



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
31 December 2012

Original: English

---

## Human Rights Council

Twenty-second session

Agenda items 3 and 5

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

**Human rights bodies and mechanisms**

## **Final study of the Advisory Committee on the promotion of human rights of the urban poor: strategies and best practices**

### *Summary*

In the present study, undertaken pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 16/27, the Advisory Committee examines the situation of the urban poor and their enjoyment of the right to food, including strategies to improve their protection and best practices.

## Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction .....	1–3	3
II. Causes of urban poverty .....	4–11	3
A. Urbanization and poor infrastructure .....	4–5	3
B. Globalization and dislocation of rural communities .....	6–7	4
C. Poor urban planning and lack of good governance .....	8–9	5
D. Natural hazards and climate change .....	10–11	5
III. Conditions and human rights of the urban poor .....	12–35	6
A. Right to food .....	12–14	6
B. Right to work .....	15–16	7
C. Right to education .....	17–19	8
D. Right to adequate housing .....	20–22	9
E. Right to health .....	23–30	9
F. Right to security, inclusion, non-discrimination and political participation ..	31–35	11
IV. Situation of more vulnerable groups .....	36–48	13
A. Women and girls .....	36–40	13
B. Children and youth .....	41–44	14
C. Other minority groups .....	45–48	15
V. Good practices .....	49–63	16
A. National and city governments .....	50–54	17
B. Civil society and private sector .....	55–59	18
C. Regional and international communities .....	60–63	19
VI. Recommendations .....	64–65	20

## 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 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. At its ninth session, the Advisory Committee discussed the final study by the drafting group (A/HRC/AC/9/3) and requested the drafting group to finalize it in light of these discussions, with a view to submitting it 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,

<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, as well as Mouvement Mondial des Mères International/Make Mothers Matter International for 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.

however, kept pace with the rate of urbanization.<sup>7</sup> In 2001, approximately 78 per cent of 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 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). Research indicates that much of the urban growth witnessed is centred in smaller cities and towns throughout the developing world.<sup>9</sup>

## **B. Globalization and dislocation of rural communities**

6. 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>10</sup> and since jobs grow where there is economic activity, people follow the promise of employment into cities. However, globalization has inflicted hardship on the urban poor, often exaggerating stark inequalities, challenging governance and undermining rule of law, particularly as the international flow of illicit drugs and goods becomes harder to control.<sup>11</sup>

7. The conversion of small-scale farming to cash-crop plantations has further uprooted many community members from rural to urban areas.<sup>12</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>13</sup> This vulnerability can ultimately lead to dislocation of rural communities and forced migration to cities in search for opportunities.

---

<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).

<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).

<sup>9</sup> UNFPA, *State of World Population 2007*, p. 7. See also 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>10</sup> UNFPA, *State of World Population 2007*, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> See James Holston and Arjun Appadurai, “Cities and Citizenship”, *Public Culture*, vol. 8, No. 2, issue 19 (1996).

<sup>12</sup> *State of the World’s Indigenous Peoples* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 09.VI.13), pp. 229–230.

<sup>13</sup> See Economics of Climate Adaptation Working Group, *Shaping Climate-Resilient Development: A Framework for Decision-Making* (2009).

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

8. Roughly 72 per cent of urban populations in sub-Saharan Africa and 57 per cent of those in Southern Asia are slum dwellers, and urban growth in developing countries consists of mostly poor people. Despite this overrepresentation of slum dwellers, city plans in developing countries seldom take into account the needs of these people and “are largely configured and redefined basically in accordance with the political influences of real estate capital, with large-scale infrastructure designed to fit the needs of economic activity, and in keeping with the demands and preferences of middle and upper-income groups”.<sup>14</sup> City governments also exacerbate these risks in their enforcement of urban development policies, where foreign investments are often introduced. 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.<sup>15</sup>

9. State authorities often fail in their responsibility to “respond effectively to local needs in a participatory, transparent and accountable manner”.<sup>16</sup> While cities theoretically offer greater access to the centres of political power, they do not manage growth by providing good governance and delivering services for households. 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. 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”.<sup>17</sup>

