



Slum Housing: Global Patterns and Case Studies

Introduction

"Slums are a physical and spatial manifestation of urban poverty and intra-city inequality. However, slums do not accommodate all of the urban poor, nor are all slum dwellers always poor."

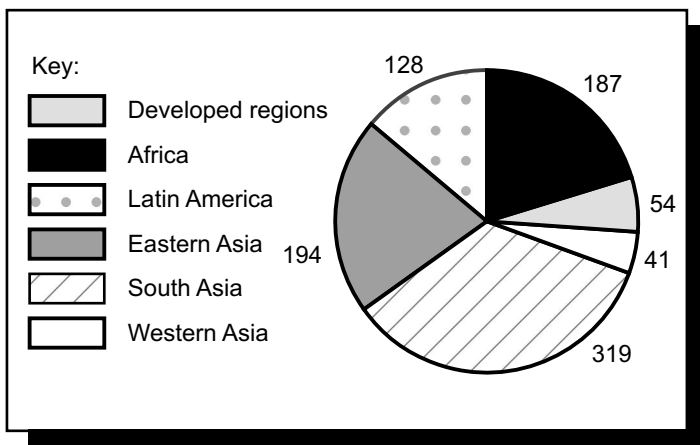
"Access to squatter settlements is rarely free and, within most settlements, entry fees are often charged by the person or group who exerts control over the settlement and the distribution of land."

The Challenge of Slums, United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 2003.

A **slum** is a heavily populated urban area characterised by substandard housing and squalor. *The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements 2003* presented the results of the first global analysis of slum housing by the United Nations since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration. The latter, published in 2000, aimed to achieve 'significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by the year 2020'.

Thirty-two per cent of the world's urban population, almost 1 billion people, are housed in slums with the great majority living in LEDCs. However, virtually all large cities in MEDCs also contain slum districts. The UN recognises that the focus of global poverty is moving from rural to urban areas, a process known as 'the urbanisation of poverty'. Without significant global action the number of slum dwellers will double over the next 30 years. The urban poor live in inner city slums, peripheral shanty towns and in almost every other conceivable space such as on pavements, traffic roundabouts, under bridges, and in sewers.

Fig. 1 World distribution of slum dwellers (millions) by region, 2001.



In the 1990s the global urban population increased by 36%, accompanied by the rapid expansion of slum housing. The Developed Countries account for 54 million slum dwellers (Fig. 1). In total, 43% of the urban populations of LEDCs live in slums. This compares to only 6% in MEDCs (Figs 2 and 3).

The highest concentrations of slums are found in the Least Developed Countries, the poorest grouping within the LEDCs, with 72.2% of urban dwellers living in slums. In some cities slums dominate to such an extent that the more affluent segregate themselves in small gated communities with continuous security protection.

Fig. 2 Slum dwellers as a percentage of urban population by region, 2001.

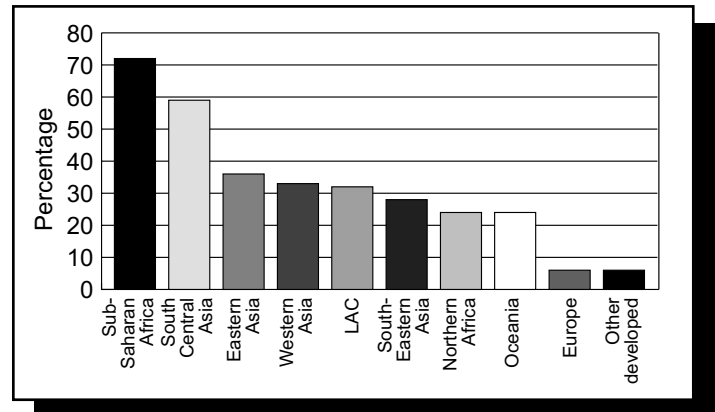
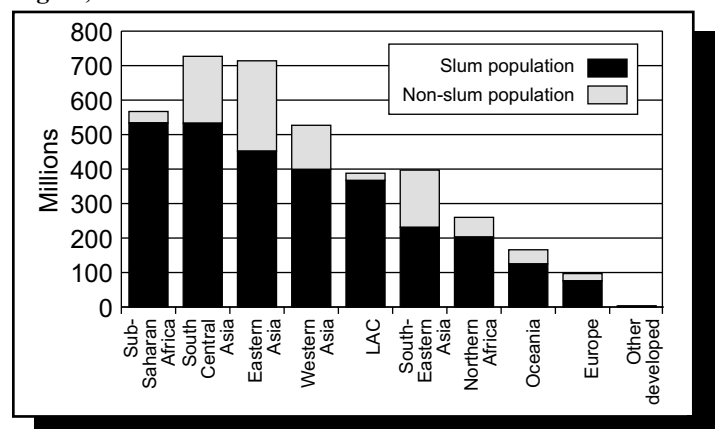


