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# A future that low-income urban dwellers want, and can help secure

by **DAVID SATTERTHWAITE** and **DIANA MITLIN**

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**March 2013**

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## 1. Introduction

The most important conclusion from our work is that in most urban contexts in the global South, poverty can only be reduced significantly when urban poor groups and their organizations can influence what is done by the local and national government agencies that are tasked to support them, and when they have the space to design and implement their own initiatives and then scale-up with government support. It is the learning from their own work and from each other and the demonstration to local government of what they can do that enables creative co-production with the state and larger-scale programmes to develop. And for the networks or federations of slum or shack dwellers or homeless people, co-production enables them to secure legitimacy and to gain more political influence, improved policies and a greater share of state resources.

This policy report looks forward at what international, national and local development agencies and governments can do to support urban poverty reduction. The Rio + 20 (UN Conference on Sustainable Development) in 2012 approved an outcome document entitled 'The Future We Want'<sup>1</sup>. We make the case that this has to be a future that urban poor groups want, and are allowed to articulate and develop themselves.

There are many initiatives that helped reduce one or more aspects of urban poverty (see boxes 1-3). Taken together, in all their diversity in what was done and who was involved, they show that progress is possible. They remind us of how much the innovation in this was catalysed and supported by community-driven processes. What is also notable is how many of these initiatives have received very limited support from international aid agencies and development banks. This suggests that there are institutional constraints on such international agencies and banks that limit their contribution to community-driven processes. What is equally notable is that national and local governments have offered limited support and have not always been constructive in their efforts; this all points to the critical contribution of the urban poor themselves. If they are not organized, able to represent themselves, articulate and negotiate for what makes sense in terms of contributions to their own efforts, then progressive development is unlikely to take place. But the limitations of purely local citizen contributions are also evident. If the urban poor are not organized at the city level, are not experienced in financial management and political negotiations, are not in structures that require them to think broadly rather than parochially and to be accountable to those they claim to represent, then development is likely to remain selective and exclusionary for at least some of those most in need.

It is difficult to draw general conclusions on what initiatives might be considered 'best practice' or even more modestly 'good practice' since so much of what was done was influenced by (and often limited by) the particulars of each location and its political economy. Professionals and researchers get excited by particular experiences that they think can be replicated – for instance, the community-driven upgrading programme in Thailand supported by the Community Organizations Development Institute – without recognizing the particular political circumstances and cultural factors that made it possible. But many of the initiatives that we draw on in this policy report share some 'good principles'. A first such principle is explicit provision for more voice for low-income groups and more voice at the city-scale, and usually also for supporting their active engagement in developing solutions (although in very different ways). Most initiatives are built on the power and ingenuity of grassroots

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.uncsd2012.org/content/documents/814UNCSD%20REPORT%20final%20revs.pdf>

organizations and their collective capacities.<sup>2</sup> Within this, most encouraged and supported the active engagement of women; for some, this was one of their defining features.

A second shared principle is that all recognized a need to change relationships between urban poor groups (or informal settlement residents) and local government, and many have developed this into co-production. All included a strong focus on local initiatives on housing, land tenure and basic services. All sought a larger scale and impact through a multiplicity of local initiatives with this multiplicity (and groups working on them) building to effect political change. For urban poor groups, changing relations with local government – and other state agencies – this requires strong collective autonomous organizations for the reasons explored in a forthcoming volume (Satterthwaite and Mitlin 2013).

Most initiatives included great care on how money was used, to make the money they could raise (through savings and direct community contributions) and other support negotiated from outside go further. Where possible, this used loans so the repayments allowed the funds to revolve. Working at any scale above the household requires collective financial capability from the neighbourhood level up; without this, local groups will not be able to participate meaningfully in the development projects and programmes that take place to address their poverty (Mitlin, Satterthwaite and Bartlett 2011).

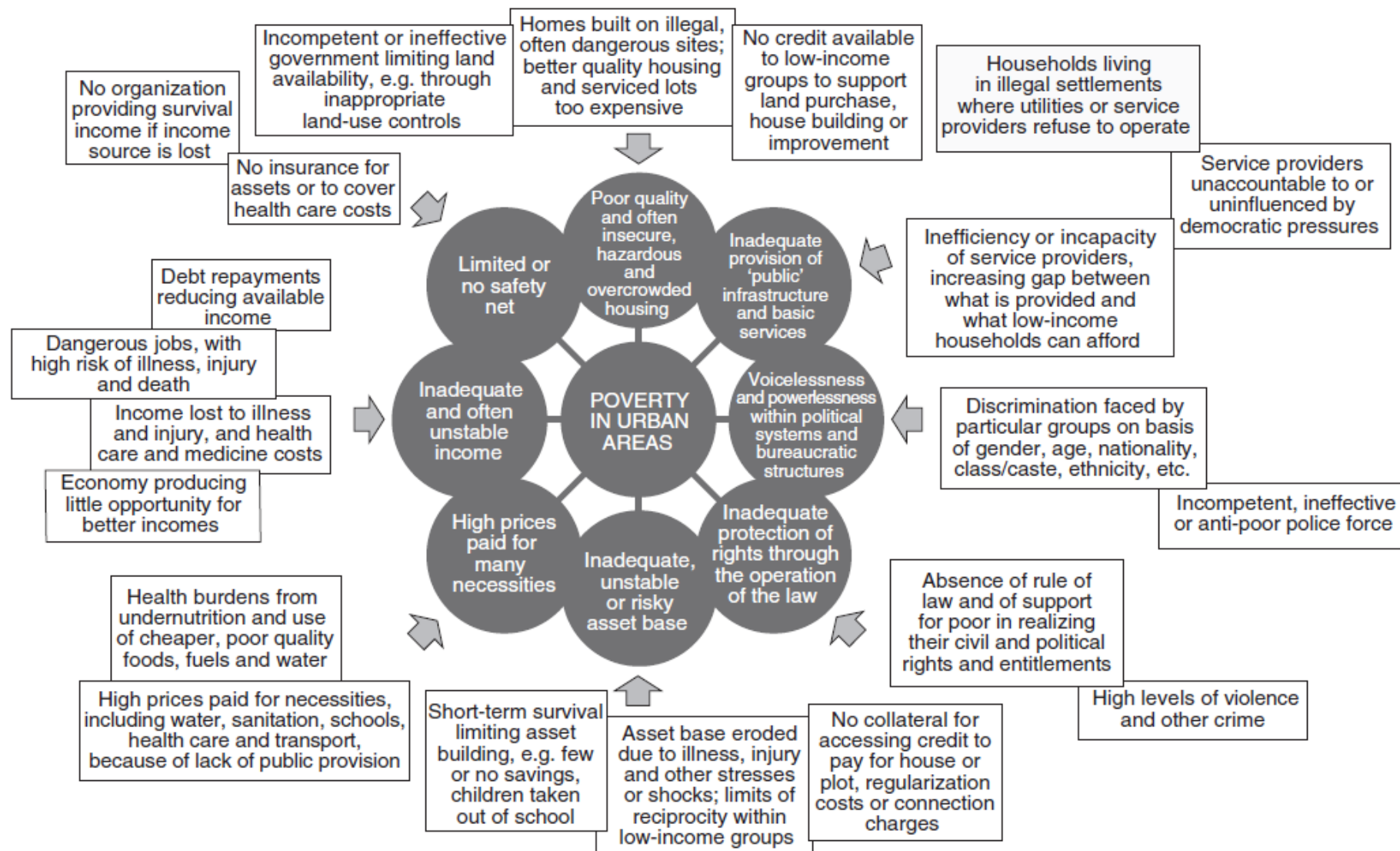
Mitlin and Satterthwaite (2012) identifies nine different deprivations associated with urban poverty; the figure listing these and highlighting some of their immediate causes is reproduced here (see Figure 1). We argue there that it is not possible to address these deprivations individually – effective programmes deal simultaneously with most if not all of them.

After reviewing what is being done (and not done) in regard to reducing urban poverty, we may need to add to the list of deprivations associated with urban poverty the lack of constructive relationships between urban poor groups and local government. Satterthwaite and Mitlin (2013) point to many examples of where the development of such a constructive relationship brought many benefits to low-income groups and also to the local government and to the city. To claim political voice is not enough – specific skills and capabilities are required. To be effective, urban poor groups need to be able to develop their own representative organizations and develop relationships with other such organizations and groups in their city. Such organizations need to be able to challenge the incapacity of professionals and politicians to come up with realistic solutions that meet needs and address urban poor groups' priorities at scale using available resources. Their political voice needs to be strong enough to challenge the institutional weaknesses of the bilateral aid agencies and multilateral development banks and their lack of support for effective urban poverty reduction. So here we have an expansion in our concern for urban poverty from seeing it as different aspects of material deprivation to also seeing it as the result of political and institutional inadequacies – at all scales, from small informal settlements and wards through municipalities to cities, metropolitan areas, states, national governments and international agencies

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<sup>2</sup> See the comment by John FC Turner on this - whose work, writing and teaching did so much to point to more effective ways of addressing housing issues for low-income groups (see in particular Turner 1976). He noted that few of the case studies said to be 'best practice' had the level of detail needed on procedural software or technical hardware to assess their applicability in different circumstances, let alone in different fields. 'Recognizing the differences between practices, tools and principles is a necessary if insufficient step toward understanding what is "best" or, at least, "better than" and, therefore, toward knowledge of common ground defined by particular values' (Turner 1996, page 199).

Figure 1: Deprivations associated with urban poverty and their immediate external causes



Source: Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 2012

### Box 1: ACHR and ACCA<sup>3</sup>

The Asian Coalition for Housing Rights was formed in the late 1980s during a period of considerable innovation in Asian civil society agencies working on urban development. In 1987 there was a decision by a global network of housing professionals and activists, the Habitat International Coalition, to set up regional groups. In Asia, there was already a network of people and organizations working in this area that knew about each other because of SELAVIP (the Latin American and Asian Low-Income Housing Service) and its six-monthly newsletter in which communities shared their experiences and built up a knowledge of organizations and individuals active in Asia.<sup>4</sup> The first meeting of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights took place in 1988. There was a joint agreement that the Coalition should be decentralized and bottom-up. The emphasis was on networking to support a diversity of city-based agencies, not on the creation of a further organization with its own programme and direction. The members of the Coalition included professional NGOs established and managed by architects or planners, faith-based agencies, a range of organizations within the 'Alinsky tradition'<sup>5</sup> of community organising, academics from university departments specializing in urban development and the built environment, and members from other traditions including credit unions. A small office was set up in Bangkok, Thailand, to house the secretariat for the regional network: this currently has three full-time and four-part time staff.