### D. Natural hazards and climate change

10. 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. Indeed: “urban poverty is complicated and intensified by exposure to natural hazards such as cyclones, floods, mudslides and earthquakes. When combined with acute vulnerability, these hazards can become disasters. While large-scale events are major enough to qualify as disasters, others, far more numerous and ultimately affecting many more children and families, are too minor or too slow-moving to meet the formal criteria for ‘disaster’. But they are still significant enough to turn lives upside down, bringing intense rainfalls that flood homes and destroy possessions, prolonged droughts that exhaust an already unreliable supply of water, or heat waves that turn unventilated shacks into ovens.”<sup>18</sup>

11. Climate change also affects food and nutrition security through direct nutritional effects, such as changes in consumption quantities and consumption, and through livelihood effects, such as changes in employment opportunities and the cost of acquiring adequate nutrition. Climate change can affect each of these dimensions, particularly in the light of biophysical and social vulnerability.<sup>19</sup> The climate affects food and nutrition security

<sup>14</sup> George Martine, “Preparing for Sustainable Urban Growth in Developing Areas”, in United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Population Distribution, Urbanization, Internal Migration and Development: An International Perspective* (2011).

<sup>15</sup> International Strategy for Disaster Reduction.

<sup>16</sup> UNFPA, *State of World Population 2007*, p. 67.

<sup>17</sup> Baharoglu and Kessides, “Urban Poverty”, p. 109.

<sup>18</sup> UNICEF, *The State of the World’s Children 2012: Children in an Urban World* (2012), p. 45

<sup>19</sup> See High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition, *Food Security and Climate Change: A Report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition* (Rome, 2012).

through reduction of income from animal production, reduction of yields of food and cash crops, lowered forest productivity, changes in aquatic populations and increased incidence of infectious disease. According to the most recent *Report on the World Nutrition Situation*: “demand for biofuel may divert land away from food cropping and increase risk of harmful production practices and environmental degradation. Reducing gender inequity is an important part of the solution to global hunger.”<sup>20</sup>

### III. Conditions and human rights of the urban poor

#### A. Right to food

12. Low incomes, unemployment, volatile food prices and subsequent inability to access adequate supplies of safe and nutritious food threaten food and nutrition security.<sup>21</sup> Ninety-seven per cent of urban households are net food buyers, yet urban-dwellers tend to pay higher prices that incorporate the cost of transportation along complex distribution chains.<sup>22</sup> The urban poor’s dependence on cash-based incomes increases together with a decrease in reliance on surrounding natural resources. Therefore, having adequate access to food-producing resources and to healthy ways of acquiring staples are crucial for their food security. The recent food crisis not only disproportionately affected the urban poor but also showed the critical need to reduce the urban poor’s dependency on imported food and vulnerability to food prices.<sup>23</sup> Sharp rises in food prices since 2006<sup>24</sup> have led to an increase in the number of hungry people to more than one billion.<sup>25</sup> Food prices 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>26</sup> The availability of biofuels, fluctuating oil prices and inappropriate policy responses exert pressure on commodity prices and increase price volatility.<sup>27</sup>

13. Since the urban poor rely almost entirely on cash transactions to obtain food, high food prices force the poor to turn to alternatives with little or no nutritional value.<sup>28</sup> The right to food as defined above encompasses not just access to sufficient caloric intake but

<sup>20</sup> Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN), *6<sup>th</sup> Report on the World Nutrition Situation: Progress in Nutrition* (2010), p. 77.

<sup>21</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>22</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>23</sup> Preliminary study of the Human Rights Council on discrimination in the context of the right to food, A/HRC/13/32, para. 30.

<sup>24</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. See also Armando Mendoza and Roberto Machado, “The escalation in world food prices and its implications for the Caribbean”, *Caribbean Development Report*, vol. 2 (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2009).

