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United Nations
Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)

1. Background

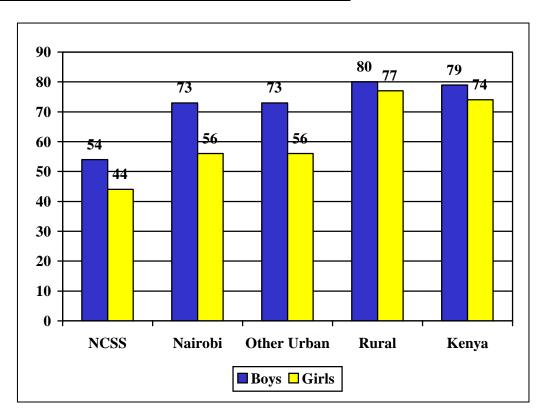
One of the most important achievements of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), the Millennium Declaration (2000) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has been reaching a consensus on a common concept of sustainable human development, focused on the rights and needs of people, anchored on sustainable global economic growth and supported by a revitalized and equitable system of multi-lateral cooperation. To illustrate the close linkage between these international goals, the Secretary-General stated in Bangkok (2004) that: "The Millennium Development Goals, particularly the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, cannot be achieved if questions of population and reproductive health are not

UN-Habitat's mandate to monitor progress in attaining Goal 7 Target 11 requires that it adopts or develops indicators that would enable it achieve this arduous task. The main challenge emanates from the fact that existing global instruments and measures are based on national data that are usually disaggregated between rural and urban population, ignoring the disparities within cities. This is despite compelling evidence that citywide averages fail to highlight sub-city differentials vis-à-vis several aspects

has been observed that many street children live in the slums and return home in the evenings. A study conducted by APHRC (2002) in four slums of Nairobi established fewer numbers of inschool youth compared to other parts of Kenya (as shown in Figure 1). About 70% of the out-of-school youth attributed their out-of-school status to their inability to pay school fees.

Figure 1: Percentage of Adolescents (aged 12-18) in School

Nairobi Cross Sectional Survey, 2000 & KDHS 1998



Source: APHRC (2002)

The ratio of in-school youth aged 15–17 years in the slums is about 2:1 (40.2% and 22.2%, respectively) for boys and girls compared to rural Kenya, which is almost even (74% and 72.9%, respectively) (APHRC 2002). The relatively low levels of education among slum dwellers are further reflected in the types of employment and income generating activities that they engage in.

3.2 Employment

The majority of slum dwellers in developing country cities earn their living from informal sector activities located either within or outside slum areas. Women are estimated to head one-forth of all households worldwide and many other households are dependent on female income even

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¹⁰ UN-Habitat, 2003

¹¹ UN-Habitat, 2003

where men are present. Factors that contribute to a rise in female-headed households include family disintegration, population movements between urban and rural areas within countries, international migration, war and internal displacements. Female-maintained households are very often among the poorest because of wage discrimination, occupational segregation patterns in the labor market and other gender-based barriers. In urban areas, evidence suggests that only a few women have access to formal employment and that most of them are virtually dependent on the informal economy for their own and their family's survival. Figure 2 shows that in most African countries, women dominate the informal labor market.

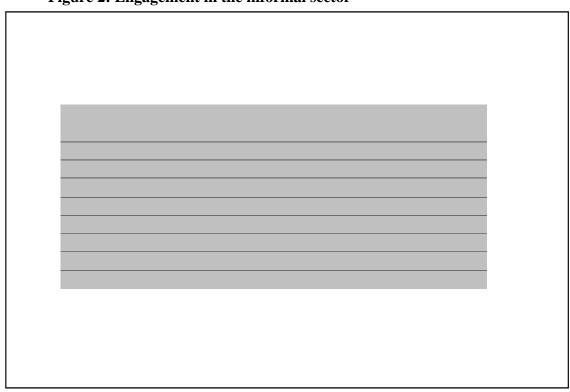
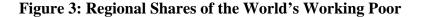


Figure 2: Engagement in the informal sector



Source: Stoevska (2004a)

3.3 Water

A household is considered to have access to improved water supply if it has sufficient amount of water for family use, at an affordable price, available to household members without being subject to extreme effort, especially to women and children. Households in the slums are rarely connected to water networks in many cities within the developing countries and can only rely on water from vendors at exorbitant costs, sometimes at 200 times the actual costs. Improving access to safe water implies reduced burden on people, mostly women, who collect water from available sources. It also implies reduced global burden of water-related diseases and improved quality of life of the slum dwellers.

3.4 Sanitation

Access to sanitation is indicated by the proportion of households with access to adequate sanitation facilities. Women are not only the primary users of sanitary facilities but also largely influence household habits and overall use of the facilities. Good sanitation is important for urban and rural populations, but where there is poor sanitation, the risks are greater in slum areas where it is more difficult to avoid contact with waste. Inadequate sanitation, through its impact on health and environment, has considerable implications for economic development. Although water is for life, sanitation has been considered critical for dignity. The location of toilets, their levels of cleanliness and safety in use are im

found to shun toilets due to possibility of abuse, especially at night.¹⁴ Where toilet access has been monetized women have even less access due to their low economic status. Cultural norms and taboos may hinder women from accessing communal toilets in the slums.

3.5 Durability of housing and overcrowding

A house is considered durable if it is built on a non-hazardous location and has a structure permanent and adequate enough to protect its inhabitants from the extremes of climatic conditions such as rain, heat, cold and humidity. Households headed by women have been found to have lower incomes and are therefore more likely to inhabit poorly constructed dwellings. Most of the structures in the slums are overcrowded, which has implications on the health of the people especially in terms of transmission of infectious diseases. Overcrowding also infringes on people's privacy, including sexual privacy for the adults, especially for the women within the households (Amuyunzu-Nyamongo and Magadi, forthcoming). Although slum upgrading is one of the initiatives being promoted and supported globally, ¹⁵ it is replete with barriers including land ownership, property rights and gender biases in terms of allocation.

