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Right to food

Preliminary study of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee on the promotion of human rights of the urban poor: strategies and best practices

Prepared by Chinsung Chung, on behalf of the drafting group on the right to food of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee∗

∗ With the collaboration of Chanmi Kim and Sunkyo Im.

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I. Introduction

1.   Half of the current global population live in cities, and at least one third of all urban dwellers are poor. This urban poor represents one quarter of the world's poor population.[1] With continued urbanization, the number of urban poor is expected to rise dramatically, making poverty an increasingly urban phenomenon. In fact, projections suggest that, by 2025, two thirds of the world's people will live in urban areas,[2] and by 2030, the global urban population will reach 5 billion.[3]

2.   Urban poverty poses particular challenges to the basic rights of the population it affects. It is also increasingly recognized that addressing these challenges is essential to achieving development targets. For this reason, the issue of urban poverty is a growing priority for development actors, including non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies, which recognize that "pockets of poverty" are not limited to isolated rural areas but are growing in cities and towns.

3.   In its resolution 16/27, the Human Rights Council requested the Advisory Committee to undertake, as appropriate, comprehensive studies on the urban poor and their enjoyment of the right to food, including strategies to improve their protection and best practices. A concept paper was prepared by Chinsung Chung for the seventh session of the Committee on behalf of the drafting group on the right to food, established by the Committee at its first session. The present paper, responding to the policy challenges of addressing the plight of the urban poor, expands the basic ideas of the above-mentioned concept paper.

II. Overview of the urban poor

A. Formation

4.   A defining characteristic of contemporary urban poverty is that low- and middle-income countries bear the brunt of both the current and projected population of poor city dwellers. Of the global population of urban poor, on average 80 per cent live in developing countries.[4] Furthermore, according to United Nations projections, the developing world will continue to see the highest rate of urban growth. By 2030, 93 per cent of the world's urban population will live in the developing world, 80 per cent in Africa and Asia alone.[5] Urbanization itself is not a measure of poverty. In fact, for many countries, it can be an economic boon. The ability of many cities to provide basic infrastructure and services has not, however, kept pace with the rate of urbanization.[6] According to a report by

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[1] Judy L. Baker, "Urban poverty: a global view", The World Bank, Washington, D.C., January 2008.

[2] In 2005, the world population was 6,506,649,175, with 3,166,711,400 living in urban areas; of these, 898,926,000 lived in developed countries and 2,267,786,000 in less developed countries. In the period 2000-2005, the average annual rate of change of the urban population was 2.2 in more developed countries and 0.67 in less developed countries. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2009.

[3] Baker, "Urban poverty" (see footnote 1).

[4] Ibid., p. 3.

[5] United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), *State of World Population 2007: Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth*, 2007. Available from www.unfpa.org/public/home/publications/pid/408.

[6] United Nations Millennium Project, "A Home in the City", Task Force on Improving the Lives of Slum Dwellers", Earthscan, 2005.

the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in 2001, approximately 78 per cent of urban residents in least developed countries lived in slums, compared with 6 per cent in the developed world.[7] With no indication that the rate of urbanization in developing countries will slow down, the concentration of urban poverty today in low-income countries suggests that it will continue to be a problem mostly for the developing world.

5.   Developing countries have a disproportionate amount of urban poverty because urbanization today is spreading at a different speed and scale than that of the forces that shaped cities of the now-developed world. The current trend, which the UNFPA State of the World's Population report of 2007 describes as the "second wave" of urbanization, is faster and larger in scale than the urban growth witnessed in Europe and North America. The first wave was relatively gradual, occurring over 200 years from around 1750 until 1950. Over two centuries, 15 million city dwellers, accounting for 10 per cent of the population, grew to 423 million, or 52 per cent of the total population. By contrast, the current wave of urbanization is relatively rapid and large. Starting in 1950, the urban population in the developing world will continue to grow from 309 million (about 18 per cent of the total population) to a projected 3.9 billion by 2030 (about 56 per cent), similar proportions to the first wave but much larger in absolute terms and at a much greater pace.[8]

6.   Different demographic and socio-economic forces drive the second wave of urbanization. In Europe and North America, industrialization drew large numbers of rural dwellers to cities in search of job opportunities. However, migration into urban areas accounts for less than half of the current rate of growth in developing countries; natural population growth (where births are greater than deaths) and the incorporation of peripheral areas into cities account for the greater part of urban growth.[9] In fact, while mega-cities have tended to attract more attention, research indicates that much of the urban growth witnessed is centred in smaller cities and towns throughout the developing world.[10]