<sup>25</sup> See World Bank, “Food Price Watch” (Washington, D.C., 2012) and International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), “Living in the City: Challenges and Options for the Urban Poor” (2002).

<sup>26</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>27</sup> See World Bank and others, “Price Volatility in Food and Agricultural Markets: Policy Responses” (Washington, D.C., 2011).

<sup>28</sup> See IFPRI, “Living in the City”.

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. Those living in urban poverty face inadequate nutrition, since food patterns in urban areas increasingly trend towards prepared or processed foods that are higher in calories but lower in micronutrients.<sup>29</sup> Various nutrition-related risks are particularly exacerbated in urban settings.<sup>30</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>31</sup>

14. The right to food is achieved when “every man, woman and child ... has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement”.<sup>32</sup> It also encompasses “the right to have regular, permanent and unrestricted access, 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”.<sup>33</sup> For the urban poor, tenuous food security and poor quality of food threatens this right.

## B. Right to work

15. 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, unsafe working conditions and 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>34</sup> The urban poor also 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>35</sup> As low-skilled labourers, many of the urban poor must work in unstable jobs for low wages. These temporary, informal jobs can vary from one season to the next, and pay tends to fluctuate accordingly.

16. 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. It also articulates that “everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work”, and that “everyone who works

<sup>29</sup> 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).

<sup>30</sup> See SCN, *6<sup>th</sup> Report*.

<sup>31</sup> World Bank, “Food Price Watch”.

<sup>32</sup> Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 12 (1999) on the right to adequate food, para. 6.

<sup>33</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food to the Human Rights Council, A/HRC/7/5, para. 17.

<sup>34</sup> World Bank, “Dhaka: Improving Living Conditions for the Urban Poor”, Bangladesh Development Series, Paper No. 17 (Dhaka, World Bank, 2007), p. 22.

<sup>35</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.

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 this quality of life.

### C. Right to education

17. The right to work is closely tied to the right to education, yet enrolment among the urban poor is decreasing in many places.<sup>36</sup> Limited access to quality education not only means that the urban poor cannot gain the necessary skills to secure more stable, higher-paying employment but also accounts for differences in wages.<sup>37</sup> These patterns can also be generational; parents who are low-skilled and poorly educated are less able to provide their children with opportunities to secure a poverty-free adulthood.<sup>38</sup>

18. 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 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>39</sup> Third, urban poor communities may simply not have access to enough school facilities. One study in the Kibera slum of Nairobi 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>40</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>41</sup> Finally, the quality of education available to poor, urban communities is usually far inferior; in some cases, the poor quality of school facilities and teaching is a major factor in family decisions to remove their children from school.<sup>42</sup> These challenges also disproportionately affect girls.

19. Education is both a human right and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights. It is 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".<sup>43</sup> 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 following generations.

<sup>36</sup> UNFPA, *State of World Population 2007*, p. 28; Eduardo López Moreno and others, *State of the World's Cities 2006/7* (UN-Habitat, 2006), p. 128.

<sup>37</sup> See Omar Arias, Gustavo Yamada and Luis Tejerina, "Education, Family Background and Racial Earnings Inequality in Brazil" (Inter-American Development Bank, 2003).

<sup>38</sup> Department for International Development (DFID), "Ending Child Poverty" (London, 2002).

<sup>39</sup> UNFPA, *State of World Population 2007*, p. 18.

<sup>40</sup> López Moreno and other, *State of the World's Cities 2006/7*, p. 127.

<sup>41</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>42</sup> See UNICEF, "Poverty and exclusion", p. 13.

<sup>43</sup> Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 13 (1999) on the right to education.



## D. Right to adequate housing

20. Urban population growth patterns indicate that the poor are concentrated in undesirable areas, leaving them vulnerable to heightened risk of disease, disaster and insecurity. The urban poor “face many of the same challenges in daily life as the rural poor, with the added burden of overcrowded and often unsanitary living conditions”.<sup>44</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.<sup>45</sup> 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>46</sup>

21. 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>47</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.

