberative democratic theory", *Politics & Society*, vol. 29, No. 1 (March 2001).

<sup>99</sup> See Brian Wampler, "A Guide to Participatory Budgeting" in *Participatory Budgeting*, pp. 45–47.

demonstrated sufficient capacity to manage the funds, which were used for a variety of activities, from income-generation to housing improvement and relocation. The real innovation of the Community Organizations Development Institute<sup>100</sup> was in how the programme was scaled up. It linked individual savings groups into larger networks or federations of slum dwellers, who managed and on-lent the funds to their member organizations. These networks were particularly effective because they (a) decentralized decision-making processes, making them closer and more responsive to communities and the needs they identified for themselves; (b) created a means for poor urban communities and municipal authorities to engage with each other constructively thanks to the ability of the networks to negotiate, advocate or influence urban policies, and collaborate with city-wide initiatives; and (c) provided ways for poor urban communities to share experiences and pool resources.

62. Mexico's *Oportunidades* programme is an example of how cash and food can successfully complement each other. Under this conditional cash transfer programme, direct cash payments are provided to eligible poor and vulnerable households who send their children to schools and clinics. Eligible households also receive grants to improve food consumption and nutritional supplements for young children and pregnant and breastfeeding mothers. Evidence suggests that the programme has had positive effects on child growth in both rural and urban sectors, and that the nutritional effect of the programme is the result of the nutritional supplements. Currently, *Oportunidades* reaches over 5.8 million people or 20 per cent of the total population. Research indicates that consumption, mostly food intake, has increased by 22 per cent, and the proportion of malnourished children decreased by 17.2 per cent.<sup>101</sup>

63. In Cambodia, the national Government collaborated with the World Food Programme and local NGOs to implement its Food for Assets programme, which helps poor, food-insecure households to cope with potential disaster by providing off-season labour opportunities to develop or rehabilitate community assets in return for much-needed food. The programme provides labour opportunities to poor and food-insecure families who receive food as payment. It also builds or rehabilitates infrastructure, as well as improves access to schools and other basic services. Similar programmes are implemented by many other Governments in collaboration with the World Food Programme.

## B. Civil society and private sector

64. The Orangi Pilot Project of the Research and Training Institute,<sup>102</sup> in Pakistan, which organizes community-initiated and community-implemented sewage construction in the poor urban settlements of Karachi, is a useful model of partnership between civil society and Government. The Institute is a community-based organization that organizes committees of poor urban residents to oversee, finance and construct basic, cost-effective underground sewage systems in otherwise underserved Orangi Town. It provides technical guidance and one eighteenth of overall financing, while the committees fund the rest. State agencies support the initiative by providing funding for larger infrastructural investments, such as treatment plants. The results show improved health indicators, particularly infant

<sup>100</sup> Celine d'Cruz and David Satterthwaite, "Building homes, changing official approaches", Poverty Reduction in Urban Areas Series, Working Paper, No. 16 (London, IIED, 2005).

<sup>101</sup> Tuya Altangerel and Fernando Henao, "Mexico: Scaling Up Progres/Oportunidades – Conditional Cash Transfer Programme" (New York, UNDP, 2011).

<sup>102</sup> Arif Hasan, "The Sanitation Program of the Orangi Pilot Project: Research and Training Institute, Karachi, Pakistan" in *Global Urban Poverty: Setting the Agenda*, Garland and others.

mortality rates, an effective, low-cost sewage system and a community that reports significant decreases in the perception of social marginalization and stigmatization.

65. The Luanda Urban Poverty Project<sup>103</sup> in Angola takes an integrated approach to alleviating urban poverty through community participation and partnerships to improve urban governance. Started in 1999 as a coalition of three NGOs (Care International, Save the Children UK and Development Workshop), the project partners Government agencies and community-based organizations in various municipalities, and is funded by the British-based Department for International Development. The Project has won recognition for its approach facilitating the ability of poor urban communities to self-manage such basic services as water and sanitation, handle waste and engage with municipal planning and advocate for pro-poor policies at the national level. At the same time, the project helps local governments dialogue with and respond to poor urban communities by incorporating the needs they identify. The key components of the project are community-coordinated and managed water and sanitation services, waste management and childcare; livelihood training, facilitating engagement in the municipal planning process, and access to credit and savings schemes.