7.   This is not to say that migration does not contribute to urbanization. Movements of rural dwellers relocating to cities in search of education and employment do certainly play a significant role. To that effect, the effect of globalization on the movement of populations has had a large impact on urbanization. Some scholars argue that the increasing economic integration of the world's economies has turned both large and small cities into the main beneficiaries of growth and opportunity;[11] and since jobs grow where there is economic activity, people follow the promise of employment into cities. The conversion of small-scale farming to cash-crop plantations has further uprooted many community members from rural to urban areas.[12] At the same time, globalization has inflicted hardship on the urban poor, often exaggerating stark inequalities, challenging governance and undermining rule of law, particularly as the international flow of illicit drugs and goods become harder to control.[13] The forces that drive the current form of urbanization also shape, therefore, the conditions faced by the urban poor.

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[7] The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) defines a slum household as one that faces any or all of four shelter deprivations: inadequate water access; inadequate sanitation access, overcrowding, and inadequate shelter construction. See UNFPA (see footnote 5).

[8] Ibid.

[9] Deniz Baharoglu and Christine Kessides, "Urban poverty" in *A Sourcebook for Poverty Reduction Strategies*, chap. 16, World Bank, Washington, D.C., 2002.

[10] UNFPA (see footnote 5).

[11] Ibid., p. 8.

[12] Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "State of the World's Indigenous Peoples", 2009.

[13] UNFPA (see footnote 5), p. 26.

B. Conditions

8.   For many of the urban poor, life in cities is characterized by inequality and exclusions that deprive them of their rights to adequate food, shelter, water and employment, and other social services (see paragraphs 28 – 53 below). Beyond these deprivations, however, the exclusion of the urban poor extends to their social and political lives. In this way, urban poverty pushes the affected poor to the very margins of city life.

1.   Social stigma and discrimination

9.   The urban poor face stigma and social exclusion because of their socio-economic status. Accounts from slum dwellers describe discrimination as a feature of daily life.[14] Research conducted in several countries has shown that children are especially aware of their harsh, often dilapidated surroundings and experience them as shameful reflections of their own self-worth.[15] Research also shows that this stigma manifests itself in job interviews and employment opportunities that discriminate against the poor because of where they live. A study conducted in France, for example, found that job applicants from low-income addresses were less likely to be selected for interviews than candidates from higher-income areas.[16] Similarly, a study in Rio de Janeiro revealed that living in a slum was a greater barrier to employment than gender or ethnicity.[17]

2.   Adverse effects of globalization

10.   The highly visible inequalities between the urban poor and higher-income city dwellers are made starker by the effects of globalization in cities.[18] For instance, in the slum areas of big cities in both developed and developing countries, including New York City, Los Angeles, Nairobi or other cities where globalization has "aggravated inequality",[19] the poor live directly adjacent to or amidst expensive high-rise buildings. In developed countries, many industrialized cities have communities of foreign migrant workers living in poverty. Since most developed countries have not ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, many foreign workers living in these countries have an illegal status and face many difficulties in enjoying their basic human rights.

3.   Lack of good governance

11.   The urban poor are also politically marginalized and often live in a governance void, where State authorities fail in their responsibility to "respond effectively to local needs in a participatory, transparent and accountable manner".[20] While cities are geographically closer to and therefore theoretically offer greater access to the centres of political power, urban poverty excludes a large majority from participation. This lack of good governance means not only that their basic needs are not being adequately met, but

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[14] See Janice Perlman, "The Metamorphosis of Marginality: Four Generations in the Favelas of Rio de Janeiro", and Douglas S. Massey et al., "Chronicle of a Myth Foretold: The Washington Consensus in Latin America" in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* , vol. 606, July 2006.

[15] Louise Chawla, *Growing up in an Urbanizing World*, Earthscan Publications and UNESCO, 2002.

[16] UN-Habitat, State of the World's Cities, 2006/7, 2006.

[17] Ibid.

[18] James Holston and Arjun Appadurai, *Cities and Citizenship*, Public Culture, University of Chicago 1996.

[19] Ibid., p. 26.

[20] UNFPA (see footnote 5), p. 67.

also that the urban poor are precluded from contributing to solutions that could directly benefit them.