3.6 Secure tenure

The Beijing Platform for Action identifies the need for equitable social development that recognizes empowering the poor, particularly women living in poverty, to utilize environmental resources sustainably as a necessary foundation for sustainable development. Secure tenure is the first component of the progressive realization to the right of housing and adequate exploitation of the available resources. However, security of tenure of a household does not necessarily imply the security of tenure for the woman in a context where ownership documentation is usually only in the name of the household head who is mainly the man. In most developing countries men head more than 75% of households as illustrated by DHS and MICS conducted in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Women's lack of security of tenure may expose them to homelessness. An Addis Ababa Urban Inequities Survey report¹⁶ shows that the majority of homeless women are either widowed or divorced which could imply that at some point women become victims of insecure tenure.

3.7 Health

Lack of toilets, poor drainage and water supplies, and inadequate health services are some of the most important health needs and problems faced by slum residents. The three most commonly cited major reproductive health (RH) problems by urban slum residents are unwanted pregnancies, abortion and HIV and AIDS. The health situation is worsened by inadequate healthcare services, characterized by lack of supplies and poor quality of services. HIV and AIDS continues to be a major problem in urban areas. For instance, in sub-Saharan Africa, the HIV and AIDS epidemic has historically concentrated in urban areas, where significantly higher

¹⁴ UN-Habitat, 2004

¹⁵ UN-Habitat, 2003

¹⁶ UN-Habitat, 2004

¹⁷ Gulis *et al.*, 2004

¹⁸ Amuyunzu-Nyamongo & Taffa, 2004

HIV prevalence rates have been recorded compared to rural areas. In South Africa, although there is no official data on HIV prevalence by income groups, local evidence suggests that HIV and AIDS is concentrated in townships and informal settlements. The recently concluded Kenya DHS²⁰ revealed significant differences between urban and rural areas. Females in urban areas accounted for 12.3% of the HIV burden compared to 7.5% in rural areas while 7.5% males in urban and 3.6% in rural areas were infected with HIV as shown in Table 1. In total, the HIV prevalence rate was 10% urban and 5.6% rural.

Table 1: HIV prevalence by age						
Percentage HIV	Percentage HIV positive among women age 15-49 and men age 15-54 who were					
tested, by age, Kenya 2003						
Age	Women		Men		Total	
	Percent		Percent		Percent	
	HIV		HIV		HIV	
	positive	Number	positive	Number	positive	Number
15-19	3.0	711	0.4	745	1.6	1,456
20-24	9.0	658	2.4	566	6.0	1,224
25-29	12.9	522	7.3	428	10.4	950
30-34	11.7	438	6.6	368	9.4	806
35-39	11.8	345	8.4	321	10.1	666
40-44	9.5	276	8.8	260	9.1	535
45-49	3.9	202	5.2	163	4.4	364
50-54	na	na	5.7	193	na	na
Total age 15-	8.7	3,151	4.6	2,851	6.7	6,001
49	na	na	4.6	3,043	na	na
Total age 15-						
54						

Although there is evidence that urban areas and women are highly affected by HIV, it is not possible to delineate its burden among the urban poor, which is presumably high. The high poverty levels among slum residents limits their

structures and processes. There is need to increase capacity-building opportunities for women, and to strengthen the capacities of local authorities, including the incorporation of gender budgeting in the planning process as contained in the proposed Gender Indicators (Annex 1).

4.0 What are the main challenges in addressing gender issues in the context of urban poverty?

The few examples cited in this paper illustrate the importance of placing gender concerns on top of the global development agenda. This is critical more so because slums are essentially physical and spatial manifestations of urban poverty and intra-city inequality, conditions that must be addressed to attain sustainable human development. The challenges outlined below are key to this process.

- 1. It is critical that Member States be facilitated to move beyond commitment, i.e. beyond rhetoric, to implementing interventions aimed at meeting the global goals. Although developing countries are signatories to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Millennium Declaration and MDGs among other international conventions, they often lag behind in implementation. It is crucial to assess the factors that lead to inaction or lackluster performance and address them if sustainable human development has to be attained.
- 2. It is important to put the needs of the urban poor on top of the global and national development agenda. Approximately 1 billion people live in slums and the numbers are projected to double in the next 30 years if no action is taken. It is therefore critical for the plight of the urban poor to become a focus for holistic development. Addressing the abject poverty that is pervasive in these areas will also be respecting the people's right to development.
- 3. The need for gender-disaggregated data cannot be overstated. The evidence provided in this paper shows that women in the slums are more disadvantaged compared to their male counterparts. However, a full comprehension of the disadvantages and resultant consequences is not possible due to inadequate data. Some data exists on critical areas including access to basic services and governance but these have to be collated and analyzed while other data have to be collected through primary research. The collection of these data could take advantage of routine data collection exercises such as economic surveys, DHS, MICS and household surveys. Collecting gender-disaggregated data will facilitate informed monitoring of progress towards the attainment of the international goals. In addition, it will facilitate the formulation and implementation of gender-responsive policies.
- 4. There is need to have a list of gender indicators at the global level that goes beyond MDG3 but which is sensitive to the urban poor women. Currently, country progress reports provide information on gender under MDG3 despite the general understanding that gender is a crosscutting issue. The development and synthesis of the indicators should be done through broad consultation and with the understanding that there may be regional and in-country variations. Although the MDGs, Beijing Declaration and

Platform for Action have provided a common framework of continuous monitoring of human development, gender experts need to enhance and integrate gender into the available tools and to strengthen the implementation processes.

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