ACHR developed several work areas as its programme consolidated. Attention was given to housing rights and problems of evictions in Asian cities. Other work included the Training and Advisory Program (TAP) which facilitated cross-country learning, exchange visits, regional workshops, exposure to key regional projects, new country action programs and research. From 2000, ACHR's work represents a more mature process and a broader scale of intervention. This included the introduction of community savings and credit activities and the development of many community development funds that have influenced new forms of development in Cambodia, India, Laos, Mongolia, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. Regional responses to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami developed with the promotion of community-driven relief and rehabilitation.

In 2008, ACHR launched the Asian Coalition for Community Action (ACCA) to catalyse change in Asian cities for slum upgrading. ACCA enables community groups to be the primary doers in planning and implementing projects in which they tackle problems of land, infrastructure and housing. The core activities of the programme, which account for 60 per cent of the budget, are the small upgrading projects and larger housing projects that are being implemented in low-income communities by their residents. The plans for these projects, as well as the citywide surveying, saving and partnership-building processes they are part of, are developed and implemented by the local groups. The budget ceilings for the upgrading projects are very small (a maximum of US\$3000) but offer flexibility in how community organizations use those small resources to address what they choose. The expectation is that if communities plan well and use these funds strategically to link with other resources, then these modest amounts can unlock people's power to negotiate with other actors for more resources, more land, more support. For each city involved in ACCA, there is:

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<sup>3</sup> This box draws on: ACHR (1989, 1993, 2011a and 2011b), Boonyabanha and Mitlin (2012), Boonyabanha, Carcellar and Kerr (2012), and [www.achr.net](http://www.achr.net)

<sup>4</sup> This publication, *Selavip News*, is still being produced by Father Anzorena and widely circulated.

<sup>5</sup> Saul Alinsky was a labour movement organizer who developed a particular methodology for strengthening citizen groups to enable them to become empowered and challenge structural disadvantage. His tools and methods have been taken up by a number of groups around the work including those in Asia.



- US\$15,000 for at least five small upgrading projects, in five different communities in each city;
- US\$40,000 for one big housing project in each city, with a maximum of eight big projects per country;
- US\$3000 per city to cover a variety of joint development processes within the city, like surveying, network-building, support for savings, local exchanges and meetings;
- US\$10,000 per country per year for national coordination, meetings and exchanges.

The programme supports the setting up and strengthening of collaborative mechanisms to build linking, learning and mutual support structures. There are regional and national committees to link community groups, government officials and NGOs to work together to make decisions, learn, assess, advocate, build capacity and make policy. In most of the cities, some kind of joint working group has been established to provide a platform for community networks and other stakeholders to manage the upgrading and city development-fund process, to look at land issues, and to support change in the city. These city committees are seeking a new kind of partnership and participatory governance process, which is distinctive as it emerges from the development activities being undertaken in the informal settlements. Underpinning these committees are community networks that link low-income communities in the city, helping them to work together, support each other, pool their resources, learn from each other's initiatives, survey and map their settlements, strengthen their community finance systems, formulate their upgrading plans, negotiate collectively for land and for various other resources and changes, and plan joint activities in collaboration with other groups.

By October 2012, ACCA was supporting activities in close to 1000 settlements in 165 cities in 19 Asian countries. By August 2012, a total of 111 big projects had been approved with a budget of nearly US\$4 million. Funding approved for small projects totalled over US\$2 million. Community development funds have been established in 107 cities; 70 of these are cities in which fund establishment has been directly linked to ACCA investments. There are an additional 19 projects in eight countries for responding to disasters and helping communities respond effectively; US\$481,000 has been budgeted to address these needs.

The small projects both build community capability and increase the visibility of their collective potential. The small projects, placed in the public eye by the network, attract state interest and enable a negotiation between the network and state authorities to take place that results in a higher level of government contribution.

In 57 per cent of the big projects so far, the land has been provided by the government under a variety of tenure arrangements. These communities have been successful in negotiating further resources from the state. Analysing the budget shares, 4 per cent of funds have been provided by ACCA, 13 per cent from the communities themselves, 3 per cent from other sources (for example, Northern NGOs), and the remaining 80 per cent has been provided by government agencies including both local and national government.

One of ACCA's most important objectives is to develop new financial systems for low-income households that work well within the realities of their lives and that they can manage themselves. The most basic building block of a people's financial system is the community savings group, in which they build, use and manage their own resources. Community savings and credit is being practiced in 101 of the ACCA cities so far. Many city-level community development funds are emerging now, most seeded with capital from the ACCA project money. Local governments have contributed to 21 of these city funds, in eight countries.

By December 2010, in 91 cities (out of total 107) there was some kind of committee formalizing a city-community partnership. In many of the cities in Cambodia, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Laos, Nepal, the Philippines and Vietnam, the successful implementation of big ACCA projects has led local governments to initiate or agree to partner with community networks and their support NGOs to implement subsequent housing projects, and to link with other housing schemes and development projects in their cities.

Another way governments are contributing is by adjusting existing planning standards to make them more realistic, lower-cost and easier for the urban poor to develop housing which matches their needs. This is happening in several cities, but the most striking example is the city of Vinh in Vietnam, where the planning standards for redeveloping old social housing have been changed from an expensive, contractor-driven model to a people-driven model as a result of the ACCA project in Cua Nam Ward. In Laos, the government had never previously given land on a long-term lease to a low-income squatter community; the two big projects in Laos are the first cases of the government giving squatter communities long-term leases to the public land they already occupy to regularize their status. Other policy reforms have also been secured.

## **2. What is understood by urban poverty reduction?**

There is little disagreement about some aspects of poverty reduction – for instance, reducing hunger and deficiencies in the provision of some ‘basic services’ (such as schools and health care, water and sanitation) – although there are disagreements as to how best these are provided and paid for (and for water and sanitation what should be provided). There is also little disagreement that an important part of poverty reduction is reducing or removing the large preventable disease and injury burdens and premature death (for instance, for infants, children, youth and mothers). The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) can be seen as targeting a range of deprivations on which there is general agreement.

Then there is the priority given to economic growth that is still held up as critical to poverty reduction. There is general agreement that low- and middle-income nations need stronger, more successful economies, although disagreement on the extent to which (and the mechanisms by which) this reduces poverty. Mitlin and Satterthwaite (2012) noted the lack of evidence for income–benefits and other benefits among most of the urban poor from economic growth. In summary, the discussion concluded that economic growth is important, but its benefits are all too infrequently shared with those who need them most. Once again, organized, representative urban poor groups are needed to change this.

There is general agreement of the validity of addressing the deprivations associated with ‘living on poverty’ and, as the MDGs state, seeking ‘significant improvements’ in the lives of ‘slum dwellers’; although less agreement as to what this should entail and by whom. A large part of the health burden associated with poverty comes from very poor housing and living conditions, although this often appears to be forgotten (Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2012). For instance, the focus of external funding is often on addressing one or more particular diseases and not on addressing the housing and living conditions that underpin risks from these and from other diseases and injuries. There are nations and cities where serious attempts have been made to reduce the number of urban dwellers living in poverty (and the importance of comprehensive upgrading to this) but, in general, there are few national governments and international agencies that have seen this as a priority. Moreover when there are efforts to improve housing and basic services, these rarely include those with the lowest incomes (and the greatest needs). Such experiences highlight the difficulties in reaching those who are the most disadvantaged with sectoral interventions planned from above.

In much of this, the priorities and agency of 'the poor' or those facing deprivations that can be considered part of poverty are ignored. This can be seen in so many development frameworks that fail to engage them (and, in most, to engage with urban issues at all). It can be seen in the formulation of the MDGs too, and in the discussions underway on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

'Success' in poverty reduction is measured by changes in indicators chosen by, and measured by, 'experts' even though massive deficiencies and inaccuracies in the data to do so have long been evident (Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2012). Indicators such as the number of persons with less than a dollar a day (now usually adjusted to \$1.25) still get repeated (and used to apparently show a dramatic fall in the proportion of poor people) even though it is known to be a very inadequate indicator of whether someone has or does not have the income needed to avoid hunger and other deprivations. These are also used at the highest levels – for instance, in the background papers prepared for the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons appointed by the UN Secretary-General to advise him on the post-2015 process<sup>6</sup>. Applying the dollar a day poverty line (whether or not adjusted a little) shows that there is virtually no urban poverty in most low- and middle-income nations<sup>7</sup>. Set a poverty line unrealistically low and poverty can disappear.

In our recent volume (Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2012), we stress how much the scale and depth of urban poverty is under-estimated by this measure. Faulty data or inappropriate definitions also lead to large under-estimations for many other deprivations. The official UN figures on improvements in provision for water and sanitation are usually presented as if these showed increases in the proportion of people with their needs for water and sanitation being actually being met – when, again, in urban contexts, the indicators on who has 'improved' provision for water and sanitation are known to massively under-state the proportion with provision to a standard that cuts down health risks and ensures convenient and affordable access. For many nations, national indicators on access to schooling and health care seem at odds with the deficiencies documented on the ground in informal settlements.

The only data on housing conditions used to monitor the MDG target that seems to have global coverage (as there are statistics for most nations) is the number (or proportion) of urban dwellers living in 'slums'. But there are serious doubts as to the accuracy of these statistics for many nations. First, there are the criteria used for defining 'slum' households. A household is defined as a slum household if it lacks one or more of 'improved' water, 'improved' sanitation, durable housing or sufficient living area (UN Habitat 2012). But, as noted previously, a large proportion of households with 'improved' water or 'improved' sanitation still lack provision to a standard that meets health needs (or, for water, what is specified in the MDGs as sustainable access to safe drinking water). If there were the data available to apply a definition for who has provision for water and sanitation to a standard that cuts down health risks and ensures convenient and affordable access, the number of 'slum' dwellers would rise considerably in many nations.