4. Insecurity and violence

12. Political marginalization also means that the poor often face greater insecurity and violence, as policing and the rule of law often do not extend into settlements where the poor are concentrated;[21] violence and criminality in poor urban communities therefore tend to be higher. Here, too, the effects of globalization disproportionately affects the urban poor, as international networks of drugs and other illicit economies are thought to flourish where governance is weak.[22]

5. Food insecurity

13. Above and beyond social and political exclusion, the urban poor also struggle to meet basic nutritional and health needs. They are particularly affected by the volatility of food prices as they rely almost entirely on cash transactions to obtain food owing to their limited ability to grow their food and the higher costs of food transportation. For the urban poor who are often unable to purchase and store large amounts of food, the stability of prices has a great effect on their food security.[23] High food prices are caused by a variety of factors, such as speculative capital activities and the production of biofuel, which can dramatically affect the difficulties of the urban poor.[24]

6. Shelter and health deprivations

14. Urban population growth patterns have resulted in the poor being concentrated in areas that are undesirable to others, leaving them vulnerable to heightened risk of disease, disaster and insecurity. Many poor urban dwellers try to find affordable homes close to employment opportunities in the city. Settlements are often found to be characterized by three common patterns. First, they often form at the edge of cities, where inhabitants incur high costs in travel and time in order to commute to work. Second, they also form in city centres near environmentally unsafe areas, such as waste dumps or industrial sites,[25] where inadequate sanitation infrastructure leaves them particularly vulnerable to negative health outcomes.[26] Third, the urban poor often settle in areas at higher risk of floods, landslides and other disasters, where inadequate resources and safety nets make recovery more difficult.

15. City governments have sometimes exacerbated these risks in their enforcement of urban development policies, where foreign investments are often introduced. According to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction,[27] urban development policies often magnify the risk of flash floods, given that the policies are usually planned and

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[21] Ibid.

[22] UN-Habitat (see footnote 16), p. 144.

[23] International Food Policy Research Institute, *Living in the City: Challenges and Options for the Poor*, IFPRI, 2002. Available from www.ifpri.org/publication/living-city?print.

[24] Armando Mendoza and Roberto Machado, "The escalation in world food prices and its implications for the Caribbean", ECLAC-Project Documents collection-Caribbean Development Report, vol.2, 2009.

[25] Baker, "Urban poverty"(see footnote 1), p. 9.

[26] For instance, infant mortality is almost 2.5 times higher in Nairobi's slums than in all of Nairobi (151 deaths per 1,000 against 62 in the rest of the city). African Population and Health Research Center, "Population and Health Dynamics in Nairobi's Informal Settlements", report of the Nairobi Cross-Sectional Slums Survey, African Population and Health Research Center, 2002.

[27] See General Assembly resolution 54/219.

implemented without the participation of the urban poor, which also results in their displacement.

C.   Situation of more vulnerable groups

16.   Among the urban poor, some groups are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of urban poverty. These include women and girls, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, lower castes and other minorities. The situation of the urban poor has worsened particularly in post-conflict contexts and areas recovering from natural disasters, such as tsunamis or earthquakes.

1.   Women and girls

17.   Women and girls in the urban poor population face particularly stark challenges. They are victims to even further marginalization, particularly a gender gap in education, employment and political participation. They also suffer disproportionately from health and security threats, many of which are related to life in slums.

18.   Women in poor urban communities are more likely to be exposed to gender-based violence. Research indicates that, in some countries, poor urban women are more likely to experience intimate-partner violence than rural or higher-income urban women.[28] This fact has also been closely linked in some cases to a higher incidence of mental illness; for instance, a study by the World Health Organization showed that women who had experienced intimate-partner violence were significantly more likely to report thoughts of suicide.[29] This is consistent with some indicators that show a higher prevalence of poor mental health among poor urban women.

19.   Women experiencing urban poverty are also particularly vulnerable to health risks associated with maternal care. Women living in slums were consistently found to have much lower access to prenatal and antenatal care than those in other urban areas with higher incomes.[30] Furthermore, women and girls in urban poor populations also tend to be subject to a higher prevalence of HIV/AIDS than women living in rural and other urban areas, which is perhaps linked to the finding of research that suggests that, for women in the urban poor population, forced or traded sex is often more prevalent than for their higher-income or rural counterparts.[31]

20.   The effects of urban poverty on women are often compounded by the fact that, in many contexts, women already face social and political marginalization. For instance, while insecurity of land tenure and inadequate shelter is a challenge for both men and women living in urban poverty, women are particularly disadvantaged because they are

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[28]   Mark R. Montgomery, "Urban Poverty and Health in Developing Countries", Population Reference Bureau 64.2, 2009, p. 13.