66. The South African Homeless Peoples' Federation<sup>104</sup> illustrates how community-generated associations can drive self-built housing improvements, particularly by bringing together a network of autonomous savings and credit groups from across South Africa. It was created to address a void in housing improvement options for the urban poor, who are largely unable to meet the requirements to qualify for the national housing subsidy. The Federation requires that members commit to a savings and credit group. It assists them by providing bridge-financing to secure land tenure and build homes; facilitating exchanges between member neighbourhoods and cities to increase knowledge, skills and practices to address common needs within poor urban communities; mapping and surveying settlements to identify needs and collect data for negotiations with municipal authorities; and constructing demonstration homes.

67. The Manila Water Company, Inc.,<sup>105</sup> is a compelling example of a public-private partnership that has been largely successful in providing improved access to water for the urban poor in Manila. In 1997, the Company won a Government concession to serve the east service zone of Manila, encompassing a population in which the urban poor make up 40 per cent of inhabitants. By approaching them as a viable customer base and revenue source, the Company's customer-centred culture and model of community engagement was successful in extending the water infrastructure to informal settlements, reducing illegal tapping and maintaining a profitable enterprise. It provides a useful illustration of how market forces might be harnessed to improve water access to the urban poor when combined with a pro-poor approach and anchored by a strong public partner.

68. Cooperatives exist in cities across Latin America, Asia and Africa that organize poor, urban informal workers who make a living by sorting and collecting waste. The case of CEMPRE (Compromisso Empresarial para Reciclagem) in Brazil shows how cooperatives can partner the private sector to improve job creation and waste management

<sup>103</sup> See UN-Habitat, Best Practices Database. Available from [www.unhabitat.org/bp/bp.list.details.aspx](http://www.unhabitat.org/bp/bp.list.details.aspx).

<sup>104</sup> Ted Baumann and others, "The age of cities and organizations of the urban poor: the work of the South African Homeless People's Federation and the People's Dialogue on Land and Shelter", Working Paper No. 2 on Poverty Reduction in Urban Areas (IIED, 2001).

<sup>105</sup> See USAID, "Enabling Water Services Delivery for the Urban Poor in Asia: Best Practices Review and Workshop" (2006).

among the urban poor. CEMPRE<sup>106</sup> is a non-profit association created in 1992, financially supported by private firms operating in Brazil, that helps waste pickers form cooperatives in order to secure better prices for the wastes they sell to industrial recyclers and waste processors. These cooperatives have been shown to be effective at securing better working conditions, higher pay and opportunities for members to gain further education, collect savings and more.<sup>107</sup>

### C. Regional and international communities

69. The work of ILO with national and regional bodies is a model of both international support and regional coordination for poverty eradication. At the national level, ILO works with individual Governments to build comprehensive poverty alleviation strategies through the decent work country programmes. ILO works with each country to integrate decent work as a key component of their development strategies, and provides expertise, capacity and technical assistance to help each Government implement them.<sup>108</sup>

70. ILO also works to strengthen regional institutions, such as the African Union and regional economic communities, in their efforts to eradicate poverty. By facilitating strategic exchanges and coordinated approaches across countries, this regional cooperation provides a means of embedding employment into each Government's national development strategy.<sup>109</sup>

71. The United Nations Development Programme, in partnership with the Economic Commission for Africa, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, provides technical support to 35 African countries that have embarked on the process of preparing and implementing national strategies and plans of action plans based on the Millennium Development Goals.<sup>110</sup> This initiative showcases a model of international support and coordination that equips individual country Governments to undertake strategies best suited to the particular poverty challenges they face.

72. Cities Alliance<sup>111</sup> is a global coalition founded in 1999 by the World Bank and UN-Habitat, whose activities are run and implemented by member cities. It is made up of city authorities from around the world, national Governments, development agencies, NGOs and multilateral institutions dedicated to addressing urban poverty. It provides cities and Governments with technical assistance in three basic areas: slum upgrading programmes, city development strategies, and national policies on urban development and local government. Its support for cities or national Governments rests on four basic criteria: they must be committed to improving their cities and local governance for all its residents; adopting a long-term and inclusive approach; implementing reforms fully to achieve delivery at scale; and empowering local government by decentralizing resources.

<sup>106</sup> Martin Medina, "Globalization, Development, and Municipal Solid Waste Management in Third World Cities" in *Private Sector Involvement in Solid Waste Management* (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Zusammenarbeit, 2005).