Secondly, the 'slum population' statistics show very large drops in the proportion of urban dwellers living in 'slums' in some nations (see UN Habitat 2012) for which there is so little supporting evidence. For instance, the proportion of the urban population living in 'slums' in India is said to have fallen from 54.9 per cent in 1990 to 29.4 per cent in 2009 (UN Habitat 2012). For Bangladesh, the proportion is said to have fallen from 87.3 to 61.6 per cent in this same period. Where is the supporting evidence for this? Certainly, in India there was some (official and academic) bewilderment as to the accuracy or validity of these figures. It may be

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<sup>6</sup> See *Poverty by the Numbers*, Working Paper Series Drafted by the High Level Panel Secretariat, Prepared for London High Level Panel Meeting, November 1-2, 2012

<sup>7</sup> See the figures on this presented in Ravallion, Chen and Sangraula 2007.

that most of the apparent fall in the slum population was simply the result of a change in definitions – as a wider range of (inadequate) sanitation provision was classified as ‘improved’ (IFRC 2010). Thirdly, one can only wonder at the basis for the statistics on the proportion of the urban population living in ‘slum areas’ that are provided for many nations for 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2007 and 2009 – including nations for which there is little or no census data for the last 20–30 years.

The MDGs' desire to achieve quantitative targets and perhaps the desperate need for all the agencies involved in international development to show success mean that critical issues of quality are forgotten. What proportion of urban children, that according to official statistics are at primary schools, are at schools where the quality of teaching is poor, classroom sizes very large, the availability of basic books limited and teachers often do not turn up? What proportion of the population living in informal settlements are having to pay to send their children to cheap<sup>8</sup>, but usually very poor quality private schools because they cannot get them into government schools? What proportion of the urban population said to have access to health care services have to put up with poor quality services that can only be accessed with difficulties (and often long queues) and which often do not provide needed treatments?

Some discussions of urban poverty are extended to include some consideration of the rule of law. But this is generally seen in rather abstract discussions for nations rather than in the specifics of providing a just and effective rule of law including policing for low-income urban dwellers (especially those living in informal settlements) that also addresses issues such as the discrimination some or all of them face in access to services and employment<sup>9</sup>.

Research has recorded the low opinion of low-income residents with regard to formal institutions of law that have failed them on many occasions (see, for example, Perlman 2010 for Brazil and Piper and Africa 2011 for South Africa). Some discussions of poverty recognize a longer list of services to which low-income groups should have access, including emergency services (ambulance and fire services) and disaster risk management. Cash transfers that actually reach low-income households with small increments to their income have been effective at reducing hunger and some aspects of extreme poverty and, in some nations, at considerable scale too (see, for example, Levy 2006).

Some discussions of poverty include in their definition a lack of voice, although here too this rarely gets specific in the sense of the means by which low-income groups get more voice. For instance, in elections (large sections of the urban poor population may lack the documents or legal address needed to get on the voters' register) or in holding politicians to account and in demanding and getting better services from providers (obviously impossible if unconnected – you cannot hold the water or sanitation, utility or health care facility to account for poor services if you get no service).

In all this discussion of poverty reduction, the very people whose needs are the justification for international development assistance (and national ‘poverty reduction’ programmes) are almost never consulted. Aid agencies and development banks do not engage them in discussions of effective measures and priorities. Some national and local governments have done so, but these examples are rare. Whether or not a particular person or household is poor is defined by external experts. It is also ‘expert judgement’ that defines which particular

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<sup>8</sup> These may be cheap but they can still represent a significant proportion of the income of a low-income household. When visiting Kibera, the large informal settlement in Nairobi in 2010, we were shown a large private school and were told that it cost 100 shillings a month to send a child there. *The Economist* in an article about Kibera published in December 2012 reported on a better quality private school than the one we visited where the cost of a place was 7,500 shillings a year although the teacher interviewed also reported that they do not expel children who cannot afford to pay these fees (the Economist 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Although there are some exceptions (see for instance Roy *et al.* 2004; Moser 2004).

'needs' may or may not get addressed – and this may or may not be in ways that actually help urban poor groups avoid deprivation. How many of the poverty reduction strategies (and papers) have been published in the languages spoken by urban poor groups? How many of their 'civil society' consultations took the trouble to include representatives of urban poor groups and to listen to them and then work with them and act on what they said?

Another aspect of this is that development assistance so often comes tied to particular 'expert' views of what 'the poor' need – improved cooking stoves, micro-finance, eco-san toilets, immunization, mobile phones, advice on urban or peri-urban agriculture. This is not to say that these cannot be important contributors to reduced deprivation or better health. But what we have sought to highlight is a need to allow urban poor groups and their organizations and federations to define their priority needs, as outlined in the next section.

### **3. Another way to reduce urban poverty**

There is the potential for another kind of development assistance; an alternative approach that works with urban poor women and men and their organizations. One that is oriented to their needs and priorities because they can influence what is chosen as well as its design and implementation. One that is also accountable to them as well as to governments (and when they are involved, to international agencies). One, above all, that recognizes their knowledge, skills and agency. This involves 'expert' staff from local and national governments and international agencies engaging with them, listening to them and being influenced by what they hear. Seeking interventions that respond to their priorities and their observations of what works for them – and what serves them in getting more effective responses, especially from local governments. Satterthwaite and Mitlin (2012) describe some approaches that have sought to do this and presented an experience that collectively shows that there is another way to address urban poverty that does not involve massive sums (although the trunk infrastructure needed to ensure adequate provision for water, sanitation, drainage and road access may, because of very large backlogs).

There is evidence of the effectiveness of such an alternative approach to poverty reduction – interventions that have worked with urban poor women and men and supported wherever possible their productive engagement with local governments. We have both seen first-hand the competence and capacity of urban poor groups, especially those rooted in savings groups in which women dominate both as savers and savings group managers. Sitting with these savings groups in many different cities and nations as they plan some new collective measure, discuss visits to other savings groups that want to learn from their experience, reflect on how initiatives are going and what more needs to be done (and who will do it), examine who has particular needs that require new measures (for instance help with loan repayments). Plan and implement surveys and enumerations of informal settlements<sup>10</sup> (getting the data that really does serve planning for poverty reduction and that they own). Accompanying them on visits to key people in the local government to present their priorities and discuss how local government support can help address this. Seeing how new perspectives on almost all aspects of poverty reduction get raised by their comments and analyses. Also experiencing their generosity in their willingness to share their experiences with us and allow us to sit in on their discussions. Seeing also their humour and the rich cultures from which they come. Perhaps, above all, seeing how their own savings groups and the organizations and federations or networks of which these are part have allowed them to contribute more to addressing their collective needs and empowered them to do so.

It is difficult to envisage sustained poverty reduction in urban areas without sustained pressure from below from those who suffer poverty. But this raises the issue of how to build and then sustain this pressure in ways that get positive responses. Even the larger national

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<sup>10</sup> See the special issue on this topic in the April 2012 issue of *Environment and Urbanization*

federations of slum or shack dwellers recognize that they lack the political strength to actually secure the scale of resources that they need from local government and to persuade local government and other state agencies to adopt development solutions that work for them. So their strategy is to develop local precedents that address their needs – building new housing on land negotiated or sometimes purchased from local government, upgrading, community toilets, a detailed survey and mapping of informal settlements – and with which to engage local government. When they can take the city engineer or town planner or a local politician or civil servant to see what they have built or improved and then also produce a detailed costing to show how much has been done with limited resources, it helps change the way they are viewed by professionals and politicians. Meanwhile, the federations or networks are also encouraging other member groups to try out their own initiatives. All such initiatives provide learning opportunities for those engaged in them – and for other groups who visit them. They (and what they do) need to be seen as legitimate by politicians and civil servants. So what they are seeking in this is not just a positive response but a change in their relationships with the state: to be seen as legitimate citizens with the same rights as middle-income groups in formal settlements, but also to be continuously engaged in co-production with the state which means community influence in what is done and help in sustaining the federations and networks.

Here, there is a deliberate choice by most networks or federations of slum/shack dwellers to avoid contentious politics as they judge that this is a terrain that is disadvantageous to low-income groups. The networks or federations are certainly capable of contention where needed – for instance, where suddenly an informal settlement is marked for demolition. But this is a last resort because, from this point of confrontation, collaborative relations have to be rebuilt, negative stereotypes of the ‘urban rabble’ challenged, and new positive identities for the urban poor reinforced.

There is also a conscious choice to avoid being drawn into political parties. This may bring short-term disadvantages but it avoids their agendas being seen as associated with one party and thus only considered by one party. It also protects their bottom-up focus and horizontal structure; political parties demand loyalty upwards and so often want to control local organizations such as residents’ associations. As they get support from some local politicians or civil servants, so this draws in more resources – and if local government supports their work, this increases the scale and scope of what can be done. So it is building on self-help activities but in ways that develop their capabilities and their relationships with local governments. Women also find that this process works for them, providing openings for their skills and resources they can mobilize, addressing their needs and priorities and opening leadership positions for them.

There are many examples of how this multiplication of local initiatives and engagement with local government has produced changes on a more substantive scale – for districts or municipalities within cities and even at city government level too. This included examples of city governments supporting their city-wide strategies (for instance, in the mapping and enumerating of informal settlements) and institutions (for instance, the City Development Funds). It also included the ways in which the strong local initiatives link together and build networks or federations able to influence higher levels of government (for instance, metropolitan government, state/provincial government and national government).

Might not this process also produce city neighbourhoods that are more convivial and more equal? Where the limited resources available to local governments support collective priorities with, and through, strong local savings groups and through this also ensure women’s needs and priorities are fully included? That allows a constant process that addresses the multiple needs in informal settlements, and where each success encourages further action and collaboration? Where residents in each locality have the capacities to address particular local needs including the needs of the poorest or most vulnerable

individuals?