22. 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 right to adequate housing includes security of tenure, accessibility to services and infrastructure, habitability, affordability, inclusive location, and cultural adequacy.<sup>48</sup> For the urban poor, securing adequate housing that meets these criteria in order to achieve such a standard of living is a challenge.<sup>49</sup>

## E. Right to health

23. The urban poor suffer from health risks that are sometimes worse than those of their rural counterparts.<sup>50</sup> Poor urban settlements often form in city centres near environmentally unsafe areas, such as waste dumps or industrial sites,<sup>51</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>52</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Baker, “Urban poverty”, p. 5.

<sup>45</sup> See UNFPA, *State of World Population 2007*, p. 39.

<sup>46</sup> UN-Habitat, *The Human Settlements Statistical Database* (2001).

<sup>47</sup> Baker, “Urban poverty”, p. 6.

<sup>48</sup> Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment No. 4 (1991) on the right to adequate housing.

<sup>49</sup> UN-Habitat.

<sup>50</sup> See Mark R. Montgomery, “Urban Poverty and Health in Developing Countries”, *Population Bulletin*, vol. 64, No. 2 (June 2009)

<sup>51</sup> Baker, “Urban poverty”, p. 9.

<sup>52</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, “Population and Health Dynamics in Nairobi’s Informal Settlements”, report of the Nairobi Cross-Sectional Slums Survey (Nairobi, 2002).

24. Urban poverty 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 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 and Asia.<sup>53</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>54</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.

25. 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. As a result, 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, 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>55</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>56</sup> For residents of Kibera in Kenya, waiting times for access to communal taps exceed one hour on average, and are much longer during the dry seasons.<sup>57</sup> According to a study conducted in 47 different countries, average water prices ranged from 1.5 to 12 times higher than in the formal network.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, these sources are often not monitored for quality.

26. Even when urban-dwellers have access to adequate sanitation facilities, most of these facilities are shared, increasing the chance of a rapid spread of diseases. For example, a 2012 UNICEF study found that 52 per cent of urban-dwellers in Accra shared a public facility, 12 per cent shared facilities with five or more other households and 11 per cent used a facility shared by up to five households. In fact, only 11 per cent of the population had access to a private, improved sanitation facility.<sup>59</sup>

27. Children are particularly vulnerable to an increased risk of illness, undernutrition and health due to inadequate access to safe drinking water and sanitation services. Children who live in poor urban settings face significant health risks even where services are nearby. In many countries, children living in urban poverty fare similar or worse health risks as children living in rural poverty in terms of height-for-weight and under-5 mortality.<sup>60</sup>

28. The painful irony is that, while urban areas may enjoy better access to health services compared to rural areas, such services are prohibitively expensive for the urban poor. 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

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> UN-Habitat.

<sup>55</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>56</sup> Baker, "Urban poverty", p. 8.

<sup>57</sup> UNDP, *Human Development Report*, p. 38.

<sup>58</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>59</sup> UNICEF, "Understanding the Specifics of Urban Poverty: A Case Study from Accra, Ghana" (2012).

<sup>60</sup> UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 2012*, p. 4.

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>61</sup>

29. 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. Current hypotheses draw connections between mental illness and the stress of survival in resource-constrained, often violent, and marginalized contexts.<sup>62</sup>

30. Health is a human right<sup>63</sup> defined by the World Health Organization as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. It is “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”. 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.<sup>64</sup> These rights of the urban poor are challenged by environmental hazards and inadequate access to water, sanitation and health services.

## **F. Right to security, inclusion, non-discrimination and political participation**

31. 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>65</sup> Children are especially aware of their harsh, often dilapidated surroundings and experience them as shameful reflections of their own self-worth.<sup>66</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>67</sup> Similarly, a study in Rio de Janeiro revealed that living in a slum was a greater barrier to employment than gender or ethnicity.<sup>68</sup> Such conditions can also lead to social unrest.

32. 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

<sup>61</sup> See Montgomery, “Urban Poverty”.