Fig. 3 Proportion of slum dwellers in urban population by region, 2001.



The United Nations regards the Kibera district of Nairobi, housing three quarters of a million people, as the largest slum in the world. The Dhavari district of Mumbai and the Orangi area of Karachi are not far behind in extent. Some slums are now as large as cities. For example, the Ashaiman informal settlement in Ghana is now larger than the city of Tema from which it grew.

In an effort to present a balanced picture, the Challenge of Slums assesses both the positive and the negative aspects of slums. The main **negative factors**, which are well known, are:

- Lack of basic services, especially water, sanitation and waste disposal
- A high incidence of vermin
- A higher incidence of disease, particularly water-borne diseases such as typhoid and cholera, and HIV/AIDS.
- Inadequate and sometimes unsafe buildings with poor indoor air quality
- Overcrowding and high density
- Locations which are often hazardous such as steep slopes and flood plains
- Insecurity of tenure
- High concentrations of poverty, deprivation and social exclusion
- Limited access to credit and employment in the formal sector
- A higher than average incidence of crime, although this is not always the case.
- Communities that are frequently not acknowledged on maps.

The **positive aspects** recognised by the report are:

- Slums are the first stopping points for immigrants, usually providing the only housing affordable.
- Slum dwellers perform a wide range of low-income jobs which are essential for the efficient functioning of cities.
- Slums are areas of cultural mix and sometimes important artistic expression.

The numbers of people living in urban poverty are increased by a combination of economic problems, growing inequality and population growth, particularly growth due to in-migration (Fig. 4). As The Challenge of Slums states “Slums result from a combination of poverty or low incomes with inadequacies in the housing provision system, so that poorer people are forced to seek affordable accommodation and land that become increasingly inadequate.” The report identifies women, children, widows and female-headed households as the most vulnerable among the poor. In urban African slums, women head over 30% of all households.

Fig. 4 Slum formation.

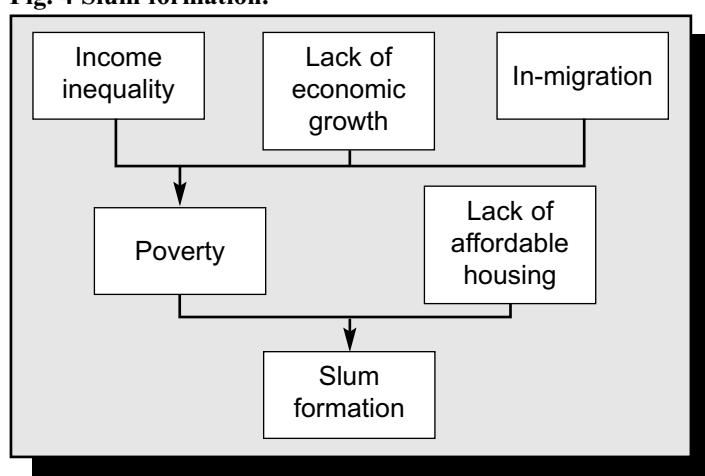


Fig. 5 shows how slum areas may vary in their disadvantages, even within the same city. This example highlights contrasts between two slum areas in Karachi. Some slums may record only a few of the disadvantages listed in Fig. 5, others may have them all. Differences between slums reflect local cultures and conditions as well as accidents of history or politics.

The Challenge of Slums recognises two broad classes of slums;

- *Slums of hope* which show clear signs of development, consolidation and improvement
- *Slums of despair* where environmental conditions and domestic services are in a process of decline.