[29]   World Health Organization (WHO), Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence Against Women: Summary Report of Initial Results on Prevalence, Health Outcomes and Women's Responses, , 2005. Available from www.who.int/gender/violence/who_multicountry_study/summary_report/en/index.html.

[30]   Monica Akinyi Magadi, Eliya Msiyaphazi Zulu and Martin Brockerhoff, "The inequality of maternal health care in urban sub-Saharan Africa in the 1990s" in *Population Studies*, vol. 57, No. 3, 2003.

[31]   Montgomery "Urban Poverty" (see footnote 29), p. 11; Kelly Hallman, "Socioeconomic Disadvantage and Unsafe Sexual Behaviors among Young Women and Men in South Africa" in *Policy Research Division* Working Papers No. 190, New York, Population Council, 2004.

often denied rights to property owing to cultural norms and discriminatory legal mechanisms.[32]

21.　　　　Marginalization may also be seen in unequal rates of educational attainment between girls and boys in urban areas. Research shows that, while in past decades, progress has been made in increasing overall school enrolments in rural areas, rates in poor urban areas have actually decreased, a pattern that has disproportionately affected poor urban girls.[33] Studies suggest that social norms that disadvantage girls, such as expectations regarding their domestic role in the home, early marriage and limits to their independent movement, all act as barriers to their education, especially when household income is limited (see paragraph 50 below).[34]

2.　　　　Children

22.　　　　Children are a particularly vulnerable group among the urban poor. Slum settlements are hazardous environments that expose children to elements that may affect their health; for instance, poor urban children often suffer a disproportionately high incidence of diarrheal and respiratory disease than children living in rural or higher income urban areas. A survey conducted by the United States Agency for International Development of existing studies on children's health in urban areas in Asia and the Near East revealed that child mortality was startlingly higher in slums than in other parts of the same city – in some cases, such as in Manila, up to three times higher.[35] Poor urban communities also often lack facilities or safe recreational spaces for children.[36] In addition, inequalities between poor and higher income urban areas affect children from the outset. Limited access to quality education can entrench generational poverty by hampering children's ability to acquire skills and to secure higher paying jobs as adults.[37]

23.　　　　Urban unaccompanied minors, such as orphans, runaways or "street children", are affected even more acutely by the challenges of poverty. Many of these children are pushed into the streets by the household's need for more income, while others leave homes to escape abuse or in the hope of finding better income opportunities.[38] Regardless of how they arrived there, life on the street leaves them without a social safety net, rendering them particularly susceptible to physical and sexual abuse at the hands of police, exploitation by organized begging or waste picking rackets, and exposed to harsh conditions without access to reliable shelter.[39]

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[32] UN-Habitat, "Case Study: Women-Headed Households Suffer Disproportionately from Inadequate Housing", State of the World's Cities 2008/2009, 2008.

[33] UN-Habitat (see footnote 16), pp. 122-123.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Sarah Fry, Bill Cousins and Ken Olivola, "Health of Children Living in Urban Slums in Asia and the Near East: Review of Existing Literature and Data", prepared for the Asia and Near East Bureau of USAID under EHP Project 26568/OTHER.ANE.STARTUP, 2002.

[36] United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "Poverty and exclusion among urban children" in *Innocenti Digest*, No. 10, 2002.

[37] Department for International Development, "Ending Child Poverty: the Challenge", DFID, 2002.

[38] UNICEF (see footnote 37), p. 14.

[39] Ibid. See also Human Rights Watch, "Easy Targets: Violence against Children Worldwide", HRW, 2001 (available from www.hrw.org/reports/2001/children/); and "Off the Backs of Children: Forced Begging and Other Abuses against Talibés in Senegal", 2010 (available from www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/senegal0410webwcover.pdf).