<sup>62</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>63</sup> See International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.

<sup>64</sup> See Council resolution 15/9.

<sup>65</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>66</sup> See Louise Chawla, *Growing up in an Urbanising World* (Earthscan Publications and UNESCO, 2002).

<sup>67</sup> López Moreno and others, *State of the World's Cities 2006/7*, p. 5.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

hampers their ability to influence policies that could improve their lives, hold Government officials accountable and contribute their valuable knowledge to development efforts.<sup>69</sup> This exclusion is even greater for non-citizens and migrant and undocumented workers, who also have access to very few legal rights and services.

33. 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>70</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>71</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>72</sup>

34. 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>73</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>74</sup>

35. The right to political participation is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives” and “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 engagement and citizenship, and security”.<sup>75</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.

<sup>69</sup> UNFPA, *State of World Population 2007*, pp. 30–31.

<sup>70</sup> See Loren B. Landau, “Shaping Urban Futures: Reflections on Human Mobility and Poverty in Africa’s Globalizing Cities” in Allison M. Garland, Mejian Massoumi, and Blair A. Ruble, eds., *Global Urban Poverty: Setting the Agenda* (Washington, D.C., Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2007).

<sup>71</sup> For instance, forced evictions or other policies designed to halt the flow of rural-urban migration.

<sup>72</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>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> UN-Habitat.

<sup>75</sup> UN-Habitat, “The Global Campaign on Urban Governance: Concept Paper”, 2nd ed. (Nairobi, 2002) p. 12.

## IV. Situation of more vulnerable groups

### A. Women and girls

36. Women and girls face stark challenges, including marginalization due to a gender gap in education, employment, security, health and political participation. Overall school enrolment rates in poor urban areas have actually decreased, with unequal rates of educational attainment between girls and boys.<sup>76</sup> Social norms that disadvantage girls, such as expectations regarding their domestic role in the home, early marriage and limits on their independent movement, all act as barriers to their education, especially when household income is limited.<sup>77</sup>

37. 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 face greater challenges in accessing jobs, including higher unemployment rates compared to young men. When employed, young women are also more likely to be in unstable, part-time and lower-paid jobs.<sup>78</sup> 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 women's "time poverty" has not been adequately addressed by policymakers.<sup>79</sup>

38. Women in poor urban communities are also more likely to be exposed to gender-based violence. In some countries, poor urban women are more likely to experience intimate-partner violence than rural or higher-income urban women.<sup>80</sup> This has also been closely linked to a higher incidence of mental illness, as women who experience intimate-partner violence are significantly more likely to report thoughts of suicide.<sup>81</sup> This is consistent with some indicators that show a higher prevalence of poor mental health among poor urban women.

39. Furthermore, women living in slums consistently have much lower access to prenatal and antenatal care than those in other urban areas with higher incomes.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, women and girls in urban poor populations are subject to a higher prevalence of HIV/AIDS than those 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

<sup>76</sup> UN-Habitat.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> See *World Youth Report 2011: Youth and Climate Change* (United Nations publication, Sales No. 10.IV.11).

<sup>79</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>80</sup> Montgomery, "Urban Poverty", pp. 10–11.

<sup>81</sup> WHO, *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.

<sup>82</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.

often more prevalent than for their higher-income or rural counterparts.<sup>83</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>84</sup>

40. 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>85</sup>

## B. Children and youth

41. 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, and studies indicate startlingly higher – sometimes up to three times higher – child mortality rates in slums than in other parts of the same city.<sup>86</sup> Poor urban communities also often lack facilities or safe recreational spaces for children.<sup>87</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>88</sup>

42. Urban unaccompanied minors, such as orphans, runaways or “street children”, are affected even more acutely. Many of these children are pushed 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>89</sup> 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>90</sup>

43. Youths are also 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, and an additional 6.4 million young people have given up hope of finding a job and have dropped out of the labour market altogether.<sup>91</sup> Youth also represent 23.5 per cent of the total working poor, compared with just 18.6 per

<sup>83</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>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> UN-Habitat, “Case Study: Women-Headed Households Suffer Disproportionately from Inadequate Housing” (2008).