Fig. 5 Attributes of selected slums.

Example of a slum	'SLUM' PARAMETERS					
	Services	Structure	Density	Location	Poverty and exclusion	Security of tenure
Ibadan, Bodija Market	Poor	Fair	High	Hazardous	Poor	Secure
Dhaka Railways	Fair	Poor	High	Hazardous	Severe	Insecure
Karachi: invasion of state land	Poor	Fair	High	Not hazardous	Severe	Secure
Karachi: ad-hoc settlements	Poor	Poor	High	Hazardous	Poor	Insecure
Cairo high-rises	Fair	Good	High	Not hazardous	Poor	Secure
Durban informal settlements	Poor	Poor	Medium / Low	Not hazardous	Severe	Secure

Urban poverty is heavily concentrated in slums. Poverty is multidimensional in nature (Fig. 6). The Challenge of Slums groups the dimensions of urban poverty as follows:

- *Low income*: consisting of those who are unable to participate in labour markets and lack other means of support, and those whose wage income is so low that they are below a nominal poverty line.
- *Low human capital*: low education and poor health. Health ‘shock’ in particular can lead to chronic poverty.
- *Low social capital*: this involves a shortage of networks to protect households from shocks; weak patronage on the labour market; labelling and exclusion. This particularly applies to minority groups.
- *Low financial capital*: lack of productive assets that might be used to generate income or avoid paying major costs.

Fig. 6 The constituents of urban poverty.

- Inadequate income (and thus inadequate consumption of necessities including food and, often, safe and sufficient water; often problems of indebtedness, with debt repayments significantly reducing income available for necessities).
- Inadequate, unstable or risky asset base (non-material and material including educational attainment and housing) for individuals, households or communities.
- Inadequate shelter (typically poor quality, overcrowded and insecure).
- Inadequate provision of ‘public’ infrastructure (e.g. piped water, sanitation, drainage, roads, footpaths) which increases the health burden and often the work burden.
- Inadequate provision for basic services such as day care/schools/vocational training, healthcare, emergency services, public transport, communications, law enforcement.
- Limited or no safety net to ensure basic consumption can be maintained when income falls; also to ensure access to shelter and healthcare when these can no longer be paid for.
- Inadequate protection of poorer groups’ rights through the operation of the law, including laws and regulations regarding civil and political rights, occupational health and safety, pollution control, environmental health, protection from violence and other crimes, protection from discrimination and exploitation.
- Voicelessness and powerlessness within political systems and bureaucratic structures, leading to little or no possibility of receiving entitlements.

Case Study: Nairobi, Kenya

An estimated 60% of the city's population live in slums. The origin of Nairobi's (Fig. 7) slums lies in the colonial period when urban layout was based on government-sanctioned segregation of Europeans, Asians and Africans. Slums developed due to the huge imbalance in the allocation of public resources towards housing and infrastructure in the different ethnic areas with the Africans consigned to the most densely populated and least serviced sectors of the city. Although segregation was relaxed in the post-colonial era accelerating rural-urban migration placed increasing pressure on the whole urban area but particularly on the poorest (and cheapest) districts. There was little government obstruction to the rapid spread of shanty style housing as long as they were not located too near the CBD. Growth was particularly rapid near centres of employment (see Fig. 7 for a typical location). New government housing provided for only a small fraction of the rapidly increasing demand and as a result slum improvement projects proved to be totally inadequate in the face of hugely increasing demand.

In Nairobi, slum housing, which is widely located across the city, is generally of two types:

- Squatter settlements
- Illegal subdivisions of either government or private land

Some slums are situated in hazardous locations (see Fig. 7a). All have very high population densities with up to 2300 people per hectare. Most housing units are let on a room-to-room basis and most households occupy single rooms. A number of studies indicate that two-thirds or more of slum households rent from private-sector landlords. Inadequate water supply and lack of sanitation are major problems. A recent survey in one Nairobi slum showed that the toilet to person ratio was 1:500. This is particularly difficult for women, who unlike men, cannot use open spaces to relieve themselves.