3. Persons with disabilities

24. The hazards of urban poverty are particularly challenging for a number of other groups, such as persons with disabilities. It is important to note that data regarding the dynamics of poverty and disability are relatively limited, particularly in developing countries.[40] It is clear, however, that households with disabled members are more likely to experience poverty owing to a host of factors. These include the effects on already economically unstable families that the extra financial burden of catering to the special needs of disabled members can have, and the relationship between low employment and education rates for those living with a disability.[41] As the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons noted, employment is particularly difficult for persons with disabilities, and the stigma sometimes associated with disabilities results in their relegation to the margins of society.[42] Thus, while data are scarce and the relationship requires more research, there appears to be significant links between disability and extreme poverty.[43]

4. The elderly

25. The elderly living in urban poverty are similarly vulnerable. The social exclusion of the elderly is context-specific varies across different cultures. For instance, in many African, Latin American and Asian countries, the elderly are treated with deference and respect, while they fall into a marginalized category in other regions, such as in Eastern Europe, where the State is responsible for their welfare.[44] While data are once again scarce, there are indications that, especially for those without the social protection of a family, the elderly poor are a particularly vulnerable population.[45]

5. Minorities

26. In urban poor communities, groups that are victims of additional stigma or marginalization are particularly vulnerable to the hazards of urban poverty. This includes ethnic or religious minorities, migrants and disadvantaged castes. Combined with even more constrained access to education, employment and health care, the marginalization due to their minority status can make survival strategies for these groups much more complex.[46]

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[40] This may be due to the difficulty of collecting disaggregated data and interpreting for the way disability affects poverty within households. See Jeanine Braithwaite and Daniel Mont, "Disability and Poverty: A Survey of World Bank Poverty Assessments and Implications", ALTER, European Journal of Disability Research 3, 2009.

[41] Ibid.

[42] United Nations Enable, "World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons", 1982. Available from www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=23.

[43] Braithwaite and Mont, "Disability and Poverty" (see footnote 41).

[44] Deepa Narayan et al., "Can Anyone Hear us? Voices from 47 Countries", The World Bank, New York, 1999, p. 200.

[45] Ibid.

[46] See Loren B. Landau, "Shaping Urban Futures: Reflections on Human Mobility and Poverty in Africa's Globalizing Cities", from Allison M. Garland, Mejgan Massoumi, and Blair A. Ruble, eds. Global Urban Poverty: Setting the Agenda, Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2007 for the treatment of undocumented immigrants in informal settlements. For a case study on the persistent exclusion of the Roma minority, see Christian Bodewick and Akshay Sethi, "Poverty, Social Exclusion and Ethnicity in Serbia and Montenegro: The Case of the Roma", The World Bank, New York, 2005.

6. Victims of conflicts and natural disasters

27.   Poor urban communities as a whole are made particularly vulnerable in post-conflict and post-disaster situations owing to the marginalization faced on three fronts. First, communities of urban poor form in marginalized areas that often are more vulnerable to disaster and without adequate planning and infrastructure to decrease their vulnerability to events such as flood, earthquakes, fires and storms. Second, very few services are available for poor urban communities to strengthen their resilience to such shocks.[47] Safety nets typically available to higher income families, such as insurance or savings, are not usually available much of the urban poor. Third, even when recovery efforts are under way, resources and attention are frequently focused on other parts of the city and diverted from the communities that may need them the most.[48]

III.   Human rights of the urban poor

28.   Poverty in urban areas has been identified as one of the most serious problems faced by both developing and developed countries. The urban poor often do not have enough food and suffer from inadequate housing (see paragraph 16 above). Existing literature has identified the following issues faced by the urban poor: (a) limited access to income and employment; (b) inadequate and insecure living conditions; (c) poor infrastructure and services; (d) vulnerability to risks such as natural disasters, environmental hazards and health risks particularly associated with living in slums; (e) space issues, which inhibit mobility and transport; and (f) inequality, which is closely linked to problems of exclusion.[49]

A.   Right to food

29.   In its general comment No. 12, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights defines the right to food as achieved when "every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement." A former Special Rapporteur on the right to food similarly defined the right to food as "the right to have regular, permanent and unrestricted access, either directly or by means of financial purchases, to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food corresponding to the cultural traditions of the people to which the consumer belongs, and which ensures a physical and mental, individual and collective, fulfilling and dignified life free of fear."[50] For the urban poor, tenuous food security owing to reliance on a cash economy threatens this right.