<sup>86</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>87</sup> UNICEF, “Poverty and exclusion”, p. 13.

<sup>88</sup> DFID, “Ending Child Poverty: the Challenge”.

<sup>89</sup> See UNICEF, “Poverty and exclusion”.

<sup>90</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>91</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO), *Global Employment Trends: Preventing a deeper jobs crisis* (Geneva, 2012), p. 84.

cent of non-poor workers.<sup>92</sup> Young people are increasingly moving to cities for greater job opportunities, not only separating themselves from their families and social support networks,<sup>93</sup> but also making them susceptible to discrimination by native urban populations, who tend to view these “immigrants” as obvious deviants. This, in turn, becomes a main source of juvenile criminal behaviour.<sup>94</sup>

44. 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>95</sup> High (and rising) youth unemployment, the unavailability of housing and support services, overcrowding, 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>96</sup>

### C. Other minority groups

45. The hazards of urban poverty are particularly challenging for a number of other groups, such as persons with disabilities.<sup>97</sup> Households with disabled members are more likely to experience poverty due to numerous factors, such as the extra financial burden of catering to the special needs of disabled family members and the relationship between low employment and education rates for those living with a disability.<sup>98</sup> 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, there appears to be significant links between disability and extreme poverty.<sup>99</sup>

46. The elderly living in urban poverty are similarly vulnerable and subject to social exclusion. In regions where the State is responsible for their welfare<sup>100</sup> or for those without

<sup>92</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>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> See *World Youth Report 2003: The global situation of young people* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.IV.7).

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Kristina Rosales and Taylor Barnes, “New Jack Rio”, *Foreign Policy* (September 2011).

<sup>97</sup> This may be due to the difficulty of collecting disaggregated data and interpreting 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>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Deepa Narayan and others, *Can Anyone Hear us? Voices from 47 Countries* (New York, World Bank, 1999), p. 200.

the social protection of a family, the elderly poor are a particularly marginalized and vulnerable group.<sup>101</sup>

47. Groups that are victims of additional stigma or marginalization, such as ethnic or religious minorities, migrants, non-citizens and disadvantaged castes, are also vulnerable to the hazards of urban poverty. Combined with constrained access to education, employment and health care, as well as limited or discriminatory legal policies for foreign migrants and refugees, the marginalization due to their minority status can make survival strategies for these groups much more complex.<sup>102</sup>

48. In post-conflict and post-disaster situations, poor urban communities are particularly vulnerable 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>103</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, resources and attention are frequently focused on other parts of the city and diverted from the communities that may need them the most.<sup>104</sup>

## V. Good practices

49. Many efforts have made to further the rights of the urban poor, but they often have mixed results. Food aid, for example, was criticized for its high shipping, storage and distribution costs. Cash transfers, on the other hand, were cost-efficient, incentivized agricultural production and market activity, and allowed recipients to meet both food and non-food needs. However, it became evident in some cases that, while food transfers are usually controlled by women and therefore benefit children directly, cash was more likely to be controlled by men and often diverted to various uses that did not necessarily benefit women and children. Furthermore, cash transfers were extremely vulnerable to the volatile prices or inflation of the commodities they were intended to purchase, and in some contexts could even exacerbate inflation. Governments, multilateral organizations and donors have therefore sought to respond to these issues through various approaches, such as adopting cash transfers for social protection interventions or providing a combination of cash transfers and food aid.<sup>105</sup> This dilemma represents one of many that surround the challenge of promoting the human rights of the urban poor, and therefore the spectrum of efforts and partnerships have greatly varied. This chapter provides a very small sample of efforts that have been made by various actors at the national, regional and international levels.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> For the treatment of undocumented immigrants in informal settlements, see Landau, "Shaping Urban Futures". For the rights of non-citizens, see report E/CN.4/Sub.2/2003/23. For a case study on the 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>103</sup> See M. Fay, and others, "Natural disasters and the urban poor", *En Breve*, No. 32 (2003).