Between 1971 and 1995 the number of informal settlements within Nairobi increased from 50 to 134 and the total population of these settlements rose from 167,000 to 1,886,000. This was the result of high levels of both natural increase and in-migration.

Employment in Nairobi's slums is mainly (a) low skill - domestic help, waiter, bar maid, guard; (b) often on a casual basis - construction labour; (c) small business owners - kiosk owner, newspaper seller etc.

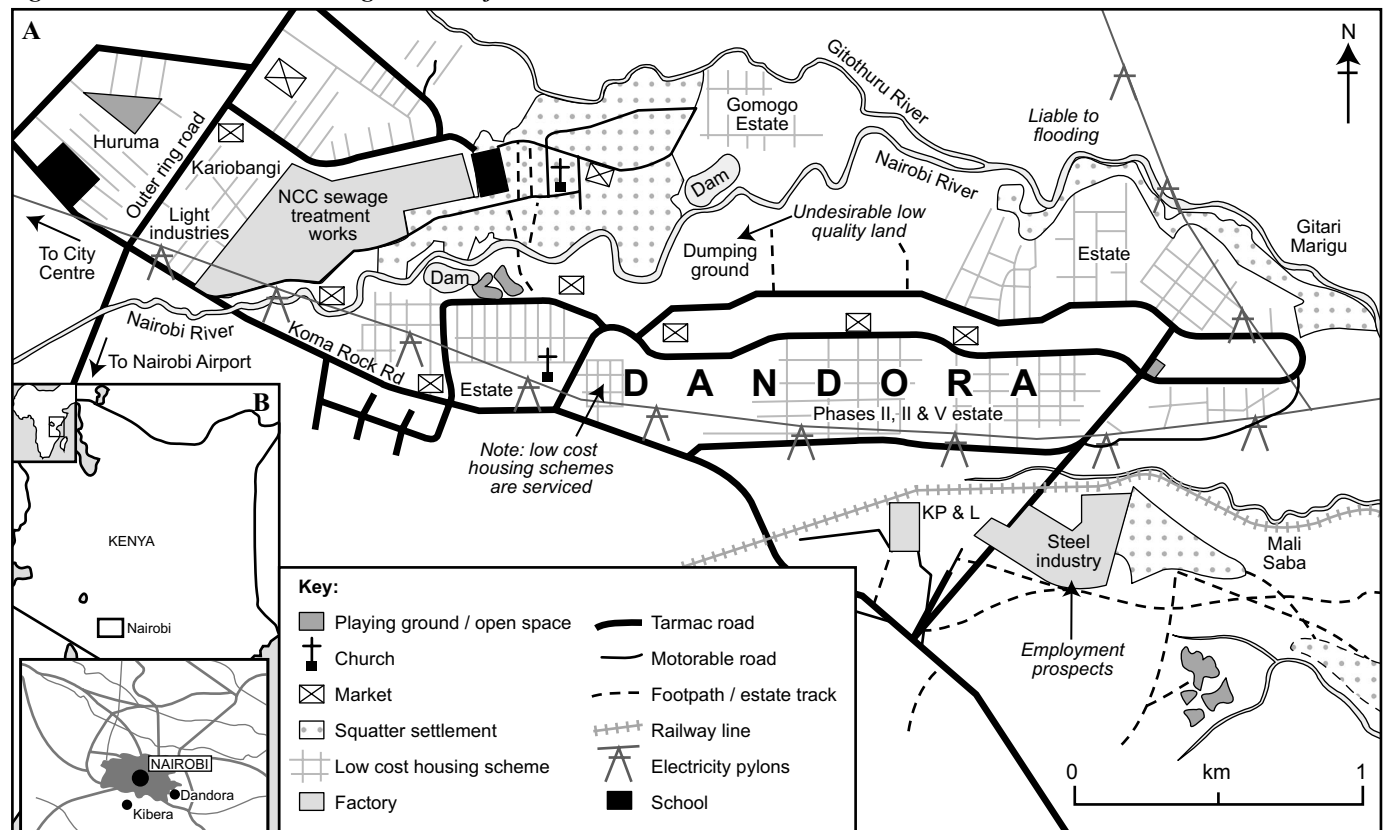
The Challenge of Slums reports that "in the face of the failure to establish coherent and effective Nairobi-wide urban policies, the outlook for the situation in slums appears to be rather bleak." Various bodies have been set up such as the Nairobi Informal Settlements Coordination Committee. While there has been some expansion in housing stock and community facilities a number of negative trends have also been observed by the UN. These include:

- Proliferation of new slums
- Exclusion of particular population groups
- Subsidy and affordability mismatches
- Top-down approaches
- Gentrification
- Failing partnerships

A number of Kenyan and international organisations have criticised the impact of World Bank and International Monetary Fund-led structural adjustment policies in the 1980s. These policies made conditions in the slums even worse than they already were because they required that the Kenyan government withdraw from subsidising basic services such as education and health. In recent years the anti-globalisation movement has highlighted the impact of World Bank/IMF policies on the urban poor in LEDCs as these policies have frequently:

- Reduced urban services
- Increased the cost of services
- Cut the number of jobs in the public services formal sector

Fig. 7 Land use in the Kariobangi district of SE Nairobi.



The Controversial Recent Slum-Upgrading Initiative

When the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) government came into power in December 2002, one of its main policies was to improve conditions for the urban poor. However, the resulting evictions and demolitions in Nairobi in 2004 have proved to be hugely controversial, drawing strong criticism from both slum residents and international organisations. An estimated 42,000 structures were targeted in what the Daily Nation, Kenya's leading newspaper, described as "Kenya's biggest bulldozing project". Under a massive public outcry the government retreated in the early stages of the plan. Nevertheless, it is estimated that 10,000 people were made homeless and many of them remain in this condition. As with previous slum-upgrading initiatives, slum-dwellers complained of an almost total lack of consultation by the authorities.

Research projects have shown that the poor cannot afford to pay for upgraded housing, even if it is made available to them. Thus, the solution seems to lie in indirect cost recovery and subsidies. Nairobi's Institute for Development Studies highlights the cost of land and infrastructure as the overwhelming difficulty preventing the urban poor from developing or owning their own homes. The Institute suggests more innovative tenure systems that are accessible to the poor, such as community ownership of land and land subsidised by the government. Some organisations have even suggested the lowering of building standards for low-income housing to reduce costs. As a result of the wave of recent criticism the Kenyan government is in the process of revising its housing policies.

The Kibera Slum

Kibera (Fig. 7b), recognised by the UN as the world's largest slum, houses over three-quarters of a million people. Kibera, on the edge of downtown Nairobi, is about four square kilometres in area. It is the oldest and largest informal settlement in Nairobi. The government of Kenya does not recognise Kibera as an official entity, as it is illegal in status with title deeds never having been issued, and provides minimal services to the area. The quality of life is extremely poor:

- Most people lack sanitation, running water and electricity
- Access to health care is severely limited
- An estimated 20% of the population is HIV positive
- Women, and young women in particular, are treated as second-class citizens
- Approximately half of the population are under the age of 15.

In the 1920s a group of Nubian soldiers were allowed, by the British colonial government, to settle on a wooded hillside outside Nairobi. The Nubians, who came from Sudan, had fought with the Allies in the First World War. Although the Nubians were never actually granted title deeds to the land they built homes and businesses on this location they named 'Kibra', meaning jungle. As the 20th century advanced other ethnic groups moved into the area. Some pegged out their own plots of land but most of the newcomers rented huts from the established Nubian community. Thus a tenant and landlord system developed in Kibera. At various times since this has been the source of violent conflict (Figs 8a and 8b). In 2004, rents ranged from US\$ 5 to 40 a month for a one room structure in the slum, with many tenants struggling to find the money during a period of recession in the Kenyan economy.

There is an ongoing water crisis in Kibera. On a daily basis residents, particularly women, walk to nearby streams, wells and boreholes to collect water while others queue at water kiosks. Tap water is rare in Kibera and water vending has become a lucrative business. Girls take the burden of collecting water, often missing out on school as a result.