There are examples of initiatives undertaken by grassroots organizations that did not work very well. Sometimes, this is simply because local government was incapable of providing needed support. Sometimes it was because the grassroots organizations took on more than they could manage. Sometimes it was because of a particularly powerful and ruthless local community leader that would not give up or share power. There is also the need to be seen and recognized as a grassroots organization or movement. As co-production develops with local government, or as local government appreciates these organizations' capacities, they can begin to see them as contractors or NGOs and treat them as such. But given that these groups are the ones with the least resources, the lowest educational levels and the least influence on government, what they have achieved is remarkable.

The following sections look at what the international and national and local development organizations can contribute to these efforts.

**Box 2: Shack/Slum Dwellers International and affiliated federations of homeless and landless people<sup>11</sup>**

As Jane Weru, ex-director of Pamoja Trust and now director of the Akiba Mashinani Trust – a Kenyan capital investment fund for the Kenyan Homeless People's Federation, explained in 2006:

"The people in Shack/Slum Dwellers International, in the leadership of the federations and in the support organizations, are mainly people who are discontent. They are discontent with the current status quo. They are discontent or are very unhappy about evictions. They are people who feel very strongly that it is wrong for communities, whole families to live on the streets of Bombay or to live on the garbage dumps of Manila. They feel strong enough to do something about these things. But their discontent runs even deeper. They have looked around them, at the poverty-eradication strategies of state institutions, private-sector institutions, multilaterals and other donors. They have looked at the NGOs and the social movements from which they have come and they are unhappy with most of what they see."

It is this discontent that has become a catalyst for change, driving the formation and expansion of this alliance of people's organizations and NGOs that together are seeking new and different ways to end homelessness, landlessness and poverty. The network emerged to bring together and built the capacity of homeless and landless people's federations and the NGOs that support them with the understanding that existing strategies will not reach scale as they do not link to the people's efforts to improve their homes and neighbourhoods, and nurture pro-poor political relationships. But like many such initiatives it did not begin with a grand plan for a transnational network, but emerged from activities in a number of places.

The first bilateral contacts that led to the formation of Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI) came as informal-settlement dwellers in South Africa searched for practical approaches to address their lack of political inclusion and substantive development needs. As a result of their exposure to the work of *Mahila Milan* and the National Slum Dwellers Federation in India, the women living in South African informal settlements began to organize their own savings schemes. Back in 1991, the emerging savings schemes in South Africa had linked up with a group in Namibia. Here, savings schemes had been established in 1987 when the UN International Year of Shelter for the Homeless had provided the

<sup>11</sup> This box draws on Bolnick (1993 and 1996), Baumann, Bolnick and Mitlin (2004), Mitlin (2008), Mitlin, Satterthwaite and Bartlett (2011).

opportunity to establish a revolving fund for housing linked to an existing credit union. In the mid-1990s, the South African groups began exchanges with Zimbabwe which catalysed the establishment of savings schemes and then, in 1998, the formation of the Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation. In the same period, links between the Indian Alliance and the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (see below) stimulated an exploration of savings-based organising involving savings groups from the Philippines, Nepal, Cambodia and Thailand. Federations of savings schemes in informal settlements emerged in the first three of these countries.

By 1996, a decision was taken by Indian and South African community leaders to form SDI as a network of federations of the homeless and landless in towns and cities of Asia, Latin America and Africa. These federations bring together residents in informal settlements and those living informally in established areas, enabling them to identify and realise a range of strategies to address their needs and interests. These national federations link to small professional agencies or NGOs that provide them with support services.

The core form of organization within the slum/shack/homeless people's federations that formed SDI are savings schemes – local groups that draw together residents (mainly women) in low-income neighbourhoods to save, share their resources and strategize to address their collective needs. These local groups and the larger federations to which they belong are engaged in many community-driven initiatives to upgrade informal and squatter settlements, improving tenure security and offering residents new development opportunities. They may develop new housing that low-income households can afford, and install infrastructure and services (including water, sanitation and drainage). With most savers and savings-group managers being women, these groups help address the multiple forms of disadvantage, oppression and exploitation that they face.

The federations and their local organizations learn from and support each other at the neighbourhood, city, national and international scale. These have several key components that are summarised below:

- Community exchanges as representatives from different savings groups visit each other. These exchanges may be experiential (for example seeing how a savings group has negotiated for land), related to the development of specific skills, and/or with a political purpose by bringing politicians, officials and community members together for a visit to development activities in another community, city or country. Most of these exchanges and dialogues take place within cities or between cities within nations. But international exchanges have also been important.
- Community-managed enumerations, surveys and maps create the information base needed for mobilization, action and negotiation (Weru 2004, Patel et al. 2002, Karanja 2010, *Environment and Urbanization* 2012). Enumerations are in effect censuses – as each household is interviewed and data are collected on them and their needs, along with maps prepared to show all buildings and infrastructure. But the process of enumeration is much more than data collection. These enumerations are part of a mobilizing strategy, drawing in residents who want to participate in a locally managed identification and verification of their shacks and plot boundaries. Managing these processes strengthens existing savings groups and encourages new savings groups to form. Equally important is that once the findings are assessed, then local residents have the opportunity to set collective priorities through neighbourhood and settlement meetings.
- Projects that federation members take on to improve shelter options, including investment in tenure security and physical improvements, provide precedent-setting investments that can be scaled up. Through a set of specific activities related to



planning of land (often with some re-blocking to improve road access) and installation of services, and sometimes construction of dwellings, members of savings schemes illustrate how they can improve their neighbourhoods.

- The federations that are SDI affiliates seek a development partnership with government, especially local government. Affiliates recognize that large-scale programmes to secure tenure and provide services are not possible without government support. As most of the homes and settlements in which federation members live are illegal, such relationships are essential if security is to be achieved.

#### Strategic developments

Since SDI's inception in 1996, the network of federations that make up SDI has grown from the six founding members – Cambodia, India, Namibia, Nepal, South Africa and Thailand – to include Bolivia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka, Philippines and Brazil. Table 4.1 provides a summary of the growth of the network. Exchanges have taken place with groups in many other countries.

Fully-fledged federations exist in the following countries:

- **Asia:** India, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka
- **Africa:** Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe
- **Latin America:** Bolivia, Brazil.

Informal-settlement communities have formed savings groups in the following countries, although fully-fledged federations have yet to emerge:

- **Africa:** Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Liberia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Swaziland
- **Latin America:** Peru.

Countries exploring options to engage the SDI network as an affiliate include:

- **Africa:** Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo
- **Asia:** Indonesia, Pakistan, Thailand
- **Latin America:** Argentina.

Over time, and working with particular donors, the network of federations and support NGOs that form SDI secured access to donor funds that it is allowed to allocate itself (rather than being directed by the donors). This has had a profound impact on the network. Rapid growth in members and deepening of strategy were key results of the SDI board,<sup>12</sup> coordinators and the secretariat accessing the resources to enable the urban poor to make choices and learn from the results. These funds are now referred to as the Urban Poor Fund International (UPFI) and located in SDI's secretariat. The forerunner of the fund was initiated in 2001 as the International Urban Poor Fund and located within the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and at the SDI secretariat (for a discussion of the operation of the fund based at IIED, see Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2007). These monies

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<sup>12</sup> The board has ten members of which two are professionals.

supported new activities and functions within SDI, including discussions about the most effective strategies for Urban Poor Funds. More significantly, the grants have helped to support the growth of the network with an increasing number of affiliates and a deepening awareness of the contribution of network activities in adding value to local development. These funds have helped to support the emergence of a number of local funds.

The core SDI network involves over 16,000 savings groups with an average membership of 70 per group. Consistent saving is, for SDI, the most important indicator of membership. This is because their interest in engaging the lowest-income urban citizens means that total savings can be a misleading indicator. Activities include information gathering and exchanges to strengthen local savings schemes. Just over 200,000 households have secured formal tenure (either individual or collective) as a result of this work. However, these figures do not include families who have greater security but not formal ownership of the land. Across the network, there are 102 agreements with provincial or city authorities which establish a dialogue with a potential for a more equal relationships between the authorities and the communities.

#### **4. Universal access to good quality basic services**

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were set up to make governments and international agencies focus on some aspects of reducing poverty and meeting needs for some basic services such as water, sanitation and health care. But many of the MDG targets leave the job half done – halving the proportion of people who have inadequate incomes, suffer from hunger, unsafe water and inadequate sanitation between 1990 and 2015. The MDG target for achieving significant improvements in the lives of slum dwellers was for just 100 million, which is around 10 per cent of those in need when the target was set – and for reasons that remain unclear, this only has to be achieved by 2020, not 2015<sup>13</sup>.

Would the global leaders who set up the MDGs offer piped water to only one child in a family with two children? Or, if extending piped water to an informal settlement, offer it only to half the residents – so those who are to the left of the water mains get water and those to the right do not? Of course, with global targets, offering to reach only half those in need is less acute and less personal. It does not involve a parent selecting which of their children should get preference in access to water or sanitation. But the need for water and sanitation that is of good quality and not too costly is such that its absence means that many will die young or live with disease burdens that blight their lives and their development. In addition, a focus on halving the population without access to some service will generally mean that this focuses on reaching the easier-to-reach groups and not those most in need (see Waage et al 2010). So getting halfway to a target does not mean that half the investment and effort has been made. It also points to a politics in which the powerful decide who is included and who is not – and the consequences are an exclusionary culture in which some entitlements are legitimated and others are not.

So can we really set goals and targets that leave the job half done or less than half done? Shouldn't the target be universal access to water and sanitation that is safe, convenient and affordable — universal access to good quality, affordable health care and to safety nets that really do provide safety? Memories on this seem to be short. In the 1970s, within UN processes, governments formally committed to providing safe drinking water and sanitation to everyone by 1990 and even designated the 1980s as The International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade. There were other formal commitments made by governments to universal provision for education and health care in the 1970s too.

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<sup>13</sup> This section draws on ideas first developed in a blog by Diana Mitlin - <http://environmentandurbanization.org/real-issue-universal-access-affordable-basic-services>

The scale of the deficiencies in provision for water and sanitation in rural and urban areas is astonishing – despite all the promises, commitments and declarations made by governments and international agencies over four decades. In most sub-Saharan African nations and many Asian nations, less than a quarter of their urban populations have water piped to their premises (Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2012). Most cities in sub-Saharan Africa and many in Asia have no sewers and no covered storm drains. This includes many large cities with more than one million inhabitants. For many of the large cities that do have sewers and storm drains, these only serve 5–20 per cent of their population.

