



Engaging with the urban poor and their organizations for poverty reduction and urban governance

An issues paper for the United Nations Development Programme

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1: Introduction

There is a hugely important poverty reduction process in urban areas that is rarely noticed by international agencies and hardly ever documented – the successes of particular urban poor groups in what they do and in how they negotiate change in their relationship with local government agencies. Of course, this change in the relations between urban poor groups and city and municipal governments means change in these governments too. A proportion of these successes have proved to be catalysts for change that get larger impacts. Many urban poor groups have undertaken initiatives as ways to show local government their capabilities. The basis for the change in their relations with local government comes as they show local government the neighbourhoods they upgrade or the houses or community toilets they design and build that work much better than those undertaken by local government. Or they demonstrate their role in recovering and re-using waste which also reduces the volume of wastes that local authorities have to collect. In the immediate term, these initiatives have considerable importance for the achievement of several of the MDG targets – especially on halving the proportion of people without safe water and basic sanitation (by 2015) and significant improvements in the lives of at least 100 million “slum” dwellers² (by 2020). They also have importance for reducing under-five and maternal mortality rates, both of which are often particularly high among low-income urban dwellers. In the longer term, they have importance in driving the changes needed in local governance – increasing the capacity and accountability of local governments (as local governments learn to work with and not against the urban poor in their jurisdiction).

The underpinnings for many of these initiatives are organizations formed by the urban poor around their livelihoods (for instance organizations of waste pickers and recyclers, street vendors and home workers) and their homes (for instance organizations of slum/shack dwellers or homeless people). In many nations, these local organizations have joined together to form city-wide and then national federations or networks. The work of these organizations, federations and networks also extend to education, health care and welfare – and, of course, to issues of governance. What these do and achieve encourages other member groups to act and to join them. As this paper will describe, collectively these groups and their networks and federations have gone beyond successful local initiatives to influence city-level developments and some have even influenced national government policies.

This paper is primarily about the initiatives of organizations formed by the urban poor themselves and the potential these have as partners for UNDP offices. This includes the work of grassroots organizations formed around savings groups, mostly managed by women and in which most savers are women. This paper has a particular interest in how the scale and scope of what they do and what they can influence has been increased by the city-wide and national federations that they have formed, and the local NGOs that support them. There are now national federations of these savings groups (usually called federations of “slum”³ or shack dwellers or homeless people) in seventeen nations. In many more nations, there are savings groups that are forming their own networks and federations. These networks and federations negotiate support from a wide range of local professionals as they engage with the state to address their needs.

The paper also describes the work of other organizations and federations formed by urban poor groups around their livelihoods – for instance by waste pickers and processors, home-workers, domestic workers and self-employed women and local organizations that support them. For instance, in Brazil, what began as local and city waste picker organizations developed into a

national movement formed of 300 waste picker associations and cooperatives.⁴ In South Africa, waste pickers are beginning to organize, forming their own organizations, associations, cooperatives, unions and micro-enterprises at municipal level and developing a national association.⁵ There is a growing number of national organizations and networks of home-based workers.⁶ These include the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India which began as a local trade union for women workers who work from home or as hawkers, vendors or manual workers and now has 1,3 million members and provides a large range of services to members.⁷ In several countries, there are national unions of domestic workers or unions that include such workers.⁸

Many of these organizations and federations have developed links with similar organizations and federations in other nations and have formed international networks – through which they learn from each other and where possible help each other. For instance, the national federations of slum/shack/homeless people and the local NGOs that work with them have formed Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI)⁹ In Asia, two international networks represent domestic and home workers – the Asian Domestic Workers Network and HomeNet Asia, a network of 600 organizations representing over 300,000 home-based workers¹⁰ In Latin America, there is the Latin American Waste Picker Network and the Latin American and Caribbean Confederation of Household Workers. There are also global networks for waste pickers, domestic workers and street vendors, supported by Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) which is a network that includes membership based organizations of informal workers, researchers and professionals from development agencies.

In the sections that follow this introduction, the paper considers the scale and nature of urban poverty, it then describes the many poverty reduction initiatives undertaken by grassroots organizations and their growing scale and importance – and their capacity to work with local government. Then it describes some of the tools and methods used to support partnerships between these organizations and local government and the local NGOs or other organizations that have supported this. This includes working with local governments on enumerating and mapping informal settlements and in identifying and acting on disaster risks. Then it discusses the financial mechanisms that can support these urban poor organizations with illustrations of how international funders have done so, over the last ten years, including the experience of the Urban Poor Fund International and the Asian Coalition for Community Action. It ends with a discussion of the mechanisms by which these are or can be supported and how these would prove valuable and effective partners for UNDP in-country offices, if they were interested in addressing urban poverty.

2: The challenges facing the urban poor

Table 1 summarizes estimates for the scale of urban poverty. Urban poverty can be seen (and measured) through inadequacies in consumption levels (for instance in food intake), income levels (and thus in capacities to afford food and non-food needs), housing and living conditions and access to social services. The statistical base for all four of these is limited and incomplete. But there is little doubt that at least a billion urban dwellers have incomes too low to allow food and non-food needs to be met¹¹ and live in poor quality, overcrowded accommodation most of which lacks adequate provision for water, sanitation and drainage.¹² A high proportion of this accommodation is in what are often termed 'informal settlements' in which the land is occupied or developed illegally. This usually means a lack of basic services and infrastructure (including health care services and schools, policing and social protection). It is common for 30 to 60 percent of the population of cities in low and middle-income nations to live in such informal settlements and also with incomes derived from informal employment. It is also common for

many of these informal settlements to be on dangerous sites – for instance sites that are regularly flooded or are on unstable slopes or industrial areas with high levels of pollution – because the high level of risk in these sites makes them unattractive to developers.

Table 1: Estimates for the scale of different aspects of urban poverty in low- and middle-income nations

Type of poverty	Numbers of urban dwellers affected	Notes
Inadequate income in relation to the cost of food and non-food basic needs	800-1,200 million	No accurate figures are available on this and the total varies, depending on the criteria used to set the poverty line (the “income-level” required for “basic needs”).
Inadequate or no provision for safe, sufficient water and sanitation	More than 680 million for water and 850 million or more for sanitation	These estimates are for 2000 and are drawn from a detailed global UN review of individual city / urban studies; ¹³ they have probably increased considerably since then.
Hunger	500 million+?	In many Asian and sub-Saharan African nations, 25-40% of urban children are underweight and/or under height. In many nations, more than half the urban population suffers from food-energy deficiency including India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. ¹⁴
Living in housing that is overcrowded, insecure and/or of poor quality and often at risk of forced eviction	c. 1 billion	Based on a 2003 global UN review of the number and proportion of people living in “slums” ¹⁵ with an allowance for the increase in number since then.
Homelessness (i.e. living on the street or sleeping in open or public places)	c. 100 million	UN estimate. There are also large numbers of people living on temporary sites (for instance construction workers and often their families living on construction sites) that are close to homeless.
Lack of access to health care, education and social protection; also to emergency services	Hundreds of millions?	No global estimates but many case studies of informal settlements show the lack of provision for these. Access to these may require a legal address which those living in informal settlements lack.
Absence of the rule of law	Hundreds of millions?	No global estimates on this but in a high proportion of informal settlements, there is little or no policing. The absence of the rule of law may show up in high levels of violence and high murder rates.
Lack of voice	Hundreds of millions?	No global estimates but getting on the voter’s register often depends on having a legal address and/or documentation that most urban poor groups do not have. There are also many nations where even if those in informal settlements can vote, this has not provided the ‘voice’ needed to get their needs and priority concerns addressed.

Many aspects of poverty reflect exclusion from government processes, whether within a democratic or authoritarian state. In some cases, such exclusion is related to the fact that the residents of informal urban settlements may not be entitled to be on the electoral roll, as they lack a legal address or the required documentation. But the core problems are more substantive. As an outcome of the deficiencies in provision for essential urban investments and services,

clientelist relations between politicians and local communities are commonplace. Such relations may deliver some public investments or services that partly address needs – for instance communal water taps may be installed, and concrete pathways provided, but such investments do little to address the scale of need. The outcomes of these relations do not provide long-term comprehensive investment because clientelism is based on managing resource scarcity in the interests of the political elite and, in some cases, government officials. Moreover, the vertical relations embedded within clientelism reinforce a sense of dependency and social inferiority, and are often associated with threats and violence.

However, organizing and mobilizing by community organizations and federations is a critical part of building the basis for more productive and less vertical relations with politicians and civil servants. As this paper describes, where local governments respond positively, the scale and depth of what can be achieved in poverty reduction increases – and there are many potential areas of support that UNDP could provide to contribute to this – in effect to better urban governance. Experiences show that engaging with the informal sector in urban areas can also strengthen local governance. Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that engaging with the urban poor and their organisations has the potential to strengthen democracy and human rights. For instance, public discussions on challenges facing the urban poor – whether on environmental issues such as land and water degradation, waste, disaster risk reduction, housing and land rights – can serve as useful entry points to raising rights awareness and improving democratic processes, by applying a human rights-based approach to concrete lived realities.¹⁶

3: Poverty reduction initiatives below the radar of agencies and academics

In the informal settlements or other settlements in which low-income groups concentrate – for instance tenement districts or cheap boarding houses - there are many local initiatives by groups of residents or workers to address their own needs and get a better working relationship with local government. These are generally too local to get the attention of academics or support of international NGOs or aid agencies. While these are rarely documented, they hold a number of valuable lessons that can be applied / adapted to different contexts. They include:

- The success of the women pavement dwellers in Mumbai in getting the government to accept that pavement dwellers have ‘addresses’ and also the right to a ration card (which allows them to get basic foodstuffs and fuel at lower prices).
- The urban poor groups displaced by floods in Iloilo (Philippines) getting the local government to work with them in rebuilding and planning for this and who are actively participating in the Urban Poor Office within the city council.¹⁷
- The success of some cooperatives of waste pickers in different cities in Brazil that have negotiated contracts with city government and changes in waste management practices that benefit them, the environment and the city.¹⁸
- The changes in official land-plot sizes and infrastructure standards in Namibia achieved by women’s savings groups formed by those living in informal settlements that lowered the cost of land plots for housing, allowing more low-income groups to avoid illegal settlements. These benefits have been multiplied as the government allows the national fund of the savings schemes to distribute low-income housing loans to their members facilitating shelter development.¹⁹
- The success of women’s savings groups from the informal settlements in Mumbai and Pune in getting a partnership with the police to set up police stations in ‘slums’ where police staff were accountable to local populations and where community organizations were formed to work with them and establish law and order.²⁰

- The success of an upgrading scheme in an informal settlement in Nairobi in getting the landlords there to agree to re-block in which there was provision for tenants too.²¹
- The success in Malawi and in Zimbabwe of groups of homeless women in negotiating land for housing from the government and then building good quality housing.²²

4: Savings groups and their achievements

Most of the above was achieved by organizations formed by “slum”/shack dwellers (mostly women-led savings groups) that were members of larger city-wide or national federations. Table 2 gives more details of the larger federations. And as important as what they achieved was what they demonstrated to local governments in regard to their capacities. For instance, in Malawi and Zimbabwe, over 3,000 land plots have been made available to women-led savings groups that are members of the Malawi and the Zimbabwe Homeless People’s Federations. In the Philippines, the support to the urban poor groups displaced by the flooding by the municipal government in Iloilo (also supported by the Homeless People’s Federation of the Philippines) has attracted the interest of other municipalities (although this is also in part because the Philippines Federation is innovating in other sectors and other cities).²³ In Thailand, the long tradition of community-savings groups formed by residents in informal settlements provided the basis for a national programme of support for these groups in designing and managing upgrading schemes.²⁴

Table 2: Examples of the scale of the savings and work programmes of some of the urban poor federations that are members of SDI

	Date ^(a)	Number of cities with a process ^(b)	Active savers ^(c)	Savings (US\$) ^(d)	Houses built	Tenure secured (number of families)
INDIA	1986	57	130,000	1,2 million	6,000 ^(e)	80,000
SOUTH AFRICA	1991	45	21,927	491,652	13,500	15,000
NAMIBIA ^(f)	1992	84	19,168	1,69 million	2,272	4,554
PHILIPPINES	1994	15	25,901	2,81 million	1,759	4,500
ZIMBABWE ^(f)	1995	53	42,665	324,000	966	14,450
NEPAL	1998		15,694	110,000	283	26,000
SRI LANKA	1998	24	52,735	5,03 million	63	93
KENYA	2000	11	61,000	1,13 million	120	25,000
ZAMBIA	2002	28	45,000	131,000	95	95
GHANA ^(f)	2003	5	12,663	227,000	31	6,500
UGANDA	2003	6	21,880	184,000	5	300
MALAWI	2004	28	9,745	178,000	757	3,076
BRAZIL	2004	4	771	16,162	–	7,000
TANZANIA	2004	6	5,878	105,000	10	500
SWAZILAND	2005	2	200	–	–	–
BOLIVIA ^(f)	2010	2	103	1,850	–	–
SIERRA LEONE	2008	2	1,492	9,788	–	–

a. The year in which significant savings scheme activity began; this may pre-date the year when the federation was established.

b. Within any city, there will be a number of settlements where grassroots activities are taking place to build collective capacity and catalyse grassroots-led development.

c. The second indicator of scale – the number of people who save regularly.

d. Local currency values converted to US\$; includes daily savings and Urban Poor Fund savings.

e. A further 30,000 households in India have obtained new housing not constructed by the federations.

f. Updated in February 2011 for Bolivia, Ghana, Namibia and Zimbabwe.

More details of the work of all these federations can be obtained from the SDI website: <http://www.sdinet.org/>.

The women-led grassroots savings groups and the larger ‘slum’/shack/homeless people’s federations they form are unusual in that from the outset they seek to work with local government as well as actively engaging in initiatives to address their needs.²⁵ So as well as upgrading their homes and informal settlements, securing land tenure or new land on which housing can be built, developing new housing that is more affordable and improving provision for infrastructure and services (including water, sanitation and policing), they also seek partnerships with local governments. What they can achieve working independent of government is limited. For this reason, they have built up relations with government agencies to support processes of co-production, or the joint delivery of secure tenure, infrastructure, services and – in some cases – housing improvements. In some cases, these initiatives have also involved state and central governments.

The federations that are members of Shack/Slum Dwellers International use methodologies that incorporate five processes of co-production between state and civil society:

- Surveys, enumerations and planning undertaken in informal settlements primarily by their residents, supported by experienced federation members from other settlements, local authority staff and professionals from support NGOs.
- Design of improved infrastructure and services with local federation groups frequently beginning this work themselves, and then drawing in local authority staff to support larger scale initiatives and negotiate more appropriate regulations and standards.
- Installation of basic services and infrastructure with component sharing – for example where the local authority provides the water or drainage connections to the settlement’s boundary and the community take responsibility for the connections within the settlement.
- Planning for scaling up initiatives to take good ideas from one settlement and replicate them in many more – and ultimately to the level of the city.
- Reflection and learning to examine what has been achieved and build the lessons into future developments (this includes community to community exchanges as described below).

All the more established federations listed in Table 2 have had some collaboration with government and most have succeeded in developing partnerships with some local governments. Many have managed to negotiate some land for housing free or at a low price and this allowed them to demonstrate their capacity to build – although the land allocations they negotiate are never on a scale to address the needs of all their members. Many have undertaken city-wide surveys of informal settlements that then allow dialogue with local governments over planning for city-wide upgrading and, where needed, resettlement. Most have initiatives underway for upgrading or for developing new housing supported by local government – including in India,²⁶ South Africa²⁷, Thailand²⁸, Namibia²⁹, Malawi³⁰, Kenya³¹, the Philippines³² and Zimbabwe.³³ Over 150,000 families within these federations secured tenure between 1993 and 2008 and upgrading in the form of housing and infrastructure improvements have taken place in most such settlements.³⁴

What gives the grassroots groups their organization and their capacity to act are savings groups.³⁵ The foundations of these federations are community-based savings groups in which most savers and most savings-managers are women. So most of the federations are made up of hundreds (or in some nations thousands) of savings groups. For such group, savings scheme

members or potential savers are visited every day by the savings group manager. Savers can put small sums (including any spare change they have) into their savings account and most members do so every three or four days. This daily visit of the savings group manager means that the members have the opportunity to save whenever they can. These savings form a pool of money on which members can draw. Many savings groups also provide emergency and income-generation loans to their members. These can be accessed quickly and easily, from the daily visits to all savers by the savings group manager. As savings group members work together to gather and manage their funds, they increase their financial management skills and build trust between each other. Over time, as they meet often, they talk about their problems and their needs. Together they begin to think about how they can address larger issues of housing and basic services.³⁶

The savings groups also give their members the confidence to voice their perspectives (usually women's perspectives) in community-level discussions and with the community leaders. The persistent and sustained savings process is also evidence of community capacity to manage money and make resources circulate and this helps increase their influence and capacity to leverage support and resources from other groups.

These savings schemes form the federations and the federations are strengthened as their member savings schemes visit other savings groups or the residents of other informal settlements who are thinking of forming savings groups in their own city. The savings group managers also visit savings groups in other nations or grassroots groups that are interested in the Federations' experiences. These exchanges catalyse an attitude of "can do" – on each visit they see what others like themselves have accomplished and they have a chance to talk about their own experiences. As more savings groups form in the informal settlements of any city, so the federation of these savings groups provides the possibility of a city-level partner for local government. These federations have demonstrated a capacity to undertake city-wide surveys of informal settlements that include detailed profiles of each settlement and maps. They have also shown their capacity to do detailed household enumerations of every household in informal settlements that can then form the information base needed for upgrading and infrastructure and service provision.³⁷ These are both very valuable for any local government wishing to improve conditions in informal settlements. These have been done in a wide range of nations and cities.

5: Community mappings of settlements

Most of the federations have undertaken what are in effect censuses of informal settlements with detailed data collected for each household and building and detailed maps. These help build better relations with local governments and provide the information base needed for upgrading informal settlements. To give one example, the Kenyan Homeless People's Federation (*Muongano wa Wanvijiji*) organized the enumeration of all informal settlements in the city of Kisumu, Kenya's third largest city.³⁸ The federation had already undertaken enumerations in many informal settlements in Nairobi – and they had been supported by a local NGO and by visits from other national federations who had experience in undertaking these enumerations.³⁹ The enumerations collected data from each household, numbered each structure and providing photo identity cards to each household. It also included the preparation of detailed maps, defining the boundaries of all house structures along with features of the site, with the level of accuracy and detail needed for upgrading and providing secure tenure. Enumerations were conducted in all the informal settlements identified in Kisumu and covered 72,433 households.

The enumerators had a very different relationship with the inhabitants when compared to data gathered by the municipality or external agencies. First, it was the women active in savings

groups within the settlements that collected most of the data, so households interviewed knew their interviewer. Second, there were numerous community meetings to explain why the enumeration was being done. So these avoided the problem of community resistance to enumerators and uncertainty about its purpose. Thirdly, the data collected from households was returned to them and to local savings groups to check. Finally, the data from the enumeration helped inform the residents of each settlement about their needs, and supported their collective discussions about priorities. When residents want to discuss with local authorities the provision for needed infrastructure or services, having detailed maps and the data about each household and house plot makes it much easier for the local government to act and to see the residents as partners.⁴⁰

These enumerations and mapping processes are also being used to identify settlements and groups particularly at risk from extreme weather. For instance, in the city of Cuttack in India, *Mahila Milan* (the federation of savings groups formed by women living in informal settlements or on the streets) and the National Slum Dwellers Federation have completed a city-wide survey covering over 300 informal settlements to support a city-wide programme for informal settlements. With the support of SPARC and a local NGO, the federation groups also prepared digital maps and a GIS with details of informal settlements for the whole city and this has proved particularly useful for local government.⁴¹

Another example of federation-government partnerships is the setting up of “police panchayats” in informal settlements in Mumbai. In most informal settlements, there is little or no police presence and no police station. Discussions with those who live in informal settlements highlight how the police are often reluctant to act on any complaint brought to them by a resident of an informal settlement and often reluctant to go into informal settlements. The police in Pune and Mumbai (India) have a partnership with two federations who work together – the National Slum Dwellers Federation and *Mahila Milan* to provide police services in the informal settlements.⁴² Each police panchayat is made up of ten representatives from the settlement (seven women, three men) and a local police officer. The community also makes available a room in each settlement for the police so there is a police presence in their settlement and the inhabitants know the police officer that is responsible for policing in their settlement. The members of the police panchayats help patrol the settlement to maintain law and order. They also seek to resolve disputes before they escalate into violence or other crimes. There are over 60 police panchayats active in Mumbai – but their expansion to cover all informal settlements needs the support of the police in each area and not all police force personnel are supportive of this model. Police officers and representatives of grassroots federations from Tanzania, Kenya and Zimbabwe have come to visit the police panchayats in Mumbai. Tanzania has begun to adopt the Police Panchayat process for Dar es Salaam.

6: Urban homeless and disaster risk reduction

Some of the federations have developed disaster risk reduction programmes with local governments and other local actors.⁴³ One example of this is the work of the Philippines Homeless People’s Federation with local governments.⁴⁴ This federation is made up of 161 urban poor community associations and savings groups with more than 70,000 members from eighteen cities and fifteen municipalities. Federation members are engaged in many initiatives to secure land tenure, build or improve homes and increase economic opportunities, working wherever possible with local governments. It has also been working in locations impacted by disasters, building community-capacity to take action to meet immediate and long-term needs. Drawing from this experience, it is also developing initiatives for risk reduction as it identifies at-risk communities in cities and municipalities and supports the design and implementation of

risk reduction. Here as in earlier examples, city-wide enumerations identify and support at-risk communities and help provide documentation on informal settlements for which there is little or no official data. The Federation and PACSII (an NGO that supports the Federation) are now identifying and profiling at-risk communities in 12 cities and 10 municipalities located in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. Budget constraints mean this has to identify and prioritize communities that are most at risk so this focuses on informal settlements located under bridges, on cliffs and other landslide prone areas, coastal shorelines and riverbanks, public cemeteries, near open dumpsites and those in flood-prone locations.

In the city of Iloilo, the partnerships established between local and national government, grassroots organizations and the Homeless People's Federation of the Philippines started before the devastation caused by Typhoon Frank in 2008 but was strengthened after it. The city government recognized that the urban poor and their support organizations are partners in the city's development. It provided many opportunities for them to participate in local decision making through representation in technical working groups and multi-sectoral bodies and allowing more room for effecting change in local policies. The scale and scope of housing delivery, upgrading, post-disaster assistance and other basic services were much increased because of the resource-sharing from the partnership. Local government extended facilities, equipment and personnel (site engineer, surveyors and mappers) to provide technical assistance to the Federation on housing and disaster rehabilitation measures. Being a member of the "Resettlement and Monitoring Task Force", the Federation assisted in social preparations and other resettlement-related activities conducted by local government. The city government assisted in the federation's social mobilization which include mapping of high-risk/disaster-affected communities, identification and prioritization of communities to be given post-disaster assistance (temporary houses and material loan assistance for housing repair).

7: Tools and methods to support partnerships with local governments

To sustain partnerships with local governments, urban poor organizations need to be organized and to be prepared to deal with what are often slow processes that do not produce perfect outcomes. Even when senior government officials are supportive of partnerships, promised support for initiatives can take a long time to come – or face unexpected blockages. Here, it is important for the community organizations to have their own agenda and to be able to draw support for their initiatives from other sources – especially if or when local government support is not forthcoming or if it is delayed or it proves to be less than what was promised. This is where support from local UNDP offices could be particularly helpful. This is also where federations having their own urban poor funds to draw on become important – as discussed below. Equally important is the use of joint exchanges where groups of national and local authority staff and officials and community activists visit community initiatives in another country. These visits help the government to understand their urban challenges in new ways, to build stronger relations with organized communities that can help to resolve problems in their own countries and cities, and get new ideas about solutions that are demonstrated to work. What is important is that there is a sustained commitment to supporting the process. Exchanges and other forms of learning need to be embedded within a longer term engagement in finding joint solutions, not just one-off events.

For local governments, as examples given above have shown, one of the most valuable tasks that the federations can do is to produce the detailed information base and maps needed for planning upgrading in informal settlements, new house developments and infrastructure and

service provision. For instance, in Namibia, central government has supported the profiling of all informal settlements with the Community Land Improvement Programme. Now that this has been completed, a second phase is working to put in place development plans in each informal settlement.⁴⁵ The first seventeen urban centres have been selected based on the willingness of local authority participation.⁴⁶

As well as producing an information base that local governments need, community-directed household, settlement and city surveys or enumerations are important for each settlement's residents to look at their own situation, consider their priorities, strengthen their own organization and articulate their priorities.

Community networks and federations have begun to build a close relationship with academic institutions in a number of countries. This can help to increase sources of professional support to grassroots initiatives and ensure that the lessons that emerge are used in under-graduate and graduate teaching across a range of professional and academic disciplines. In Zimbabwe, UN-Habitat has been supporting this work through sponsoring learning exchanges between staff and students from the Planning Department and the Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation and associated documentation.

Virtually all the federations have support NGOs that are important for sustaining them and supporting them including providing regular professional advice, securing and managing donor funding and linking to municipal and state officials. The federations also set up their own international umbrella organization, Slum/Shack Dwellers International and this also supports them – for instance in supporting an international voice and managing funds for investments and exchanges. It has also developed an international fund, the Urban Poor Fund International, through which the Federations can access funding – as described below.

The work of the federations in building and infrastructure often comes up against regulatory frameworks that are unrealistic – for instance regulations on minimum lot sizes that are unrealistic for urban centres and that push up costs both of the land and of the infrastructure needed to service it (because of the low densities). Many of the precedent-setting initiatives the federations have undertaken contravene official rules and standards. But by having new houses, a functioning public toilet, a site layout that accommodates more households to show to local government officials, so negotiations on how rules and standards can change (or for particular sites be avoided) becomes easier. In Zimbabwe and Namibia, the federations have managed to negotiate smaller plot sizes (in some cases a mix of plot sizes) and lower infrastructure standards that can be improved incrementally, as resources permit.⁴⁷

The most basic financial mechanism that serves the federations is the savings undertaken by the dozens, hundreds or even thousands of groups that are these federations' foundation. Most of the federations listed in Table 2 have set up their own urban poor fund while some have more than one – for instance with one for housing and another for employment. In some cities, city-level funds have been developed. These are funds where the savings groups place part of their savings, and also funds through which local governments and external agencies (national governments, international funding agencies) can channel support to federation activities. Most of these funds are managed by boards, with federation members forming the majority.⁴⁸ It is often a city government's contribution to these funds that signals their recognition of community organizations as partners – as in contribution to the Urban Poor Development Fund in Cambodia by the Phnom Penh municipality that later developed into a city-wide upgrading programme.⁴⁹ In many of these national funds, the federations' community organizers sit on the board with

NGOs, professionals and government officials to administer them. In many nations, national governments have also made major commitments to these urban poor funds, including in Namibia, South Africa, the Philippines, India and Cambodia. For UNDP offices in the many nations where there are well established national and city funds, learning about and supporting the work of the federations through these funds would be one possible entry point.

It is important that international agencies that want to work with the grassroots organizations and federations understand how these work and negotiate. Some key aspects of the negotiating strategies used by the federations in India, supported by the NGO SPARC have almost universal relevance to how urban poor groups can engage their governments around working together in service provision. As staff from SPARC have noted,⁵⁰ these include:

- **Start small and keep pressing:** The women's savings groups (*Mahila Milan*) started small –negotiating with the municipal government in Kanpur and Bangalore to provide hand pumps and water taps in informal settlements. These were not complicated or expensive or beyond the means of local government. Through these negotiations they gradually gained the confidence, persistence and visibility to press for the next level: community toilets. Starting with small initiatives can show both government and communities that change is possible. Convince the officials that they can use their limited powers to make a small change. First, they might only give a limited consent, but later, when they see this working on the ground, even in small ways, that consent might become support. Support is the first step in the creation of a genuine partnership.
- **Paint beautiful pictures:** Grassroots activism often focuses on highlighting the failures of government. For any community organization or NGO exploring new ways to bring the poor and the state together, this has limited utility. One of the defining features of the partnership in India between the National Slum Dwellers Federation, *Mahila Milan* and SPARC was this shift from making demands on government to offering government a partnership – and showing government what they could bring to city development. So instead of pelting government officials with “awfuls and shamefuls”, a more effective approach was to kindle government officials’ imaginations by describing possibilities in ways that make clear how they can contribute.
- **Know more than they do:** When community organizations come into negotiations with government officials prepared, with enumeration reports and maps with data on all households in the settlement, with construction costs for what they plan worked out and tested, with knowledge of city infrastructure grids, and with examples of community-state partnerships in other cities, it becomes much harder for government officials to argue against the proposals they are making.
- **Cut an attractive deal:** The Slum Dweller Federations/*Mahila Milan* in different cities around India have succeeded in showing local governments that entering into an unconventional partnership for toilet-building or house building or upgrading with a well-organised community organisation is a realistic and attractive proposition for solving big problems. For instance, a city administrator would have difficulties ignoring the advantages of a partnership on community toilets:
 - sharing costs with a community reduces the city’s sanitation cost burden;
 - when communities build toilets, the city government’s limited construction capacity is not stretched;

- when communities maintain the toilets, the city's maintenance costs are eliminated (and the toilets get maintained, unlike municipal toilets);
- community-built toilets often cost less than those the city builds, so a city's infrastructure budgets can be spread further, increasing service delivery.

Similar lessons can be drawn from other community-local government partnerships. For instance, local authorities in urban areas in Thailand saw how much could be achieved in upgrading informal settlements through working with the savings groups formed by their residents – and then at city scale, working with networks of these savings groups (although here a national government agency that supported this whole process, the Community Organizations Development Institute was also very important).⁵¹ Or in the Philippines where many municipal governments have developed partnerships with savings groups formed by the residents of informal settlements or of groups hit by disasters, together with the Philippines Homeless People's Federation.

8: Responding to demand from low-income urban dwellers

In many nations, local institutions have been set up to support and work with low-income households that deliberately avoid a dependence on aid funding because of the difficulties in getting such funding to align with the needs, priorities and ways of working of such households and their organizations. In addition, most of these institutions have developed products or services that low-income groups can afford and choose to pay for – which then allows them to work at a much larger scale. Here, three examples are given of this.

In Pakistan, what began as the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) in the early 1980s and later became the OPP Research and Training Institute has supported a large-scale programme of community-led (lane led) initiatives for nearly 30 years. This includes producing high quality sanitation and drainage with cost-recovery from households. The inhabitants had to raise the funding to cover the costs of the street and neighbourhood components (the “small pipes”) and in over 300 locations in Pakistan, communities have financed, managed and built their own internal sanitation and drainage systems. The OPP Research and Training Institute also got government agencies to support these by providing the trunk infrastructure (the ‘big pipes’) into which these could integrate.⁵² The OPP also set the Orangi Charitable Trust whose micro-credit programme through 86 local partner organizations had by 2010 provided 39,704 loans worth \$7.8 million in Orangi for small private schools (as government schools are not available), manufacturing units, traders, service providers, building component manufacturing yards and clinics. The Trust had also supported 117,115 loans worth \$18 million through partner organizations outside Orangi. Keeping procedures and products simple and transparent, supporting staff in partner organizations by learning-by-doing and recruiting local staff makes contact with potential borrowers and loan recovery easier. Those who have taken on loans and those interested in loans meet often to discuss progress and difficulties. Initially, partner organizations require financial support but within two years, most generate sufficient funds to cover their overheads.⁵³

CID Consulting is an international for-profit firm that also works with local NGOs and grassroots organizations in Egypt, especially garbage collectors and recyclers and their organizations. It has supported a range of initiatives including 'learning and earning' centres for working children that support their income-earning with curricula that are relevant to their lives and fun - but only if they attend school. It has also supported a Rag Recycling Center for girls and women. Both these initiatives are sustained by the revenues they generate. It also supported the Association of Garbage Collectors for Community Development (AGCCD) that has spearheaded the transformation of an informal settlement (Manchiyet Nasser) from tin and

cardboard shack dwellings to brick homes and solid structures which in turn was underpinned by the neighbourhood's small and medium size recycling enterprises. CID's founders chose not to set up an NGO because this would be dependent on donor funding and would be constrained by having to work within the limits set by these funders. Local NGOs also lack the contacts and international experience to bid for tenders set by international funding agencies that are so often prepared and evaluated far from the field and people's realities. In Egypt and in many other nations, the development sector had developed its own big actors, including specialized consulting firms and other well-networked commercial enterprises. Local NGOs also lack the contacts to bring in the private sector and influence national and local government (who see them as advocates rather than groups with invaluable local knowledge). NGOs also have little capacity to address the structural issues that underpin poverty – for instance, to fight against government and donor waste management schemes that threaten the livelihoods of the waste collectors and the informal waste recycling industry.⁵⁴

SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association) in India provides another example of a civil society organization that is formed primarily by grassroots organizations, works at scale and draws most resources from within India. SEWA began as a trade union for poor self-employed women working in the informal economy in the city of Ahmedabad in Gujarat but it now has 1.3 million members across nine states and encompassing rural and urban areas (although around half of members are in Gujarat). It is the largest independent trade union in India. It supports members through a range of services including credit, training, childcare, market linkages, health care, insurance and pension schemes. It also negotiates on behalf of members for the setting of a minimum wage, identity cards and social benefits (childcare, health care and school scholarships) for sub contracted garment workers.

Members include home-based workers, small businesswomen (including hawkers and vendors), manual labourers and service providers and artisans. Any self-employed woman can become a member with a membership fee of five rupees a year. Members elect representatives that form the Trade Council and members of this Council elect the executive committee. The various types of SEWA organizations set up by members operate at village and district level and are registered as cooperatives, societies, producer associations or remain unregistered. It also operates at higher levels – for instance, to influence the government of India and state governments and international agencies. It has developed housing services for members that include shelter finance, legal advice, technical assistance and support for them to get water and sanitation and other services from local governments.

9: Waste picker associations and networks⁵⁵

One obvious way in which low-income groups can seek change in relations with government and the private sector is to organize. Within the federations that are members of Slum/Shack Dwellers International as described above, this organization is around savings groups. For Sewa, as noted above, it is around trades among women working within the informal economy. There are important networks at city and increasingly at national levels formed around particular occupations in which low-income groups are concentrated – for instance home workers, street vendors and waste pickers. The example given here is on waste picker associations, to show how these associations and networks develop within cities, then within countries and even internationally, and contribute to urban governance policy at local and national levels.

In Latin America, groups of waste pickers or recyclers have organized themselves into syndicates or cooperatives and this has helped change their relationships with local governments; in other nations too, waste pickers are organizing, offering local governments

partnerships and extending the range of what they can do. There are many ways in which collaboration between organized waste pickers and recyclers and local government can assist both groups. Waste pickers can secure safer and better remunerated work, local government can support the economic development of low-income neighbourhoods and have efficient waste management systems. Households can be encouraged to sort at source and build closer relations with those who are keeping the neighbourhood clean.

In most cities, there is little appreciation of the scale of the 'waste economy' in terms of the number of people working in it, the value it generates and the costs saved to city and municipal governments. It is common for large cities to have tens of thousands of people working in the waste economy.⁵⁶ In Brazil's large cities, more than half a million people survive by collecting and selling solid waste⁵⁷ and the recycling market has a turnover of over \$1 billion a year. In India, there are an estimated 1.5 million waste pickers.⁵⁸ But most work as waste pickers in dumps and on the streets with little or no organization and with very low returns. The returns they get do not reflect the value of the wastes they recycle, the money they save for city governments (reducing waste volumes and extending the life of landfills), their contribution to cleaner cities and the contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Most waste pickers face very poor working conditions and have very low incomes, in large part because they get such a small proportion of the revenue generated by the recycling industry. They get low prices from the intermediaries who buy the recyclable materials (formal companies and usually a large networks of agents) and from city officials who manage collection services. Their activities are even considered illegal in some nations.

To secure greater appreciation for the value of their work and to address their needs and interests, recyclers have been organising in cooperatives, associations and national movements. In Brazil, the first step towards a national voice for waste pickers was the first meeting of the Paper and Reusable Waste Pickers' Popular Organisations in Santos in 1992. In 1999, the National Movement of Recyclable Waste Pickers (MNCR) was created during their first National Congress attended by more than 1,700 workers. At present, MNCR represents around 300 waste picker associations and cooperatives. It emphasizes the need to regulate the recycling trade, secure the social inclusion of waste pickers (for instance in public programmes for housing, health, education and work needs) and support workers' active participation in all aspects of the processing of recyclable materials. The MNCR influenced the creation of the Inter-ministerial Committee for the Social and Economic Inclusion of Waste Pickers in 2003. The MNCR also seeks to directly assist waste recyclers to be more effective in their work, through encouraging them to work in cooperatives – and it promotes a package to increase cooperative competitiveness, which includes a warehouse, equipment and trucks.

Waste picker associations and cooperatives aim to improve the situation of waste pickers – for instance through partnerships with NGOs, companies and governments. The national government has already begun to respond to waste picker needs by launching a financing line through the Brazilian Development Bank, which focuses on recyclable waste picker cooperatives and which aims to generate 39,000 jobs for waste pickers in 199 cities across Brazil. Marketing networks to bring together associations and cooperatives have been created to provide a large volume of quality materials direct to the industry. Networks are already active in São Paulo, Bahia, Minas Gerais and Rio Grande do Sul, and others are being planned. Commercial companies are also realising the benefits of working with waste picker organisations – for instance the steel group Gerdau in Chile and Brazil and the cosmetics

company Natura has asked cooperatives to provide them with packaging collection in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Colombia.

In Londrina, a partnership between city officials and waste pickers led to 100 tonnes of recyclable materials (25 per cent of the city's waste) collected every day. One innovation is the door-to-door collection, which builds a bond between waste pickers and the community. The programme started in 2001, in part to remove waste pickers from the city landfill. Twenty-nine sorting centres were created, where 500 waste pickers sort the wastes before these are collected for processing and sale. Eighty per cent of waste pickers taking part in this initiative are women. Since the quality of the materials is now higher, better prices are obtained. In five districts in Diadema City, 50 waste pickers provide a door-to-door pre-determined schedule, collecting materials from by residents and with the city administration's cleaning service paying the waste collectors the same rate as the contractors – and this has increased their incomes. The groups have started to organise themselves to access the social security (INSS) benefit.

In 1996, Roberto Laureano da Rocha and some of his friends who had been working as waste pickers on the streets of Poá (within Greater São Paulo) decided that if the middlemen managed to make a better life in recycling, they could do it too. One of them had access to a family space that they could use as a warehouse and one had worked as a locksmith so, from metal scraps they collected, they made their first carts and started their own business: CRUMA (Recycling Cooperative United for the Environment). Three years later they were organising the first São Paulo State Meeting of Waste Pickers and the first National Meeting, where the seed for the Brazilian National Network of Waste Pickers (MNCR in Portuguese) was born. They were instrumental in the formation of a committee involving ten federal institutions to coordinate public policies that would promote the social integration of waste pickers set up by President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in 2003.

In India, the Alliance of Indian Waste pickers is a national network of 35 organizations working in 22 cities. In 2009, the South African Waste Pickers Association held its first meeting in 2009.⁵⁹ The first meeting of the Latin American Waste Picker Network was in 2005, in 2008, there was the first world conference of waste pickers. Representatives of these waste picker associations have also made presentations about their work in many international conferences and to many international institutions – to show how their work is so relevant to many environment and development issues including poverty reduction, solid waste management and cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

10: Funding the key actors in urban poverty reduction

Most international agencies still assume that poverty reduction is achieved by government programmes – or where governments are particularly ineffective, by international or occasionally national or local NGOs. Although external funding is legitimated on the basis of the “needs” of “the poor”, it is rare for official development assistance agencies to work direct with the organizations formed by the urban poor. There are the obvious difficulties for such agencies in doing so. Official development assistance agencies are meant to work through national government and to get their agreement for funding for civil society organizations. If a small part of their funding does go to civil society organizations, it goes to international or local NGOs who have the professionals that can prepare proposals following these agencies' requirements and the financial systems that can meet the official agencies' accounting and reporting requirements. And most international agencies lack the staff that can speak the same language as grassroots organizations and are under heavy pressures to keep down their own staff costs – so they could not manage a multiplicity of relationships and funding support with

grassroots groups. There are also other difficulties such as time scales that fit the bureaucratic requirements of formal agencies, rather than the dynamic shifting of political opportunity at the local level, and the need for budgets to specify exactly what will be done, rather than flexible finance able to respond to emerging opportunities.

Putting aside the institutional difficulties for international agencies of doing so (and the possible opposition of governments), it is worth considering how and where direct support to the organizations formed by the urban poor could help improve and increase the scale of urban poverty reduction. Then to consider whether there are mechanisms by which UNDP offices (and other international agencies) could support this. Are there ways of identifying urban poor organizations on the ground that are representative and include the poorest groups – and then working with them so they have more power, capacity and agency?

Three examples will be given here of mechanisms by which external funding has supported urban poor organizations directly. The first is the Urban Poor Funds set up by many slum/shack dweller national federations.⁶⁰ In ten nations, Urban Poor Funds are working with slum/shack dweller federations and in some of these nations, Urban Poor City Funds have also been developed. These support the members of these federations to obtain better quality shelter with basic services, by providing finance systems that serve their needs (including supporting their savings). In doing so, they also help to change low-income households' relations with government agencies and the law, as these households obtain housing solutions that are legal and that can be served by publicly provided infrastructure and services. This is achieved either through a move to new sites or through upgrading and legalizing their existing homes. Box 1 gives some examples of these funds.

Box 1: Examples of Urban Poor Funds

In **Cambodia**, the Urban Poor Development Fund has been operating for ten years and is supporting the work of 225 savings groups in Phnom Penh and 42 outside the capital city. More than \$2 million has been provided in loans to members, including for income generation and in relation to shelter. Some of these loans have helped the development of communities resettled on land with secure tenure following central city evictions.

The **Kenyan** Homeless People's Federation set up an independent organization, the Akiba Mashinani Trust (AMT), to manage its loan funds. The Trust has supported a number of developments, including housing loans for about 100 members and, more recently, land purchase in four locations. The Kenyans have introduced another institutional tier, a community-managed Urban Poor Fund, much like those in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. This fund pools community savings in order to interface politically and financially with the formally managed AMT, and to side-step it for small transactions and direct development finance. Negotiations with the government have opened a number of possibilities for further developments, and the state has allocated land to some savings schemes.

The **Malawi** Homeless People's Federation has used the Mchenga Trust to finance the construction of just under 1,000 houses in the three largest cities of Malawi. Finance for further construction continues to be difficult as there is limited savings capacity and the state has not provided finance. The federation is supported by the Centre for Community Organization and Development (CCODE).

The **Namibia** Shack Dwellers Federation was established in 1998 after many years of work on savings schemes supported by the Namibia Housing Action Group. The federation has been working to secure land and reform regulations with Windhoek and other municipalities throughout the country. The Twahangana Fund helps to finance local investments with its own monies and acts as a conduit for low-cost loans provided by a government-run housing programme, Build Together.

Box 3: The Asian Coalition for Community Action (ACCA)

The third example of funding for urban poor organizations is ACCA managed by the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights. This is a fund set up in 2009 to catalyze and support city-wide upgrading and partnerships between community organizations and local governments. By the end of 2010, initiatives had been supported in 107 cities in 15 nations. This included support for 549 small upgrading projects and about half had been completed – for instance walkways, drains, community toilets and water supply improvements. During this same period, 65 larger initiatives had been supported and funding from ACCA totalling \$2.3 million had leveraged \$1.9 million from communities, \$35.7 million from government (mostly land, also infrastructure, cash and materials) and \$1.6 million from other sources. These also facilitated the creation of many city level community development funds – and these often receive support from local governments. 70 city development funds are now at work with 213,365 active savers. ACCA sets very low budget ceilings for the funding it provides and leaves it to the implementing communities to work out how best to use it and raise other funding. It explains the principle of ‘insufficiency’ because there is not enough development funding to fund ‘sufficiently’ all that needs to be done to meeting needs all informal settlements.

As the report on its first year of operation explained:

“The \$3,000 for small upgrading projects and the \$40,000 for big housing projects which the ACCA Program 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 fifty 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.”

- Improved provision for water and sanitation in Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Zimbabwe
- Enumerations and maps of informal settlements in Brazil, Ghana, Namibia, Sri Lanka, South Africa and Zambia that provide the information needed for upgrading and negotiating land tenure
- Exchange visits by established federations to urban poor groups in Angola, East Timor, Mongolia, Tanzania and Zambia (in Tanzania and Zambia, these helped set up national federations)
- Community-managed shelter reconstruction after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami in India and Sri Lanka
- Federation partnerships with local governments in shelter initiatives in India, Malawi, South Africa and Zimbabwe

Since 2008, the Fund has grown substantially, with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. By 2008, SDI federations were ready to implement much larger initiatives in some areas where they have worked for many years. Since 2008, the Fund has supported investment in land development, housing and basic services in over 22 towns and cities. In India, Kenya, the Philippines and South Africa, the Fund has provided finance for developments involving thousands of people who were renting or squatting in shacks without secure tenure. This Fund has produced a new way of financing community-led development and of encouraging and leveraging support from local and national governments. Since the beginning of 2008, projects financed by Urban Poor Fund International have secured 443 plots of land free of charge from the state with an additional \$7.6 million worth of support from governments.

11: Conclusions and recommendations

In low-income and most middle-income nations, reducing most of the deprivations associated with urban poverty and meeting the MDGs in urban areas depends on changes in approach by city and municipal governments. Most of the measures needed to meet the MDGs in urban areas fall within the responsibilities of local governments, even if these governments so often lack the capacities to meet them. One key aspect of the needed change in approach is change in local government relations with their citizens living in informal settlements and working in the informal economy.

If we review the examples of where local governments have changed approaches and become more successful at reducing poverty and meeting the MDGs, two paths can be identified - although in many cities, there is evidence of both paths. The first is through democratization and decentralization within national government, so urban governments get more power and resources and structures that are more accountable and transparent - for instance as mayors and city councils are elected. This is most evident in many Latin American nations. These changes were certainly driven by citizen pressures and demands and urban poor organizations and movements had considerable importance in this. The second path is from changes in local governments (and governance) driven by the organizations formed by urban poor groups. These include very specific local examples - a group of waste pickers and recyclers negotiating a contract with the local government so they become part of the formal waste management system, a savings group formed by homeless women who negotiate a plot of land on which they design and build homes, partnerships formed between the police and resident committees in informal settlements to provide policing there. But as this paper has described, these have been taken much further where there are larger membership organizations or federations of urban poor groups that want to work with local government and responsive local governments. In both paths, there has to be a recognition within local government that those living in informal settlements and working in the informal economy are legitimate (and important) parts of the city and have rights to infrastructure, services and local government agencies who are accountable - but often it is the second path that is driving this recognition.

Of course, there is the problem that most informal settlements are on land that is occupied or subdivided illegally - but in many nations, this issue has been dealt with successfully. Again, there are good examples of how to do so that have been driven by federations or networks of urban poor savings groups.

So for many UNDP offices interested in addressing urban poverty and committed to meeting the MDGs, there are grassroots organizations and federations working in the same cities as UNDP offices that really do represent the urban poor's needs and priorities. They are accountable to the urban poor; they are actively building homes, upgrading informal settlements and providing services; they want to work with local governments (and international agencies). There are now more examples of local governments who have a good track record of working with them. There are also some national government agencies that have provided some support for this - and so also senior national government politicians or civil servants who support this. UNDP offices can thus consider how they can support both paths identified above - the path through supporting local government reform and the path through supporting the organizations and federations of the urban poor as they seek to engage with and work with local government.

It is difficult to make general recommendations on how UNDP should or could engage with these organizations, federations and networks as contexts are so different. But each UNDP office can think how to begin to engage with these membership organizations and to share their

experiences in doing so with each other. From this can develop ideas about responses that fully involve the organizations and federations of the urban poor in discussing possible programmes and mechanisms of support. The goal in each nation is a long-term partnership with these organizations and federations, going beyond one or a few small initiatives.

As the examples given earlier have shown, there are funding mechanisms that have supported these federations and networks and from which UNDP can learn. It is also worth recalling that most of the national federations of slum or shack dwellers have already set up national funds and sometimes city funds through which external support can be channeled and these provide UNDP offices (and other potential international funders) with the needed accountability and transparency in regard to how the funding is used. Then there need to be mechanisms by which UNDP offices document their experiences in working with these organizations and compare and contrast these across the different offices.

It would be an amazing contribution to urban poverty reduction if many UNDP offices developed ways of working with, supporting and learning from the organizations and federations of the urban poor as these developed their links and programmes with local governments – and with this also seen positively by national governments. So these organizations' increasing linkages with some national and local governments then help to redefine national UNDP programmes. And this in turn demonstrates to other international agencies the importance and relevance of this approach.

Among the important roles that UNDP offices could have in furthering the building of partnerships between urban poor organizations and local governments:

- Working with established city federations and networks:
 - to expand their outreach into the development assistance community eg. Meetings through which community organizations and federations introduce their work to other international agencies;
 - to link to hesitant government agencies at the central and local levels, using the legitimacy of the UN to build bridges to potentially sympathetic senior staff and politicians.
- Supporting links between community networks:
 - in different sectors within nations and internationally so they can get to know each other and strengthen participatory governance initiatives;
 - and the academic community to ensure local documentation, an extended network of local professionals and a better educated next generation of professionals

Thus, there are a range of organizations and local or national networks of urban poor groups organized around their livelihoods (waste pickers, domestic workers, street vendors, etc.) and for some, also regional networks. These include the Asian Domestic Workers Network and HomeNet Asia, a network of 600 organizations representing over 300,000 home-based workers. Examples from Latin America include the Latin American Waste Picker Network. There are global networks for waste pickers and domestic workers.⁶¹ WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing) is a global network made up of activists, researchers and policy makers that seeks to improve the status of the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy.

There is also an international network of 'slum'/shack dweller national and city federations organized around savings groups with a particular interest in housing, infrastructure and services. They have set up a small secretariat (Slum/Shack Dwellers International) to support them, help

them learn from each other and support their negotiations with international agencies. As this paper has described, there are also local organizations that work closely with urban poor groups that have developed large scale initiatives without large scale funding – mostly by supporting initiatives that can generate revenues or get cost recovery. All these can be valuable partners for UNDP offices. There are also well-established channels of funding that support the work of urban poor organizations and that respond to their needs and priorities that show how valuable partnerships between international agencies and urban poor organizations can be.

Endnotes

¹ David Satterthwaite and Diana Mitlin are with the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED); Sheela Patel is director of Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC), based in Mumbai, India, which has worked in partnership with the National Slum Dwellers Federation and *Mahila Milan* (the federation of women's savings groups) for over 20 years. She is also chair of the Board of Slum/Shack Dwellers International and a member of the UNDP Civil Society Advisory Committee.

² The term "slum" often has derogatory connotations. Classify a settlement as a slum and it helps legitimate the eviction of its inhabitants. In addition, it is often used as a general term for a range of different kinds of housing or settlements, including those that well serve low income groups; in any city, there are a range of different housing sub-markets through which those with limited incomes buy, rent or build their homes. However, it is difficult to avoid the term "slum" for at least two reasons. The first is that some urban poor groups have organized themselves as slum dweller organizations or federations including one of the most successful and innovative of the urban poor federations, the National Slum Dwellers Federation in India. In India too, there are advantages for residents of informal settlements in being recognized officially as a "slum"; indeed, the residents of such settlements may even lobby to become a "notified slum". The second is that the only global estimates for deficiencies in housing collected by the United Nations are for "slums". So where the term slum is used, it means urban settlements characterized by at least some of the following features: a lack of formal recognition on the part of local government of the settlement and its residents; the absence of secure tenure for residents; inadequacies in provision for infrastructure and services; overcrowded and sub-standard dwellings; and location on land less than suitable for occupation.

³ See footnote 2.

⁴ Fergutz, Oscar, Sonia Dias and Diana Mitlin (2011), *Developing urban waste management in Brazil with waste picker organizations*, Environment and Urbanization, Vol. 23, No. 2.

⁵ See the Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) website: <<http://wiego.org/>>.

⁶ See footnote 5.

⁷ See the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) website: <<http://www.sewa.org/>>.

⁸ See footnote 5.

⁹ See the Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI) website: <<http://www.sdinet.org/>>.

¹⁰ See footnote 5.

¹¹ Applying the dollar a day poverty line to urban populations suggests that less than a billion urban dwellers are poor but this is such an unrealistic poverty line for most cities where the costs facing low-income groups for accommodation (rent), access to water and sanitation, health care, transport and keeping children in school are particularly high.

¹² For instance, the UN Joint Monitoring Programme that provides global statistics on provision for water and sanitation cannot say what proportion of the urban population has provision for water and sanitation to a quality that greatly reduces disease risk because such data are not available in most nations.

¹³ UN-Habitat (2003), *Water and Sanitation in the World's Cities: Local Action for Global Goals*, Earthscan Publications, London.

¹⁴ Ahmed, Akhter U., Ruth Vargas Hill, Lisa C. Smith, Doris M. Wiesmann and Tim Frankenberger (2007), *The World's Most Deprived: Characteristics and Causes of Extreme Poverty and Hunger*, 2020 Discussion Paper 43, IFPRI, Washington DC, 130 pages. The urban population of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh was around 477 million by 2010 so this implies that in these three countries alone, around 260 million urban dwellers suffered from hunger.

¹⁵ UN-Habitat (2003), *The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements 2003*, Earthscan Publications, London.

¹⁶ Sen, Amartya (1999), *Development as Freedom*, Oxford University Press, pages 158-159. "Not only is the force of public discussion one of the correlates of democracy, with an extensive reach, but its cultivation can also make democracy itself function better. For example, more informed and less marginalized public discussion of environmental issues may not only be good for the environment; it could also be important to the health and functioning of the democratic system itself."

¹⁷ Rayos Co, Jason Christopher (2010), *Community-driven Disaster Intervention: Experiences of the Homeless Peoples Federation Philippines*, IIED/ACHR/SDI working paper, IIED, London, 54 pages.

¹⁸ Fergutz, Dias and Mitlin 2011, op. cit.

¹⁹ Mitlin, Diana and Anna Muller (2004), *Windhoek, Namibia: towards progressive urban land policies in Southern Africa*, International Development Planning Review, Vol 26, No 2, pages 167-186.

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