Kibera was part of the recent slum-upgrading initiative. Initially residents were told that some of them would be relocated to Athi River on the outskirts of the city to make room for the upgrading project. Residents strongly opposed the plan for a number of reasons but particularly because it would mean travelling longer distances to work. Landlords also objected because of their resultant loss of rental income. Both groups formed their own associations to resist relocation.

Fig. 8a Kenya's Slums

Kenya's Slums: New Political Battleground

Tribal fighting continued this weekend over high rents.

By Danna Harman (Staff writer of the Christian Science Monitor)

KIBERA, NAIROBI - Thousands of residents here streamed out of the Kibera slum this weekend, hauling their gerry cans, bed frames and cooking utensils as they escaped violent clashes that have claimed a reported 15 lives so far.

Francis Aguya, waiting for a hired wheelbarrow to help him move his belongings to a different slum across town, says that he is not coming back. "This is only the beginning of bad days to come," he says. "I don't want to stay and see more."

The clashes in Kibera, Nairobi's largest slum with half a million inhabitants - and just four miles from downtown - began escalating last month and have been gathering momentum ever since. Ostensibly just a dispute between landlords and tenants over rent, the violence serves as a snapshot of much that is wrong in Kenya today. The problems range from poverty to intractable ethnic tensions - and the divisive behaviour of the politicians who take advantage of these issues.

From The Christian Science Monitor December 10th 2001

Fig. 8b

Bulldozers go in to clear Kenya's slum city

Meshack Onyango was at work when the bulldozers came, but his neighbours rescued his mattress and paraffin stove before the demolition crews ploughed his ramshackle home back into the red earth.

The tin roof of his shack was stripped off by thieves before the wrecking started, but he counts himself lucky to have saved a few possessions.

More than a third of a million people living in the slums around Kenya's capital, Nairobi, now face a similar fate as the government prepares to clear shanty settlements which have encroached on to the borders of railway tracks and on land reserved for road building.

The Onyango family's home was demolished along with 400 other tin-roofed mud shacks because it stood in the way of a planned bypass, which cuts a 60 metre wide strip through Kibera, the biggest slum in Africa.

"They came at nine in the morning when I was at work and my wife was at the market," Mr Onyango said.

"The bulldozers were accompanied by police so people could not stop the demolition, or they would be clobbered. We slept in the church that night, and now we're at my brother's house because I don't have money to rent my own house."

My Onyango, his wife and their four small children now all live with his elder brother in a shack the size of a British greenhouse.

Conclusion

Slums are the product of the following factors:

- Failed policies
- Bad governance
- Corruption
- Inappropriate regulation
- Dysfunctional land markets
- Unresponsive financial systems
- A fundamental lack of political will

Older approaches to slum improvement were largely engineering based - the provision of new housing and physical services. However, such actions were usually inadequately resourced and in most cases:

- Used imported technology, equipment and capital
- Created few local job opportunities
- Added to balance of payments problems
- Failed to address issues of asset management, upkeep and maintenance of the new assets
- Subject to chronic overuse and rapid degradation.

It has become increasingly clear that new approaches (*Fig. 9*) need to consider much more than the provision of housing and physical services.

Fig. 9 Slum upgrading actions

Slum upgrading consists of physical, social, economic, organisational and environmental improvements undertaken cooperatively and locally among citizens, community groups, businesses and local authorities.

Actions include:

- installing or improving basic infrastructure - for example, water supply and storage, sanitation/waste collection, rehabilitation of circulation, storm drainage and flood prevention, electricity, security lighting and public telephones;
- removing or mitigating environmental hazards;
- providing incentives for community management and maintenance;
- constructing or rehabilitating community facilities, such as nurseries, health posts and community open space;
- regularising security of tenure;
- home improvement;
- relocating/compensating the small number of residents dislocated by the improvements;
- improving access to health care and education, as well as to social support programmes in order to address issues of security, violence, substance abuse etc.
- enhancing income-earning opportunities through training and micro-credit;
- building social capital and the institutional framework to sustain improvements.

Further Research**Website**

www.unhabitat.org - United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

Acknowledgements

This Factsheet was researched by Paul Guinness, a well-known author who works at Kings College School.

Curriculum Press, Bank House, 105 King Street, Wellington, TF1 1NU. Tel. 01952 271318.

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ISSN 1351-5136