As global institutions and official development assistance agencies reflect on what should follow the MDGs, there is the opportunity to recognize this flaw. What is development if it does not involve the acceptance that every woman, man and child is able to secure the basic needs required for their good health? It is extraordinary that, in this age of prosperity, such basic values seem to have been forgotten. As the scale of the huge inequalities in housing conditions and access to basic services is documented and discussed among both government and development agency staff alike, surely a critical first step is a universal standard of basic provision: for safe, sufficient, accessible, affordable water; for accessible and affordable sanitation and drainage that reduces the risk of faecal contamination; for accessible, good quality health care and emergency services for all rural and urban dwellers? With such a commitment, the interventions described in Boxes 1–3 can be considerably more effective, sharing ideas, planning and implementing programmes at scale in ways that are able to bring lasting change.

## **5. How are low-income households going to access basic services if these are just another market opportunity?**

Almost all the conventional responses to urban poverty face the contradictions between the cost of what is needed, the funding required and the very limited capacity of low-income groups to pay<sup>14</sup>. But getting full cost recovery for any form of infrastructure or service from low-income households for which they choose to pay brings great advantages. The number of households reached is not limited by the lack of subsidy. It also avoids the need for external funding. The same is true for loan finance. The expansion and extension of good quality sewers and drains to which all households connect supported by the Orangi Pilot Project Research and Training Institute was permitted by the fact that unit costs were lowered to the point that the inhabitants of each lane could raise the funding this needed. The community toilets that Mahila Milan helped design and build and now manage have charges that seek to ensure everyone can afford to use them, while providing sufficient income to cover running and maintenance costs (the capital costs were covered by local authorities). The community savings groups formed by low-income groups (including those that are at the base of the national slum/shack dweller federations) are sustained because they do not need external subsidies to function. Many of the programmes described in Boxes 1–3 have included provision of small loans that are affordable and taken up by low-income households to help with improving or extending their homes. Loans have also been widely used within many of the initiatives supported by the Asian Coalition for Community Action (ACCA) so that loan repayments extend and expand what these can support – including funding for local or city-wide development funds.

There are also the services provided by utilities or entrepreneurs in informal settlements that get full cost recovery – and may even generate substantial profits. In settlements where few,

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<sup>14</sup> This draws on ideas first developed in a blog by Diana Mitlin on this topic – see <http://environmentandurbanization.org/basic-service-provision-shouldn%E2%80%99t-just-be-money-maker>

if any, households have toilets in their home, 'public' toilets can prove very profitable, especially if there is little competition. It is difficult to determine where and when these are valuable to low-income households and where they are exploitative. Perhaps many water kiosk operators or water vendors or enterprises providing toilets and washing facilities have aspects of both. Some families may be able to afford these services but, in other cases, families cannot afford to purchase on a sufficient scale and have to suffer the consequences. Certainly, the refusal of local government or private sector utilities to work in informal settlements mean many market opportunities for private provision for water, sanitation, health care, schools, solid waste collection – and often also for electricity and security.

In many cities, utilities and municipal authorities alike have come to realize that their interests are better served by a formalization of service delivery, irrespective of whether or not tenure security is offered. Utilities (whether public or private) are now providing piped water supplies and electricity to those living in informal settlements but charging prices that households struggle to meet – or cannot afford. Rather than 'accumulation by dispossession' (to use David Harvey's phrase) with the eviction of low-income residents from informal settlements to enable government officials and politicians (both legally and illegally) to make money from redeveloping their site, people are being integrated into the market for the benefit of the same elites. Of course, utilities should be managed in the interests of all citizens, with profits being spent on extending services and ensuring that basic services are provided to all, but there is a growing body of evidence from a range of cities that low-income households cannot afford these services (see Dagdeviren 2008 for a discussion of experience in Zambia).

These experiences suggest that some local authorities and utilities are increasingly seeing the public provision of services as income-generating - rather than being concerned to manage these services so as to improve household well-being and provide for the public good. Mitlin and Satterthwaite (2012) show the limitations to this approach. With these costs, such services are not affordable to the lowest-income households. As a result, these households still use surface water (shallow wells and water courses), they practice open defecation if there is no affordable alternative, and they risk the dangers of illegal electricity or manage without.

Entrepreneurs have long made money from investments in industries and commercial services. This system has provided increased opportunities for many. It has helped urban centres to grow strong and, in many cases, prosperous. In recent years, the informalization in labour markets has reduced risks and increased some of these profits. Growing informalization in both employment and housing means that not much of this income is spent on formally-produced goods and services. Service payments are a way in which the formal system 'captures' the incomes of people living and working informally. On the one hand, it is fair that people pay for services and most households want legal connections. But on the other, prices have to be affordable for most people most of the time. The interventions described in Boxes 1–3 have developed local organizations and institutionalised practices able to work with local government and utilities to reconcile some of these contradictions. There are no simple, easily replicable mechanisms but there are social processes that are able to test out solutions, improve their functioning and take them to scale.

## **6. Rethinking finance for development**

This policy report suggests that there are many examples of using finance in different ways and drawing it from different sources. This includes the money mobilised by informal savings groups and the many functions this has – providing loans, supporting group capacity to manage finance and initiate their own initiatives.

Box 1 described how the Asian Coalition for Community Action (ACCA) has provided small

grants to 950 community-initiatives to upgrade 'slums' or informal settlements in 165 cities in 19 nations, but with each community choosing what to do. It also supported all the initiatives in each city coming together to assess what they could do at the city-scale – and engage the city government. Additional funds were available as loans to support larger initiatives. In many cities, this not only supported grassroots organization-local government collaboration but also led to the development of a City Development Fund in which all the active community organizations have a stake by pooling financial resources and through which larger scale initiatives can get support. ACCA supported the setting up of 107 City Development Funds.

A report on the first two years explains the principle of “insufficiency”, because there is not enough development funding to “sufficiently” meet the needs of informal settlements:

"The US\$ 3,000 for small upgrading projects and the US\$ 40,000 for big housing projects that the ACCA programme offers community groups is pretty small money, but it is available money. It comes with very few strings attached and it's big enough to make it possible for communities to think big and to start doing something actual: the drainage line, the paved walkway, the first 50 new houses. It will not be sufficient to resolve all the needs or to reach everyone. But the idea isn't for communities to be too content with that small walkway they've just built, even though it may be a very big improvement. Even after the new walkway, the people in that community will still be living in conditions that are filled with all kinds of 'insufficiencies' – insufficient basic services, insufficient houses, insufficient land tenure security and insufficient money [...] the ACCA money is small but it goes to as many cities and groups as possible, where it generates more possibilities, builds more partnerships, unlocks more local resources and creates a much larger field of learning and a much larger pool of new strategies and unexpected outcomes." (ACHR 2011a, page 9)

For a civil society initiative, this was large – US\$11 million over four years. But this is very small in relation to the cost of most conventional donor-funded initiatives. And for an official aid agency or development bank to manage, this would have been their worst nightmare; imagine the staff and administration costs that would have been involved if each of the 950 initiatives had had to develop a conventional project proposal that had to go through all the stages needed for official approval? And what about the need to monitor and evaluate each of these initiatives? Furthermore, since many of the initiatives were loan-funded, what about the institutional costs of accepting and managing repayments in 19 different national currencies?

The same is true for the Urban Poor Fund International (see Box 2), which has supported over 100 initiatives that were chosen by, assessed by and implemented by grassroots organizations and federations. This, too, is small in comparison to conventional development assistance projects – some US\$17 million from 2002 to 2012. But it has supported a great range of initiatives in a great range of nations with many of these initiatives also leveraging substantial contributions from local governments. These also strengthened many federations with activities in over 400 cities and many small projects that have achieved full tenure for over 200,000 households and partial improvements for many more. Again, for any official development assistance agency, managing such a fund would be a nightmare. The key point here is how to get funding that serves on the ground development to the people and institutions that can use it well and be guided by and accountable to urban poor households? ACCA was possible because it could work with and through institutions in each nation and city. The upgrading programme supported by CODI described in Box 3 was possible because the funding was available to, and managed by, networks of grassroots organizations. The Urban Poor Fund International worked because each initiative that received funding was managed by their national and city federation.

These each show us a working finance system in which urban poor organizations have the power to decide what is funded with decisions made in this being accountable to them as well as to external funders. These also show the development of local or national funds which are also accountable to grassroots organizations. The model used by OPP-RTI on sanitation in informal settlements was different – but this was possible because the inhabitants of each lane where the sanitation was to be installed organized and helped manage the costing, the implementation and the funding. So the key issue is: where are the (mostly local) organizations on the ground that can make best use of money for poverty reduction in ways that are accountable to the urban poor, that bring in other funding sources (including the savings of urban poor groups) and that encourage and support collaboration with local authorities? The importance of the national federations or networks of slum and shack dwellers or homeless people and the local NGOs that support them is precisely that they provide this. And with their national organization, can also push for supportive national changes.

### **Box 3: UCDO, CODI and Baan Mankong<sup>15</sup>**

In Thailand, the failure of economic growth to reduce inequality was evident by the early 1990s. The government responded with a willingness to address the needs of the urban poor living in informal settlements, with the goal of securing more inclusive development. Drawing on earlier experience across Asia, the Urban Community Development Office (UCDO) was set up in 1992 to provide an integrated response to the needs of the urban poor, with funding windows for community strengthening, housing investment and livelihood activities.

The Thai government recognised the successes of the UCDO and in 2002 the Community Organization Development Institute (CODI) was established to continue and extend this work. While the UCDO had been located within the National Housing Authority, CODI's separate legal standing as an independent public organization provided it with greater possibilities (being able, for instance, to apply to the government budget for funds), greater flexibility, wider linkages and new possibilities for supporting collaboration between urban and rural groups. The emphasis on supporting community-managed savings and loan groups and community networks extended to 30,000 rural community organizations, and many community networks that CODI supports include both rural and urban community organizations. CODI recognized that for pro-poor development to take place, relations between low-income groups and the state had to change; critical to that change was the establishment of representative accountable local organizations. From the outset, CODI sought to bring together different interest groups, with senior government staff, academics and community representatives sitting on its board.

