

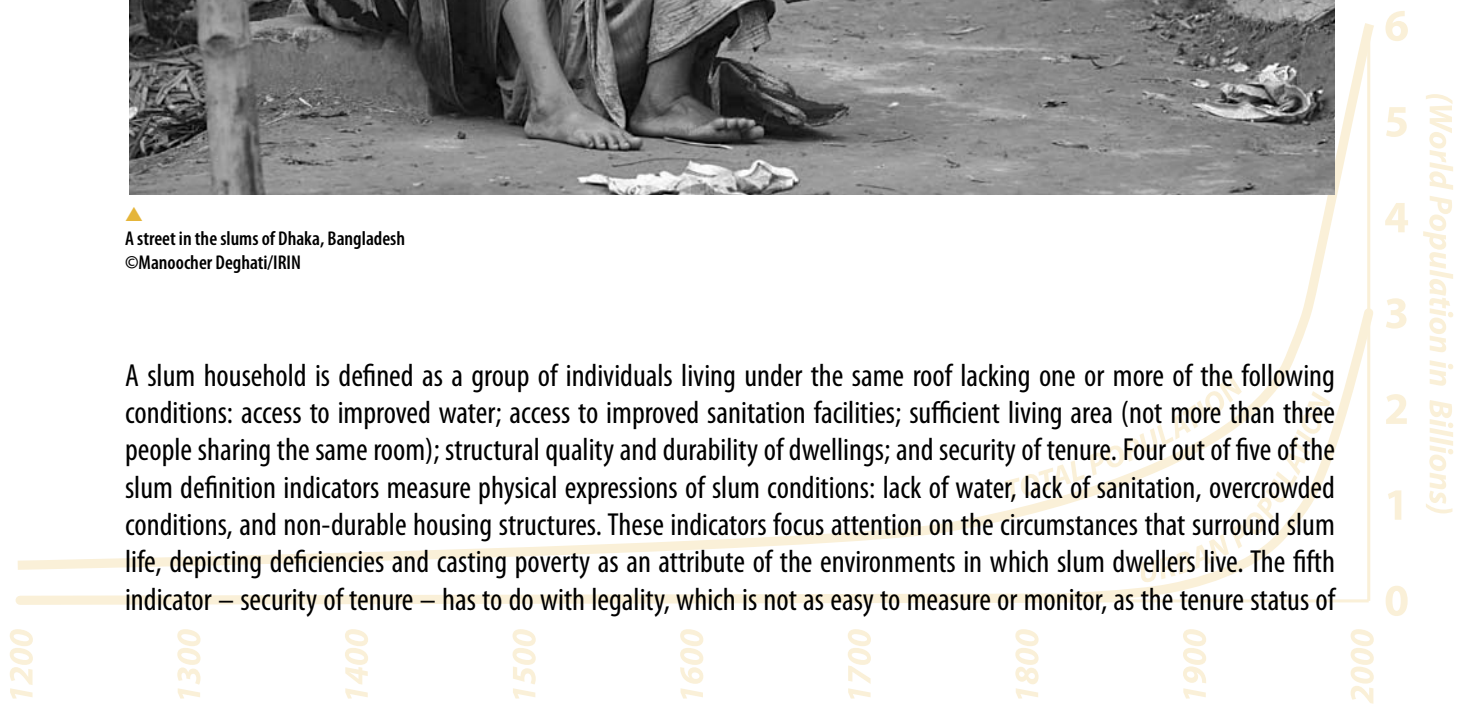
Case Study

Slum households and shelter deprivations: degrees and characteristics



▲ A street in the slums of Dhaka, Bangladesh
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A slum household is defined as a group of individuals living under the same roof lacking one or more of the following conditions: access to improved water; access to improved sanitation facilities; sufficient living area (not more than three people sharing the same room); structural quality and durability of dwellings; and security of tenure. Four out of five of the slum definition indicators measure physical expressions of slum conditions: lack of water, lack of sanitation, overcrowded conditions, and non-durable housing structures. These indicators focus attention on the circumstances that surround slum life, depicting deficiencies and casting poverty as an attribute of the environments in which slum dwellers live. The fifth indicator – security of tenure – has to do with legality, which is not as easy to measure or monitor, as the tenure status of



slum dwellers often depends on de facto or de jure rights – or lack of them. This indicator has special relevance for measuring the denial and violation of housing rights, as well as the progressive fulfillment of these rights.

Defining slums by household-level shelter deprivations, however, does not fully capture the degree of deprivation experienced by a given household or slum community, or the specific needs of that community – a dimension that is important for policymakers. The current definition masks which specific deprivations households experience, as well as the severity of combined deprivations, and creates a challenge for monitoring, as the proportion of slum dwellers may remain the same in any given country, while the type of deprivation experienced by households may change over time. Furthermore, only the elimination of all deprivations in a given household now registers as an improvement in the incidence of slums.

A simple alternative approach is to group slum households into categories that can be aggregated into moderately deprived (one shelter deprivation), severely deprived (two shelter deprivations) and extremely deprived (three or more shelter deprivations). By studying the prevalence of slum households in categories of severity, changes in household deprivations can be tracked more accurately; a reduction in one shelter deprivation for a severely deprived household, for example, could still leave it with a deficiency, but would move it out of the ranks of the severely deprived. Addressing programmes and policies to geographic areas in which households experience combinations of deprivations also allows for more effective upgrading and improvement.

Source: UN-HABITAT Global Urban Observatory, 2008