30.   Urban populations are net purchasers of food, meaning that they rely on their ability to buy food that has travelled along distribution networks to the cities rather than grow most of the food that they consume. Generally, there is a greater variety and quantity of food available in urban areas than in rural areas.[51] Despite this relatively ample supply, however, urban dwellers tend to pay higher prices that incorporate the cost of transportation along complex distribution chains. On top of these higher prices, the urban poor are particularly vulnerable to price rises. Most do not have a stable source of fixed income as

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[47] M. Fay, F. Ghesquière and T. Solo, "Natural disasters and the urban poor" in *En Breve*, No. 32, LAC Region, The World Bank, New York, 2003.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Baker, "Urban poverty"(see footnote 1).

[50] A/HRC/7/5, para. 17.

[51] IFPRI, *Living in the City* (see footnote 23).

they rely on low wages from casual, informal or temporary jobs. Most lack the cash reserves to buy and store large quantities of food from wholesalers. Many of the urban poor pay for smaller quantities of food on a more frequent basis, which tends to be more expensive than buying in bulk. This also means that changes in food prices disproportionately affect the urban poor.[52]

31.   Another concern is the quality of food to which the urban poor have access. The right to food as defined above encompasses not just access to sufficient caloric intake but also to food that is nutritionally adequate. A healthy diet requires not just sufficient quantities of calories but also essential nutrients. Those chronically deprived of the latter suffer from malnutrition (often referred to as "the hidden hunger"), which makes them more vulnerable to disease. For those living in urban poverty, inadequate nutrition may be a problem, since food patterns in urban areas increasingly trend towards prepared or processed foods that are higher in calories but lower in micronutrients.[53]

B.   Right to adequate housing

32.   Article 25 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services". In its general comment No. 4, the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights further clarifies the right to adequate housing. In combination with its findings in general comment No. 7 on forced evictions, they characterize adequate housing to include security of tenure, accessibility to services and infrastructure, habitability, affordability, inclusive location, and cultural adequacy.[54] However, for the urban poor, securing adequate housing that meets these criteria in order to achieve this standard of living is a challenge.

33.   As discussed above, the urban poor often settle in areas that make them more vulnerable to disaster and disease, at the edge of cities or in otherwise undesirable and hazardous sites. UN-Habitat defines a slum household as such if it lacks access to an improved water supply; lacks access to improved sanitation; is subject to overcrowding (three or more people per room); or if the dwelling is made of non-durable material. According to this definition, in developing countries, around one third of the urban population live in slums. This figure is much higher for sub-Saharan Africa, where an estimated 71 per cent of urban dwellers live in slums, and for South Asia, where the figure is 59 per cent.[55]

34.   Given that the urban poor very rarely own tenure over their land or housing, they often face the constant threat of eviction, are vulnerable to mistreatment owing to the

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[52] Alberto Zezza and Luca Tasciotti, "Urban agriculture, poverty, and food security: Empirical evidence from a sample of developing countries" in *Food Policy*, vol. 35, No. 4, 2010.

[53] For instance, studies conducted in Cameroon and the United Republic of Tanzania show notable differences in the food consumption patterns between urban and rural populations, particularly in the higher amount of starch, sugar, fat and salt of urban residents compared with the high-fibre and micronutrient-rich diets of rural residents. See Gina Kennedy, "Food security in the context of urban sub-Saharan Africa", submitted for the FoodAfrica Internet Forum (2003) (available from http://foodafrica.nri.org/urbanisation/urbanisationpapers.html).

[54] See also www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Housing/Pages/Documents.aspx.

[55] UN-Habitat (see footnote 16).

informality of renting agreements, have greater difficulty in obtaining access to credit, and cannot use their homes for income-generating activities.[56]

35.   Much of the above predicament is due to too few pro-poor policies with regard to urbanization as a permanent pattern that requires acceptance and incorporation into city development strategies. There is a reluctance to integrate poor communities into the larger city, particularly in formalizing informal settlements, providing basic infrastructure or improving land tenure laws.

C.   Right to drinking water

36.   In developing countries, providing the rapidly increasing urban poor with safe and affordable drinking water has been one of the greatest challenges of sustainable development in recent decades. Following up on General Assembly resolution 64/292, the Human Rights Council affirmed the rights to water and sanitation in its resolution 15/9 , in which it affirmed that the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation is derived from the right to an adequate standard of living and inextricably related to the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, as well as the right to life and human dignity.

37.   For the urban poor, the right to an adequate standard of living is one of the most severely constrained. Settlements of the urban poor often lack access to water and sanitation infrastructure. These communities exist off the grid and rely on private, small-scale distributors of water, such as vendors or public taps. The result is that most urban slum-dwellers pay several times more than their higher income counterparts, not just in absolute terms but also as a share of household expenditure. In Nairobi, for instance, residents of informal settlements pay five to seven more times per unit than the official tariff levied on households with a connection to the water network.[57] In Argentina, poor urban households spend 16 per cent of all expenditure on utilities, compared with only 11 per cent of the wealthiest 25 per cent.[58] For residents of Kibera in Kenya, one of the most well-known slums on the continent, waiting times for access to communal taps exceed one hour on average, and much longer during the dry seasons.[59] According to a study conducted in 47 different countries and 93 locations, this pattern holds across countries; it in fact revealed that average water prices ranged from 1.5 to 12 times higher than in the formal network.[60]

38.   Having access to drinking water of adequate quality is a challenge for the urban poor. With very few households connected to the formal grid, the urban poor often obtain water from sources that are more difficult to monitor for quality. Combined with poor sanitation infrastructure, which experts agree must develop in tandem to avoid contamination, the net effect is that too few poor urban households have access to safe drinking water.

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[56] Baker, "Urban poverty" (see footnote 1).

[57] UNDP, "Human Development Report 2006: Beyond scarcity: Power, poverty and the global water crisis", 2006 (available from http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2006/).

[58] Baker, "Urban poverty" (see footnote 1), p. 18.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Mukami Kariuki and Jordan Schwartz, "Small-Scale Private Service Providers of Water and Electricity Supply: A Review of Incidence, Structure, Pricing and Operating Characteristics", Policy Research Paper No. 3727, The World Bank, 2005.

D.   Right to health

39.   The right to health is articulated in the Constitution of the World Health Organization, which defines health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity", and declares that "the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition." In addition to the challenges posed to health by inadequate access to water and sanitation, the right of the urban poor to this right, reaffirmed in article 12 of the International Covenant of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, is challenged by their exposure to environmental hazards and their limited access to health services.

40.   There is a large body of evidence suggesting that urban areas on average enjoy much higher health indicators than rural areas. However, when disaggregated, it is clear that there are wide disparities between the socio-economic fragments that exist in cities, and that the urban poor suffer from health risks that are comparable with, and sometimes worse than, those of their rural counterparts.[61]

41.   The painful irony is that urban areas enjoy better access to health services compared to rural areas—at least geographically. But for the urban poor, such services are often prohibitively expensive. For much of the developing world, health services in urban areas are largely fee-for-service, making reliable access cost prohibitive for the urban poor. However, even when subsidies are implemented to remove the cost barrier, often the system is inaccessible to the urban poor who face difficulty navigating the processes. Furthermore, the spatial and social marginalization of the urban poor affects their health-seeking behaviour such that many health care providers have come to expect urban poor users to seek treatment only when conditions become severe, to fail to follow prescriptions in order to save costs on medicines, and to sometimes display limited will to engage in robust health-seeking behaviour.[62]

42.   As discussed above, poor access to food, water, and sanitation in densely populated settlements accounts for many of the health risks faced by the urban poor. They are vulnerable to diseases such as tuberculosis and other respiratory, intestinal and infectious diseases. In particular, HIV/AIDS tends to be more severe among urban populations when compared with rural populations. The relationship between poverty and HIV prevalence is still unclear. There are some indications, however, that, for some socio-economic groups, such as adolescents and women, poverty may be linked to HIV prevalence owing to higher rates of early sexual initiation and reports of forced or traded sex.[63]

43.   In addition to the above-mentioned health burdens, poverty in urban areas is intertwined with the problem of environmental degradation, where poor air and water quality are particularly hazardous and pervasive. The urban poor are often exposed to especially high degrees of outdoor air pollution from traffic and industry. Airborne particulates and pollutants have been linked to respiratory illness, particularly in cities in Latin America, but with growing evidence of similar patterns in India and China.[64] Indoor air pollution caused by the intensive use of solid fuels, cooking stoves and open fires among the urban poor, combined with inadequate ventilation in poorly constructed shelters, are also believed to substantially raise the incidence of acute respiratory infections and

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[61]   Montgomery, "Urban Poverty " (see footnote 29).
[62]   Ibid.
[63]   Ibid., p 13.
[64]   Ibid.

chronic obstructive pulmonary disorders among the urban poor.[65] Poor families in cities are more likely to rely on these forms of fuel for their lighting and cooking needs than those with higher incomes.