To further support urban poverty reduction, the government introduced *Baan Mankong* (secure housing) – a national programme for upgrading and securing tenure in January 2003. Recognising the work of CODI in strengthening local organizations, reducing poverty and addressing inequality, *Baan Mankong* was passed to CODI for implementation. The *Baan Mankong* programme channels government funds in the form of infrastructure subsidies and housing loans direct to low-income communities, which plan and carry out improvements to their housing environment and basic services. Infrastructure subsidies of 25,000 Thai baht (US\$625) per family are available for communities upgrading in situ, US\$1125 for re-blocking and US\$1625 for relocating. Families can draw on low-interest loans from either CODI or banks for housing, and there is a grant equal to 5 per cent of the total infrastructure subsidy to help fund the management costs for the local organization or

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<sup>15</sup> See Boonyabanha, 1999, 2005 and 2009.

network.

*Baan Mankong* was set up to support processes designed and managed by low-income households and their community organizations and networks. These communities and networks work with local governments, professionals, universities and NGOs in their city to survey all low-income communities, and then plan an upgrading programme to improve conditions for all these within three to four years. Once the plans have been finalized, CODI channels the infrastructure subsidies and housing loans directly to the communities. These upgrading programmes build on the community-managed programmes that CODI and its predecessor UCDO have supported since 1992, and on people's capacity to manage their own needs collectively. They also build on what slum communities have already developed, recognizing the large investments that communities have already made in their homes. Upgrading existing settlements is supported whenever possible; if relocation is necessary, a site is sought close by to minimize the economic and social costs to households. The programme imposes as few conditions as possible, in order to give communities, networks and stakeholders in each city the freedom to design their own programme. The challenge is to support upgrading in ways that allow urban poor communities to lead the process and generate local partnerships, so that the whole city contributes to the solution.

By 2000, when UCDO's work was integrated into CODI, 950 community savings groups had been established and supported in 53 of Thailand's 75 provinces; housing loans and technical support had been provided to 47 housing projects involving 6400 households; grants for small improvements in infrastructure and living conditions had been provided in 796 communities, benefiting 68,208 families; and more than 100 community networks had been set up. More than US\$25 million had been provided in loans, and more than half the loans had already been repaid in full. Informal estimates suggest that assets of some US\$70,000 had been generated by the projects. The special fund to help savings groups facing financial difficulties had helped many communities and community networks to manage their debts and continue their development activities.

Between its beginning in 2003 and July 2012, within the *Baan Mankong* programme, CODI approved 874 projects in 1637 communities (some projects cover more than one community), spread across some 286 urban centres and covering 91,805 households. Sixty-one per cent of beneficiaries belong to communities that were upgraded in situ with a secure long-term collective tenure. Ten per cent of the beneficiaries relocated to new sites within two kilometres of their former homes. Those communities that moved to public land negotiated long-term collective leases; the ones that moved to private land purchased it at prices they negotiated with CODI with loans made to the community cooperative. By 2012 the total number of households reached by the programme had grown to more than 25 per cent of the numbers that *Baan Mankong* targeted, but they still represented less than 20 per cent of the 600,000 families in need within towns and cities in Thailand. During the same period, grants for infrastructure upgrading and associated technical assistance and capacity building exceeded US\$147 million; and loans for land and housing exceeded US\$181 million. Nearly 80 per cent of households supported by CODI are now living in settlements that have also achieved tenure security, via long-term leases or collective land ownership.

CODI has provided an example of how governments can support an integrated approach to poverty reduction with the simultaneous building of community organizations, informal settlement upgrading, housing and income generation. The model has been important in illustrating a partnership approach with community organizations having a major role in both implementation and decision-making. The emphasis on citywide approaches that seek alliances between middle-class and lower-income residents demonstrate how to pre-empt some of the more exclusionary urban politics that have been seen in other cities. They have demonstrated the contribution of multiple community networks collaborating together to promote pro-poor urban change. While the government remains of primary importance in

terms of loan capital and subsidy finance, from 2010 the networks established their own savings-based loan funds following delays in recapitalization by the government and anxieties about the reliability of continued political support.

## **7. Is this a new paradigm for development funding?**

Perhaps it is too early to suggest that this shows a new trend or (to use a much over-used word) even a new paradigm in development. It has certain features shared with other initiatives. First, it makes funding available direct to low-income groups. But many forms of social protection now do this at the household level. Second, unlike social protection initiatives that provide income-supplements to individuals, it funds collective initiatives chosen by grassroots organizations. In so doing, it encourages them to plan and act collectively and, as noted previously, to bring this to the city-level and engage local governments. Collective action helps to ensure that the urban poor are strong enough to challenge and overcome more powerful groups who do not act in the interests of all urban citizens. Then to go further in setting up city or national funds that can continue, widen and increase support for community initiatives. The Urban Poor Fund International that has supported hundreds of community-initiatives and where the use of funding is determined by agreements made by federations of slum or shack dwellers also has these two features<sup>16</sup>. Such funds are not alternatives to social protection – rather they are a complementary mechanism designed to improve tenure security, access to basic infrastructure and services, and enhance political voice. They address components of urban poverty that are untouched by conventional approaches to social protection and welfare provision.

### **7.1 Can aid agencies and development banks support this?**

Official aid agencies and development banks were not set up to work directly with low-income communities. They were set up to work with and fund national governments. Aid agencies have to be accountable to the government that funds them (and beyond this to the voters who put the government into office). Multilateral development banks such as the World Bank and the Asian, African and Inter-American Development Banks have to be accountable to the governments that sit on their boards, especially those that provide them with funding. These funding agencies have no direct accountability to low-income groups, although these groups' unfulfilled needs are what justify their work and the funding they get. Initially, it was assumed that international funding agencies would support national (recipient) governments to address these unfulfilled needs. It was also hoped that this would support stronger economies that, in turn, would also help address unfulfilled needs through increased incomes and larger government capacity to provide the basics: secure housing, water, sanitation, health care, schools, rule of law and provision for voice.

But this has not happened for a large, and in many nations, growing number of people (Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2012). Around one-in-seven of the world's population lives in informal settlements in urban areas. In the absence of support from governments, aid agencies and development banks, individuals, households and communities have had to manage themselves. City economies would collapse without their labour and informal enterprise activities, yet city governments often ignore them or see them only as a problem. Most aid agencies have also ignored them. There has been some progress where and when low-income urban households and their own organizations and federations had some political influence – as in several Latin American nations when they returned to or strengthened democracies with political changes that included city governments that were more accountable and better funded.

This provides us with a reminder that to be sustained, pro-poor policies and practices at

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<sup>16</sup> See <http://www.sdinet.org/> for more details.



national and local levels need urban poor groups to be organized. In many nations, there are now urban poor organizations and federations that actually want to work with local governments and that bring their own knowledge and capacities that are so valuable in actually reducing urban poverty. These are also bringing the knowledge and capacities of women into these initiatives and, in so doing, supporting their empowerment.

If large, centralized aid agencies and development banks cannot work direct with urban poor groups and their community organizations, can they learn to work with and through intermediary institutions that are on the ground in each city and that finance, work with and are accountable to urban poor groups? As in the city development funds and the national funds organized and managed by the slum/shack/homeless people's federations? Are development assistance agencies prepared to give up sole control of the decisions and work in collaboration with these slum/shack/homeless networks and federations to reach those most in need, at scale with integrated programmes that bring effective development to the urban poor?

## **8. Will the agenda of slum and shack dwellers ever get considered?**

### **8.1 Global discussions and urban poverty**

Many discussions are now underway on the development framework that will replace the MDGs post-2015. As mentioned earlier, this includes a 'High-level Panel of Eminent Persons' appointed by the UN Secretary-General to advise him on the post-2015 process. There are the many UN agencies involved in developing thematic papers for the post-2015 discussions. There are also the international discussions on sustainable development goals coming out of Rio+20 (the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012) seeking to re-invigorate a concern for local and global environmental issues within development. There are also the evolving discussions on aid effectiveness within a 'High-Level Forum'. This is generating lots of discussion and material. But in all these discussions, so little attention is given to the local – to local contexts, to local government, to local organizations of urban poor groups and other local civil society groups, to local finance, to local resources, to the local data needed to inform action, to the accountability of national governments and international agencies to the residents of each locality. In addition, so little attention is given to urban populations.

Looking at the make-up of the 26 persons who form the High-Level Panel, most are working for (or used to work for) national governments - including former or current ministers, prime ministers and presidents. Several are working in, or have worked in, the large official development assistance agencies. Two represent private enterprises. The Panel is said to include 'representatives of governments, the private sector, academia, civil society and youth, with the appropriate geographical and gender balance'<sup>17</sup>. But no-one on the panel is a representative of the urban poor and their organizations and federations. Only one is from local government. Where are the grassroots leaders and the local NGOs and local governments they work with who really have contributed to meeting many development and environmental goals within their localities?

### **8.2 Development in urban areas depends on local institutions**

Almost all development interventions in urban areas are local in the sense that they depend on local institutions: for water, sanitation, electricity, piped gas (where this is available), solid-waste collection, schools, street cleaning, day-care centres, playgrounds and public spaces, health-care clinics, emergency services, public transport systems, policing and bank

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.un.org/sg/management/pdf/ToRpost2015.pdf>

branches et cetera. These may be government agencies, private sector enterprises or civil society organizations or a combination of these (including co-production). Where some of these fall under the responsibility of national or state/provincial governments, their realization relies on local offices of national governments or collaborative arrangements between national agencies and local governments. So it is the performance of local (state, civil society and sometimes private sector) institutions that is so critical for meeting MDGs and most other development or environment goals.