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> See Rachel Sabates-Wheeler and Stephen Devereux, "Cash Transfers and High Food Prices: Explaining Outcomes on Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme", working paper 4 (DFID (2010).



## A. National and city governments

50. Anti-poverty efforts made by the Government of China serve as a useful example of a long-term, phased and integrated approach.<sup>106</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.

51. Brazil pioneered the concept of participatory budgeting in the city of Porto Alegre in 1989.<sup>107</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>108</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>109</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.

52. In Thailand, the national Government enhanced urban governance by nurturing and collaborating with community-based networks or federations. For example, it merged two offices (the Urban Community Development Office and the Rural Development Office) to form a single body to target the 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 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>110</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-

<sup>106</sup> See Lu Mai, "Poverty Eradication in China: A New Phase" for the China Development Research Foundation (2011).

<sup>107</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>108</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>109</sup> See Brian Wampler, "A Guide to Participatory Budgeting" in *Participatory Budgeting*, pp. 45–47.

<sup>110</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).

wide initiatives; and (c) provided ways for poor urban communities to share experiences and pool resources.

53. Under the Mexican *Oportunidades* 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>111</sup>

54. 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**

55. The Orangi Pilot Project of the Research and Training Institute<sup>112</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 mortality rates, an effective, low-cost sewage system and a community that reports significant decreases in the perception of social marginalization and stigmatization.

56. The Luanda Urban Poverty Project<sup>113</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

---

<sup>111</sup> UNDP, “Mexico: Scaling Up Progresa/Oportunidades – Conditional Cash Transfer Programme” (2011).

<sup>112</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.

<sup>113</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).

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.

57. The South African Homeless Peoples' Federation<sup>114</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.

58. The Manila Water Company, Inc.,<sup>115</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.

59. 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 among the urban poor. CEMPRE<sup>116</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>117</sup>

### C. Regional and international communities

60. 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

<sup>114</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>115</sup> See USAID, "Enabling Water Services Delivery for the Urban Poor in Asia: Best Practices Review and Workshop" (2006).

<sup>116</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>117</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.

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>118</sup>

61. 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>119</sup>

62. 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>120</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.

63. Cities Alliance<sup>121</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.

## VI. Recommendations

64. **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) Recognize the indivisibility of the human rights of the urban poor, and the need for targeted, rights-based and inclusive efforts at all levels to promote the human rights of the urban poor.**

**(b) Promote rights-based and participative development policies and good governance. Development policies that fully consider the human rights, dignity and freedoms of the poor should be implemented. This includes meeting the most basic and minimum needs, such as access to quality public services, required for the urban poor to live with dignity and freedom. 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**

---

<sup>118</sup> See ILO, Decent Work Country Programmes, at [www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/program/dwcp/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/program/dwcp/index.htm).

<sup>119</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>120</sup> See Economic Commission for Africa, *Sustainable Development Report on Africa* (Addis Ababa, 2008).

<sup>121</sup> See [www.citiesalliance.org](http://www.citiesalliance.org).

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;

(c) 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;

(d) 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;

(e) 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>122</sup> Instead, an integrated approach should be applied to ensure that the urban poor have access to basic public services at a minimum. 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;

(f) Strengthen international cooperation. 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>123</sup>

(g) 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.

(h) Emphasize the critical roles of each actor – whether international, regional, State, civil society or private sector – in promoting the dignity and human rights of the urban poor, especially the marginalized and vulnerable groups. For example, the international development community can mobilize its knowledge,

<sup>122</sup> See UNFPA, *State of World Population 2007*.

<sup>123</sup> See the Millennium Project for a discussion on the positive impact of fostering exchanges across federations of slum dwellers.

experience and sometimes resources to address the challenges of juvenile delinquency, but the State plays the most critical role in implementing policies and systems that provide security for youth and children in urban areas.

65. 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 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.

---