<sup>107</sup> See Oscar Fergutz and others, "Developing urban waste management in Brazil with waste picker organizations", *Environment and Urbanization*, vol. 23, No. 2 (October 2011), p. 23.

<sup>108</sup> See ILO, Decent Work Country Programmes. Available from [www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/program/dwcp/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/program/dwcp/index.htm).

<sup>109</sup> See ILO, Regional Office for Africa at [www.ilo.org/public/english/region/afpro/addisababa/activities/coopau.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/afpro/addisababa/activities/coopau.htm).

<sup>110</sup> See Economic Commission for Africa, *Sustainable Development Report on Africa* (Addis Ababa, 2008).

<sup>111</sup> See [www.citiesalliance.org](http://www.citiesalliance.org).

## VI. Recommendations

73. In order to address the challenges that urban poverty poses to a growing population on a global scale, the following measures should be taken to:

(a) Promote rights-based and participative development policies and good governance. Development policies that fully consider the human rights of the poor should be implemented. Central to this effort is the enhanced political participation of the urban poor themselves. Aside from fulfilling an integral human right, promoting good governance that engages affected communities in the policymaking process has been shown to enhance development efforts. Local knowledge of needs and constraints are invaluable to the policymaking process. Often innovations grown within poor urban communities to fill the service void are viable options that can be scaled up. Meanwhile, meaningful buy-in from traditionally excluded poor urban communities may enhance the sustainability of initiatives in the long run, as some of the examples in the previous chapter demonstrate;

(b) Promote the establishment of social safety nets. Given the fragile economic resilience of poor urban communities where employment is unstable or uncertain, and where the bulk of incomes go towards immediate survival, social safety nets should be established to make households better equipped to recover from shocks. Initiatives that help the urban poor cope with unemployment, casual or informal employment, uncertain daily wages and disaster should be established;

(c) Empower the urban poor by investing in human capital. Given the links between low wages, limited access to quality education and low skills, measures to enhance the human capital of the urban poor should be taken. Quality education and vocational training to boost access to higher wages and stable employment could have a significant impact on long-term poverty alleviation among the urban poor;

(d) Apply an integrated approach. Understanding that the hazards of urban poverty are multidimensional and require interventions that span urban planning, public health, education, food security and more, it is important to avoid a fragmented approach.<sup>112</sup> Instead, an integrated approach should be applied. This may take the form of several measures implemented in tandem, such as infrastructure investments to improve access to water and sanitation, enhanced vocational training and microcredit programmes. Efforts to increase access to information and communication technologies also need to be a priority, as well as measures to ensure the inclusion of particularly vulnerable or marginalized groups including women and youth;

(e) Strengthen international cooperation. As the example of the national poverty alleviation strategy adopted in China shows, a long-term approach may be better suited to the systemic impact and multisectoral dimensions that are required to address urban poverty. Thus, there is an urgent need to coordinate international development efforts in order to direct rights-based foreign investment to where it can have a greater impact and avoid waste. International South-South cooperation may also yield benefits as developing countries facing similar urbanization challenges share lessons and successful strategies;<sup>113</sup>

<sup>112</sup> See UNFPA, *State of World Population 2007*.

<sup>113</sup> See the Millennium Project for a discussion on the positive impact of fostering exchanges across federations of slum dwellers.

(f) Incorporate particular regard for vulnerable groups. All these measures should integrate a gender perspective into governance processes including policymaking, public administration and service delivery, particularly issues gender-specific issues including gender-based violence, the unpaid care work burden for women and discrimination. The needs of children, older persons and disabled persons also require special attention and mainstreaming, as well as multiple discriminations based on castes, ethnicities, religion and so on through integrated programming.

74. As the global urban population continues to grow at a rapid pace, the need to focus attention on ensuring their full enjoyment of basic human rights must become a priority for the future. In order to ensure that the needs of the urban poor – and particularly those of vulnerable groups living in urban poverty – are met, various actions need to be taken at the local, national, regional and international levels. An approach to alleviating poverty for urban populations that integrates infrastructural development, social safety nets and investments in empowering and educating poor communities will prove essential. Equally crucial will be a human rights approach to development that effectively addresses the ways urban poverty threatens rights to health, water, shelter, food, education and work. Lastly, improving political participation for the marginalized urban poor is the linchpin to strategies aimed at addressing the challenges of growing urban poverty.

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