There is a very considerable diversity between nations in the allocation of responsibility for the goods and services mentioned above between different levels of government; and, of course, in the form of local government. But in almost all nations, local government has a significant role in this provision. Wherever living standards are high, local governments have a major role in this achievement, often the primary role. This can be seen in the wide range of responsibilities they have for provision, maintenance and, where needed, expansion of infrastructure and services that usually includes provision for water, sanitation, drainage, streets, emergency services, parks and public spaces. Their responsibilities often extend to health-care services and schools and many include social protection measures (although usually with national government). They have key roles in ensuring health and safety – for instance, through building standards, land-use planning and management as well as environmental, occupational and public health services<sup>18</sup>. They usually have key roles in disaster prevention and preparedness (UN ISDR 2012). All in all, local governments can have a major influence on performance towards meeting most of the MDGs and their targets. Good local governance is also central to democratic participation, civic dialogue, economic success and facilitating outcomes that enrich the quality of life of residents (Shah 2006). For most sectoral policies, policy, standards and oversight are often national responsibilities, while actual provision and administration are local. As Nigeria's National Planning Commission noted, 'Without state and local governments, federal programmes alone would amount to attempting to clap with one hand' (Nigerian National Planning Commission 2004, page vii). In many nations where urban poverty has been reduced, it is the increased competence, capacity and accountability of local governments that have contributed much to this – and to meeting many of the MDG targets.

National governments and international agencies are only as effective as the local institutions through which they implement their policies and programmes. Even where interventions are the responsibility of national ministries, or infrastructure or services delivered through private enterprises or international NGOs, their effectiveness usually depends on local government support, coordination and oversight; and effective local government usually depends on representative organizations of the urban poor, able to manage the local politics and ensure that scarce resources are not used in ways that perpetuate exclusion, disadvantage and inequity. In the past, these local representative organizations have been missing. But what has changed is that these groups are now in place in many towns and cities in the global South; and, in many of these, they have established collaborative relations with local government.

The UN system and the official aid agencies and development banks fail so routinely to support the contributions of local governments and local civil society organizations (including representative organizations of the urban poor) or even to acknowledge them as stakeholders. If low-income urban dwellers are considered in their discussions (and usually they are not), they are simply targets to be reached – or, occasionally with their leaders, invited to official conferences to legitimize the agenda of the organizing agencies.

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<sup>18</sup> For most of these, responsibilities are shared with national government or different aspects of the responsibilities divided – for instance as national government sets regulations and standards and local government enforces them.

### **8.3 Who will address international goals and targets?**

Discussions on the post-2015 framework for development need to pay more attention to who has to act to meet goals and targets and how they are to be resourced and supported. Here, local government and local civil society have great importance.

The MDGs are very clear about what they want to achieve but say very little about who needs to act to meet the goals. Goals and targets are constructed by 'experts' who seem to give little thought to who needs resourcing to ensure these goals and targets are met. The MDG agenda is a set of technical, sectoral and macroeconomic undertakings that overlook the very local and integrated nature of social transformation (Vandermoortele 2011). Most of its goals are allocated to one sectoral ministry or agency with a technical fix rather than building local competence and capacity to address goals together. Waage and colleagues note the need to avoid goals that are 'compartmentalised into responsibilities of different line ministries nationally, sub-nationally, and locally, which means that the potential for simultaneous actions in the same location, working with the same communities and households, is unlikely' (Waage et al. 2010, page 999).

The people whose needs are meant to be addressed are, at best, passive recipients to be targeted. There is no mention of their roles or their rights to set targets and get supported to address these. Nowhere is there any recognition of the agency and capacities of grassroots groups to address the goals themselves. Yet we know from experience that these groups are often the most effective agents for their own development, that they can catalyse action from others, and that this agency is essential for these targets to be met. Perhaps more to the point, their political influence is needed to make sure that local governments also address the targets.

### **8.4 Can international frameworks support local pro-poor agendas?**

Despite the key role of local institutions in implementing and 'localizing', internationally agreed development and environmental agendas remain under-recognized and under-supported. Those who are discussing and determining the post-2015 agenda tend to be at a vast distance from local realities. When they talk about 'localizing' the MDGs, they mean at national level, not within local government or civil society. When they discuss good governance, they refer to the activities of national governments, not the vital relationships between citizens and their local administrations. When they measure progress, they use nationally representative datasets, relying on aggregate data to demonstrate success, but failing to reveal who is being left out and where they live.

In the 20 'thematic think pieces' compiled by experts from among the Task Team members – mostly UN agencies – there is so little discussion of local institutions, even in papers that discuss issues that depend on local institutions such as health, disasters, inequalities, employment and governance. There is also no mention of local governments in many of these and other papers discussing the Post-2015 Development Agenda. So it is not surprising that many national governments fail to take local organizations seriously in addressing the MDGs.

Local governments may also determine whether citizens have access to entitlements provided by national government. Especially in urban areas, where so many residents live in informal settlements, a lack of documentation (for instance, a legal address) may prevent them from getting on the voter register, getting basic services, getting their children into a school, or gaining access to government-supported health care. Local authorities may be reluctant to provide these to those living in informal settlements because they feel that this encourages the development of even more such settlements. Or high density settlements and narrow lanes may simply make it inconvenient to provide those living in such

settlements with services like piped water or waste removal. Access to these services determines whether many of the MDG targets are met for urban populations.

### **8.5 Lack of attention to urban areas and their low-income residents**

Most local governments in urban areas have failed to ensure provision of even minimum basic services and tenure security to much of their population. But this type of exclusionary partial politics is not inevitable (Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2012). The programme interventions that we introduce here have found the tools and mechanisms that enable local communities to challenge outcomes and find new and more collaborative approaches (see also Satterthwaite and Mitlin 2013). As partnerships are built and new more effective modes of urban development are identified, then improving conditions in informal settlements is possible at the city-wide scale. But just as effective local government requires strong citizen groups able to hold local politicians to account and assist with the planning and implementation of improvements, it also requires finance and supportive policy frameworks at the national level.

If we review all the papers and discussions that are part of the post-2015 processes, there is an astonishing lack of attention to urban poverty. Urban issues are not even mentioned in most of the UN-led thematic papers. Where they are mentioned, it is mainly in the context of urbanization and economic growth. Many of the MDG targets and indicators are designed for rural contexts and so under-report the scale of deprivation in urban areas. Most documents do not get the implications for poverty of living in informal settlements: insecurity, lack of services, lack of access to entitlements, high infant, child and maternal mortality rates et cetera. There is also the lack of attention to urban poverty among most aid agencies. Perhaps this is changing; there seems to be more discussion of urban poverty now including more conferences and seminars and more institutions developing urban programmes (in part because there is or may be more funding here). But how much does this involve the urban poor?

Take one example<sup>19</sup>. The 6th World Urban Forum was held in Naples in September 2012. Its theme was The Urban Future. Organized by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat), it included this UN agency's official programme for over 150 'networking' and other events organized mostly by international NGOs and academic institutions. One innovation that UN Habitat has pioneered within the UN system is supporting a strong focus on the importance of local governments. This is never easy in that all UN agencies are accountable to national governments who may not support the policies and practices of some local governments. But in the official events, many of the speakers were city mayors, along with representatives from national governments and international funding agencies, academics and a few NGOs.

What was absent from almost all the official events in this Urban Forum was any representation of the networks and federations of slum or shack dwellers. It is as if they have no role in defining the urban future. One possible excuse could be that they were not present (although this would raise the issue as to why they were not invited and supported to come). But there were plenty of representatives and leaders of national federations or networks of slum/shack dwellers from many nations taking part in the side events that external agencies were allowed to organize, even though there had been no UN support to get them there. And perhaps surprisingly, these side events often included presentations, not only by federation leaders but also by local government or national government staff that work with them. So in a session on alternatives to evictions organized by Shack/Slum Dwellers International, the

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<sup>19</sup> This draws on ideas first developed in a blog by David Satterthwaite - <http://environmentandurbanization.org/6th-world-urban-forum-will-agenda-slum-and-shack-dwellers-ever-get-considered>

Mayor of Iloilo in the Philippines (Jed Patrick Mabilog) talked about the importance of his government's partnership with the Philippines Homeless People's Federation, which was then confirmed by Sonia Fadrigo of the Philippines Federation. The Mayor of Harare (Muchadei Masunda) spoke of his commitment to stopping evictions and the value of the partnership between the city government and the Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation and its supporting NGO, Dialogue on Shelter. This was confirmed by Davious Muvindi from the Zimbabwe Federation. A session on city-wide upgrading organized by the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights included short presentations by many community leaders and local government politicians and civil servants about their partnerships. What was notable about this presentation was the scale of the city-wide upgrading initiatives all over Asia, driven by community organization and action.

It is amazing that after decades of discussion on participation and permitting 'voice' to urban poor groups, very large forums and conferences on urban issues can still be organized without engaging the urban poor – even as these events are justified by their apparent importance for addressing the needs of the urban poor. Anyone who actually listened to the presentations of these and other federation members and leaders during the World Urban Forum were reminded of how clear they are about their needs and priorities and the challenges they face in getting these addressed; but also how often these differ from our assumptions about their needs. The Mayor of Iloilo ensures that there are representatives of the Philippines Homeless People's Federation on key committees within his Government including those allocating funds and those determining infrastructure priorities. Why weren't representatives of urban poor organizations, federations and networks on the committees that organized this and previous World Urban Forums? Why are the powerful global institutions that are now developing a Post-2015 Development Agenda so reluctant to engage the urban poor direct? The formulation of the MDGs did not consult them; if it had, it would have had a much more ambitious and relevant target for improving conditions in slums.

The preparations for the Post-2015 Development Agenda will probably forget to involve the representative organizations of slum dwellers – as in the Eminent Persons panel. Those that set up this panel probably think that because there are one or two representatives from NGOs these represent 'the poor'. Or it will assume that their priorities get represented by other professional groups (experts). This has to change. As Adnan Aliani from UN ESCAP commented at the 2012 World Urban Forum, in so many countries it is no longer an issue of people needing to participate in government programmes, it is an issue of government learning to participate in and support people's programmes.

## **8.6 Urban poverty reduction and climate change**

This policy report has not reviewed the contribution to urban poverty reduction of climate change adaptation, although Mitlin and Satterthwaite (2012) include a discussion of the potential contribution to poverty of different direct and indirect impacts of climate change. Human-induced climate change will certainly increase risks to large sections of the urban poor and continue increasing risks until global warming stops. Hundreds of millions of low-income urban dwellers who are so at risk now from extreme weather, sea-level rise and disruptions to food and water supplies will see these and other risks increase. The global discussions on this are still so far from producing the agreement needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and avoid dangerous climate change. In addition, the scale and scope of international funding for poverty reduction will be influenced by the large and probably increasing share of development assistance (or other forms of financial aid) that will be allocated to climate change adaptation, or compensation for climate change impacts (what is now termed 'loss and damage'). Will funding for climate change adaptation contribute to reducing risks and vulnerabilities among urban poor groups (including those living in informal settlements that governments regard as illegal)? Or might it even contribute

to increasing poverty as adaptation measures displace them from their homes and livelihoods? Table 1 (below) outlines the implications for climate change adaptation and mitigation of different approaches to poverty reduction in urban areas.

Will the relations between low-income households, their associations and local government be strong enough to withstand the difficulties of more intense or more frequent storms, flooding, landslides and heatwaves in informal settlements? Will their residents be fully involved in determining the best course of action – for instance, upgrade in situ or relocate? Will the programmes to relocate those living on sites most at risk allow those being moved the influence they need on choosing relocation sites, organizing and managing the move and developing the new settlements? Or do we face increasing tensions, conflict and even violence as residents and local governments struggle to cope? Where more powerful groups get adaptation that serves them (or they move)? And where predictions of areas at risk are found to be wrong and there is loss and repeated relocation?

But this review cannot assess the implications for urban poverty reduction of climate change adaptation in the global South because, as yet, there are too few experiences to consider. There can be powerful synergies between reducing everyday environmental risks faced by low-income groups (with major contributions to poverty reduction), reducing disaster risk (with major contributions to poverty reduction) and building resilience to climate change impacts. Here, there is the potential for climate change adaptation to contribute to poverty reduction and often to mitigation too. But this is unlikely to happen unless urban poor groups have political influence and good working relationships with local governments. Almost all the poverty reduction measures introduced by the agencies whose work is described here will also help build the resilience of urban poor groups to climate change. It is also unlikely to happen unless the international funds for climate change adaptation can learn to support and work with urban poor groups and local governments; and, if they cannot, at least to support the local funds that can. Of course, as we learn more about the specifics of what risks are changing in each location, so development and disaster risk reduction can adjust to these. But it is households who no longer face the deprivations in basic infrastructure and services that are generally far more resilient to climate change.

**Table 1: Approaches to poverty reduction in urban areas in the Global South and their implications for climate change adaptation and mitigation**

Approach to urban poverty reduction	Direct impacts	Indirect impacts	Issues	Implications for adaptation	Implications for greenhouse gas emissions
1: Economic growth	More employment or income-earning opportunities/higher incomes for some	Rising incomes and more people with adequate incomes increasing demand for services and generating more taxes and other revenues	Government facilitating this & removing barriers for private enterprise success; less “success” in poverty reduction than often hoped for; impact exaggerated by inappropriate measures of poverty. More difficult for external agencies to successfully support enhanced livelihoods in urban areas?	May allow those whose incomes rise to adapt but of itself, does not address risk (e.g. build risk reducing infrastructure) or increase resilience of urban areas	If successful, rising per capita GHGs from expanded production and consumption. Possibilities for combining mitigation and adaptation e.g. recycling groups, densification of urban centres.
2: Pro-poor/inclusive economic growth	Minor adjustments to the above that are meant to help ensure fall in poverty. May include support to informal sector and financial services that meet urban poor’s needs. May include urban management efforts to improve provision of energy, transport and other basic services for economic growth and/or basic needs.				
3: “Meeting basic needs” - tenure, provision for water, sanitation, drainage, health care, schools, electricity...	If done well, e.g. in effective ‘slum’ upgrading, reduces many aspects of poverty. Usually state-led but some successful examples of community-led and larger local government-community organization partnerships.	Can produce major health and time benefits; can support more successful household enterprises (as provision for water, electricity, roads... improve)	Success depends on capacity and competence of (local) government and relations with urban poor; also on whether this resolves difficult issues e.g. tenure, good quality well-maintained infrastructure and services	Most of this should reduce disaster and climate change risk. Climate change adaptation can be integrated into this	If successful, some minor increases in GHGs from larger, better quality buildings and infrastructure. Improved public transport may lower emissions, especially with densification.

4: Support for Housing	Assists households to get safe, secure homes with infrastructure & services	Improved social status. Perhaps more secure incomes	Relatively expensive; incremental housing cheaper but may contravene regulations. Housing units supported may go to non-poor	Depends on quality of housing and chosen site	Depends on housing design, construction quality & if attention is given to energy efficiency
5: Social protection, safety nets, measures for food security	Providing or subsidizing food or particular services or funds (e.g. conditional cash transfers) for 'poor'	Can produce significant improvements in nutritional status and health	Needs effective government structures to be able to reach 'the poor'?	Provides some low-income groups with some aspects of increased resilience but does not address large gaps in protective infrastructure	If successful, increases in consumption of lowest-income groups but scale of increase has very small implications for GHG growth; shifts to cleaner fuels may reducing GHGs from energy use. Very considerable possibilities for employment generation for urban centres that seriously address mitigation (and adaptation)
6: Livelihoods and household assets	Microfinance and market access for small scale/informal enterprises	Often needs change in attitude by government on informal economy	Many urban poor dependent on wage labour that provides very poor returns and not served by this.		
7: Rights based approaches	May address lack of rights but problems related to realization of rights often remain	May lead to improved access to basic services, and/or improved security	Assumes a strong legal process that works for low-income groups (often not there)	This can combine poverty reduction with risk reduction from	
8: Urban poor led initiatives – voice, services, tenure, rule of law ...often supported by social movements	Many different kinds of urban poor led initiatives have reduced many aspects of poverty. In some nations, this has produced more competent pro-poor local governments	Organizations of the urban poor with more capacity to negotiate and act	Limits in scale and scope if government is hostile to urban poor.	disasters/climate change but scale and scope depends on supportive local governments and national government finances, and may also require support from external funders.	
9: Urban poor groups working as federations with local government	As above but scale/scope of what can be done increasing considerably. Urban poor's direct involvement improves state policies and programmes and improves access to tenure and basic services	Empowered local groups & their federations to negotiate other benefits e.g. community-police partnerships for policing informal settlements	Poverty reduction agenda widens as urban poor organizations develop partnerships with local governments e.g. city-wide surveys and maps of settlements at risk to help prioritize and support action		



## 9. MDGs, post-MDGs and development assistance in an urbanizing world

Here are eight points for development assistance agencies to consider, if they really want to reduce urban poverty:

**1: Don't just set targets, be clear about how they can be met and by whom.** The MDGs and their various targets are clear about what they want to achieve (and by when) but say nothing about how. They don't set out who is responsible and capable of meeting the targets and who needs their capacity to act enhanced. Most goals and targets will not be met unless grassroots organizations and their federations and networks, as well as local governments and the agendas they develop together, are supported.

**2: Go back to universal targets** that include universal provision for: safe, sufficient water (which in urban areas is measured by the proportion of households with regular supplies of treated water piped to their premises); sanitation (which in urban areas is measured by the proportion of households with good quality toilets in their home or immediate neighbourhood); primary health care, schools and emergency services accessible to all (with more attention paid to ensuring good quality provision).

**3:** When considering financial support for the achievement of goals, **consider where finance is needed, available to whom and accountable to whom.** There is a danger that the post-MDG discussions just generate a new list of goals without considering the financial and other mechanisms that are needed by local government and civil society to support their achievement. There is a need for local financial institutions in each urban centre that work with and are accountable to urban poor groups. There are already many of these functioning from which to learn. The federations and networks of slum/shack/homeless people's organizations and the local governments that work with them are critical allies in this.

**4: Have indicators that actually match goals and targets.** Measurements are needed to assess whether targets are met. But some of the indicators being used to measure progress on MDG achievements are flawed for urban areas: the dollar-a-day poverty line (and its adjustment to \$1.25 a day at 2005 prices), the statistics on provision for water and sanitation and on slum populations. If poverty lines were set in each nation at levels that match the costs of food and non-food essentials and adjusted for where such costs are particularly high (for instance, in larger and more prosperous cities) it is very unlikely that the poverty reduction target has been met – or will be met by 2015. This would also produce a very different picture of global trends in poverty.

**5: Support local processes to generate the data needed for setting priorities and benchmarks and monitoring progress.** This means radically changing the very basis for generating data – no longer relying on national sample surveys that provide so little useful data for local actors about where needs are concentrated. There is also a need to consider how to provide data on some key qualitative issues: the extent to which there is a constructive relationship between urban poor groups and local governments, what constrains the development of representative organizations of the urban poor, and the availability of funds to support the work of grassroots organizations.

**6: Encourage and support local governments and civil society organizations to develop their own goals and targets and to recognize their roles and responsibilities within the post-2015 development process.** Agenda 21 coming out of the UN Earth Summit in 1992 had a short section on Local Agenda 21s. This is one of the few times that the key role of local governments in meeting environment and development goals was recognized. Perhaps surprisingly, the agenda for change coming out of Rio + 20 is one of the only examples of global discussions on development and environment that actually takes

local governments' roles seriously.

**7: Avoid vague and ambiguous statements.** Sadly, a commitment to sustainable development means nothing today unless it specifies what is meant. The term sustainable development is used to mean so many different things including even sustainable economic growth. The term 'sustainable urbanization' has also come to be widely used, but it is not clear what this seeks to sustain (and even less clear what it hopes to develop). What is needed is for the term 'sustainable development' to be used to highlight the two priorities emphasized by the Brundtland Commission in 1987: meeting the needs of the present (i.e. ending poverty) without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

**8: And what about climate change?** Somehow the issue of climate change got left out of the MDGs and their targets. Oddly enough, building resilience in urban areas to the impacts of climate change is dependent on points 1 and 2; this needs local competence and capacity, partnerships between those most at risk and local governments and basic infrastructure and services reaching everyone. It also requires finance systems that support on the ground knowledge and capacity to act (points 3 and 5).

Some of the discussions around the post-2015 Development Agenda are titled 'The Future We Want'. It would be nice if it actually was the future that those who currently suffer hunger and other forms of deprivation want.

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