



Press Release

One out of three people living in cities of the developing world lives in a slum according to UN-HABITAT's new *State of the World's Cities Report 2008/9: Harmonious Cities*

One out of every three people living in cities of the developing world lives in a slum. However, in a new analytical breakthrough on measuring the quality of housing, the new UN-HABITAT *State of the World's Cities report 2008/9: Harmonious Cities*, finds that not all slum dwellers suffer the same degree or magnitude of deprivation, nor are all slums homogeneous – some, in fact, provide better living conditions than others. The degree of deprivation depends on how many of the five shelter deprivations used to measure slums – lack of access to improved water, lack of access to sanitation, non-durable housing, insufficient living area, and security of tenure – are associated with a particular slum household.

Based on this new analytical tool, the report finds that slum prevalence – or the proportion of people living in slum conditions in urban areas – is highest in sub-Saharan Africa; 62 per cent of the region's urban population lives in a slum or suffers from one or more of the five shelter deprivations that define a slum. Slum concentrations throughout Asia vary widely, from an average of 43 per cent in Southern Asia and 37 per cent in Eastern Asia, to 24 per cent in Western Asia and 28 per cent in South-Eastern Asia.

Concerned about the incidence of slums and the lack of inadequate housing, in his foreword, Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations points out that the data and analysis contained in the report are intended to improve our understanding of how cities function and what we, as a global community, can do to increase their liveability and unity.

To help policymakers and planners, the UN-HABITAT report gives a thorough country by country breakdown of the incidence of slums in Africa and Asia.

Africa

The authors note that in Africa the slum proportion is particularly high in countries such as Ethiopia, Angola, Central African Republic, Chad, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mozambique, Niger, Sierra Leone, and Sudan, where slum households are likely to lack clean water, improved sanitation, durable housing or sufficient living space; in many cases, slum dwellers in these countries not only suffer from one shelter deprivation, but from three or more. In Central African Republic, Chad and Ethiopia, slum cities are more entrenched and underserved, with as much as 91 per cent of even non-slum households living in extremely deprived settlements.

A second group of countries in sub-Saharan Africa has large slum concentrations but fewer instances of multiple shelter deprivations. Among these countries, are Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Gabon, Kenya, Ghana, and Senegal. Although the majority of urban households in these countries can be classified as slums, most suffer from only one shelter deprivation. According to the authors, this means that a simple programme tackling the lack of improved water, sanitation or housing can contribute significantly to improving the lives of slum dwellers. For countries such as Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, and Ghana, a sanitation programme would be enough to significantly improve the lives of most slum dwellers.

Using this kind of data, the authors find that in the last five years some countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have been more successful than others in reducing the number and proportion of slum dwellers. The Northern Africa region has the lowest concentration of slums in Africa, with slum households comprising 15 per cent of all urban households. In this region, nine out of 10 slum households suffer from only one shelter deprivation.

Asia

Analysing data from Asia, the report finds that Slum concentrations throughout Asia vary widely, from an average of 43 per cent in Southern Asia and 37 per cent in Eastern Asia, to 24 per cent in Western Asia and 28 per cent in South-Eastern Asia. The high concentration of slum households in Southern Asia can be associated with a variety of factors, including lack of investment in the sub-region's housing sector, poverty and instability.

1200

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

TOTAL POPULATION

URBAN POPULATION

(World Population in Billions)

Although Western Asia has a relatively low average slum concentration, the report notes that within the sub-region, several countries, including Israel, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and United Arab Emirates, have low slum prevalence while other countries, such as Yemen, Lebanon and Iraq, have large proportions of urban dwellers living in slum conditions.

The green agenda versus the brown agenda

In mapping the environmental status of cities around the world, the UN-HABITAT report finds that because of the prevalence of slums in developing countries, cities tend to struggle most with localized, immediate and health-threatening environmental issues belonging to the “brown” agenda, such as lack of safe water, inadequate sanitation and poor waste management.

For example in analyzing energy use at household level, the report finds in Gabon, 68 per cent of urban households use gas, while in Kenya and Nigeria, use of kerosene for cooking is quite common among urban households (47 per cent and 46 per cent, respectively). It is interesting to note, however, that in Nigeria, which is among the larger producers of petroleum, a large proportion of urban households still rely on wood and charcoal for cooking (49 per cent).

However, the report also finds that many households in African cities cannot afford kerosene and liquefied petroleum gas and the large majority continues to rely on fuel wood and charcoal. Interestingly enough, the use of solid fuels in non-slum areas of African cities cannot be linked to lack of financial resources. Instead the data suggests that when people move up the economic ladder, they change fuels for heating and lighting, but not necessarily for cooking.

UN-HABITAT analyses also show that the result of this kind of energy use is that indoor air pollution is a leading cause of respiratory illnesses among women and children living in Asian and African slums, as they are most likely to be exposed to poorly ventilated cooking areas.

In the cities of Burkina Faso, including the capital Ouagadougou, the prevalence of acute respiratory infections among children under the age of five is almost two times higher in households using solid fuel for cooking than in those that use non-solid fuels. Ethiopia’s urban households display the largest variation in the prevalence of acute respiratory infections in children under the age of five— with nearly 30 per cent prevalence when dung is used for cooking against 8.3 per cent prevalence when charcoal is used and 4.8 per cent prevalence when kerosene is used.

Additionally the authors of the report find that the health of slum dwellers suffers greatly because in many African cities solid waste is rarely cleared. In Freetown, Sierra Leone, for example, only 35 to 55 per cent of the urban solid waste is collected; uncollected waste is illegally dumped in open spaces, water bodies, and storm-drainage channels, buried, burnt or deposited along the streets or roadsides.

In Benin, less than 50 per cent of urban households benefit from collection of household wastes either through a public or private system. The result is that, as the 2001 Demographic and Health Survey showed, the prevalence of diarrhoea among children under the age of five years was 18.5 per cent in urban households where the garbage is dumped in the yard against 7 per cent in urban households where the garbage is collected.

Similarly, a 2003 survey in Kenya showed that one out of every four children living in households where garbage is dumped within the yard suffered from diarrhoea compared to less than one in ten children living in households where solid waste is regularly collected.

Concerned about such slum statistics, in her introduction, Anna Tibaijuka, Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, points out that urban inequality has a direct impact on all aspects of human development, including health, nutrition, gender equality and education. “In cities where spatial and social divisions are stark or extreme, lack of social mobility tends to reduce people’s participation in the formal sector of the economy and their integration in society. This exacerbates insecurity and social unrest which, in turn, diverts public and private resources from social services and productive investments to expenditures for safety and security. Pro-poor social programmes, equitable distribution of public resources and balanced spatial and territorial development, particularly through investments in urban and inter-urban infrastructure and services, are among the most effective means for mitigating or reversing the negative consequences of urban inequality.”

¹ It should be noted that the original estimate for slum dwellers in sub-Saharan Africa was in the region of 71 percent. However, in this report the figure is 62 percent because in 2006, the Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation decided to change the definition on adequate sanitation –one of the five indicators on slums– in order to adapt it to the reality of more dense urban settings. The World Health Organization, the United Nations Children’s Fund and UN-HABITAT agreed to consider fifty per cent of households using pit latrines as slum dwellers. In previous slum estimates (until 2004) pit latrines were considered as non-improved sanitation solution. The change in definition affected estimates mostly in those countries where the use of pit latrines is more widespread, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa.