



## MOBILITY CAUSES PROBLEMS IN COUNTING SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA'S SLUM POPULATIONS

according to UN-HABITAT's new report, *The State of African Cities 2010: Governance, Inequality and Urban Land Markets*.

The good news is that, proportionally, global urban slum populations have been falling over last two decades. Based on the internationally accepted definition of slums as having: inadequate access to safe water; little or no sanitation; poor structural quality of housing; overcrowding; or insecure tenure, UN-HABITAT's new report, *The State of African Cities 2010* states that the share of slum dwellers has been dropping.

In Nigeria, in 1990, 77 per cent of the urban population was made up of slum dwellers. By 2010, this share dropped to 61.9 per cent. In South Africa, between 1990 and 2010, it dropped from 46.2 to 28.7 per cent.

However, in many cities, the actual number of people living in slums is unknown, because, according to the report, urban slum populations are highly mobile and fluid, relentlessly changing. The result is that slum enumeration constantly runs into problems.

"Counting citizens is an essential tool for urban planners. The world over, proper census data is a prerequisite for a fully functioning city. It is virtually impossible to plan housing or infrastructure without knowing how many people live within municipal boundaries," said Joan Clos, the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT. "However, it is interesting to note that today in many parts of the world, poor people take advantage of urban-rural mobility to live in multiple locations. This is especially true of slum dwellers who retain links with their rural homesteads. Policymakers and planners need to take such fluidity into account when planning the shelter needs of the poor."

### 'MULTI-LOCAL' HOUSEHOLDS & URBAN-RURAL MOBILITY

The constant shifts of population in and out of urban slums are complex, reflecting social behaviour patterns and survival strategies. Social and economic ties to rural extended families remain strong after initial migration to the city, and oscillating between one or more urban and one or more rural areas is very common.

Mobility and migration remain hugely important in Africa. Individuals and households nowadays rarely spend their entire lives in one place. 'Multi-local' households are the norm, especially for slum dwellers, with family members residing in different urban and rural locations for shorter or longer periods.

According to the authors, these constant movements represent an important survival strategy, effectively spreading economic risk and providing access to services and livelihood opportunities in different localities.

Mobility patterns can shift very rapidly as conditions change and nowadays often span national or even continental boundaries. All these factors make accurate slum population enumeration extremely difficult.

Misguided public policies that attempt to split the population into either urban wage earners or full-time rural farmers ignore these real-life seasonal factors, undermining legitimate livelihood or survival strategies and in the process exacerbating poverty.

### THE KIBERA CENSUS

Nairobi is a good example of the difficulties in enumerating urban slum populations. It is claimed that Nairobi's slums accommodate more than half the city population. From the 2009 Kenyan Population and Housing Census results, however, it can be derived that the total slum population consists of 1,045,058 people or 33.7 per cent of a 3.1 million total population.

Likewise, the census figures appear to shatter the long-standing perception that Nairobi's Kibera slum neighbourhoods hold anything from half a million to one million people. The 2009 census data appear to set this figure at just under 400,000.

However, depending on the source, the population figures of Kibera's sub-locations continue to vary significantly. The 1999 and 2009 census results, for instance, appear to suggest a 14 per cent inter-decade decline in Kibera's population from 450,000 in 1999 to 384,000 in 2009. This contrasts sharply with the area's registered voters rolls for the 2005 and 2010 referendums, which recorded a half-decade (2005-2010) population increase with 23 per cent (after correcting the figures for those below the age of 18 years who are not eligible to vote). Moreover, these voters' rolls do not reflect an estimated 35 per cent of the Kibera population that remains unregistered for whatever reasons but who might well be going 'home' to register.

In other words the authors argue that data on slum dwellers derived from a population census or from voter rolls, often the sole options of enumerating, should be interpreted with great caution. A census or a voter registration is not an exercise in slum dweller identification and, for instance, does not enumerate incidence of insecurity of tenure, one of the key parameters identifying slum dwellers.

Moreover, throughout Africa, slum dwellers are now increasingly found beyond the municipal periphery in the Greater Metropolitan Region. As Nairobi takes on a regional city scale, the wider concept of the regional city should be applied also to the enumeration of slum inhabitants.

#### RESULTS OF THE 2009 KENYAN POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS, NAIROBI, AUGUST 2010.

LOCATION	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL	HOUSEHOLDS	AREA KM2	DENSITY
Kibera	206,778	177,144	383,922	121,933		
Gatwikira	13,580	11,411	24,991	7,270	0.3	85,323
Kibera	53,297	44,041	97,338	32,115	0.2	65,197
Kianda	15,229	14,127	29,356	8,327	0.7	39,478
Lindi	19,545	15,613	35,158	11,551	0.5	70,302
Makina	12,965	12,277	25,242	7,926	0.7	38,508
Mugumo-Ini	14,410	15,981	30,391	8,478	3.0	10,186
Siranga	10,198	7,165	17,363	6,164	0.2	71,072
Serangome	28,809	25,538	54,347	15,597	1.0	52,433
Laini Saba	38,745	30,991	69,736	24,505	0.4	75,942
Embakasi	98,896	84,808	183,704	66,555		
Mukuru Nyayo	27,277	26,026	53,303	17,357	5.9	8,983
Mukuru kwa Njenga	71,619	58,782	130,401	49,198	12.0	16,720
Huruma	54,787	51,532	106,319	34,017		
Huruma	37,734	34,761	72,495	23,800	0.7	103,431
Kiamaiko	17,053	16,771	33,824	10,217	0.7	50,620
Mathare	95,866	81,450	177,316	60,798		
Mabatini	15,286	12,974	28,260	9,809	0.4	79,740
Mathare	11,205	9,256	20,461	6,617	0.8	25,040
Mlango Kubwa	20,622	17,752	38,374	15,000	0.4	93,005
Majengo	8,945	7,342	16,287	5,295	0.3	55,323
Mathare 4A	10,211	8,565	18,776	5,627	0.2	87,209
Mathare North	29,597	25,561	55,158	18,450	0.5	119,055
Kangemi	33,306	30,712	64,018	21,665		
Gichagi	10,164	9,290	19,454	6,409	0.9	22,243
Kangemi	23,142	21,422				
	44,564	15,256	1.6	28,298		
Korogocho	21,958	19,988	41,946	12,909		
Gitathuru	11,379	10,356	21,735	6,480	0.5	45,262
Korogocho	5,376	5,000	10,376	3,129	0.9	46,961
Nyayo	5,203	4,632	9,835	3,300	0.2	52,286
Viwandani	41,257	30,133	71,390	27,740		
Landi Mawe	15,434	11,075	26,509	9,814	5.6	4,772
Viwandani	25,823	19,058	44,881	17,926	5.7	7,859
Kahawa	7,765	8,678	16,443	5,063		
Kongo Soweto	7,765	8,678	16,443	5,063	1.2	13,649
<b>Total</b>	<b>560,613</b>	<b>484,445</b>	<b>1,045,058</b>	<b>350,739</b>		

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