44.   Beyond these physical health indicators, there is also growing evidence that mental illness, particularly depression and anxiety, is more prevalent among the urban poor than their higher income counterparts. Though more research is required, current hypotheses draw connections between mental illness and the stress of survival in resource constrained, often violent, and marginalized contexts.[66]

E.   Right to education

45.   In its general comment No. 13, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights defines education as both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights. The Committee also recognizes education as an "empowerment right", defining it as "the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities." As such, States are charged with the duties of both facilitating and providing education, as the Committee outlined in its general comment No. 3.

46.   For many of the urban poor, however, unequal access to quality education challenges this right and, by extension, their ability secure a poverty-free life for themselves and the generation that follows them. Figures on educational achievement and enrolment in urban areas often hide inequalities that disadvantage the poor. On aggregate, education favours the urban side of the urban-rural divide because schools are closer to where people live.[67] In reality, however, there are stark differences between the ability of the poor and the economically advantaged in their access to quality schooling. This is true to such an extent that enrolment among the urban poor is decreasing in many places, counter to rising rural and other urban enrolment rates.[68]

47.   Urban poor families have limited access to quality education owing to several common factors. First, despite free schooling, indirect costs such as uniforms, textbooks and supplies often make it prohibitive for households with very limited economic means. Second, the transition between primary and secondary school is particularly tenuous, as many children leave school to find work in order to supplement household income, illustrating the difficult economic decisions that poor urban families must make.[69] Third, urban poor communities may simply not have access to enough school facilities, such as in the case of Kibera, one of the largest slums of Nairobi. One study revealed that, while there were 14 free primary public schools within walking distance, the facilities could only accommodate 20,000 of the more than 100,000 school-aged children in the area.[70] Fourth, even if they are available, there are often dangers associated with traveling to and from schools, especially in poor urban areas, or at the schools themselves, including sexual abuse

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[65] UN-Habitat (see footnote 16), p. 114.
[66] See Naomar Almeida-Filho et al., "Social inequality and depressive disorders in Bahia, Brazil: interactions of gender, ethnicity, and social class" in *Social Science and Medicine,* 59, no. 7, 2004.
[67] UNFPA (see footnote 5), p. 28.
[68] UN-Habitat (see footnote 16), p. 128.
[69] UNFPA (see footnote 5).
[70] UN-Habitat (see footnote 16), p. 127.

and mistreatment.[71] Finally, the quality of education available to poor, urban communities is usually far inferior. For example, door-to-door surveys conducted in Hyderabad and Secunderabad in India indicated that the poor quality of school facilities and teaching was a major factor in family decisions to remove their children from school.[72] It is important to note that these challenges to the right to education disproportionately affect girls.

F.   Right to work

48.   Article 23 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights specifies the basic right of everyone to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. Articles 23 (2) goes on to specify that "everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work", while article 23 (3) declares that "everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection."

49.   For those living in urban poverty, however, not only is unemployment uniformly much higher than for the rest of the urban workforce; there is very little protection against unemployment. A study conducted by the World Bank in 2007in Dhaka found that unemployment among poor men was twice that of non-poor men (10 per cent as against 5 per cent). These figures were even higher for women, with 25 per cent of poor women facing unemployment compared with 12 per cent of non-poor women.[73] Data from Latin America suggest that the urban poor have disproportionately low skill levels – 70 per cent of poor, urban adults in the workforce, as against 50 per cent in the overall urban workforce classified as low-skilled.[74] This has implications for the type of wages that the urban poor are able to secure. They are rarely sufficient to meet the conditions described in article 23 (3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As low-skilled labourers, much of the urban poor must work in unstable jobs for low wages. These temporary, often informal, jobs can vary from one season to the next, and pay tends to fluctuate accordingly.

50.   The right to work is closely tied to the right to education; research shows that limited access to quality education for the urban poor means that they cannot gain the necessary skills to secure more stable, higher paying employment. Studies from Brazil, for instance, suggest that limited access to quality education can account for differences in wages between different groups of varying social marginalization.[75] These patterns can also be generational in some cases; parents who are low-skilled and poorly educated are less able to provide their children with adequate opportunities to secure a poverty-free adulthood.[76]

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[71]   UNICEF (see footnote 37), p. 13; UNFPA (see footnote 5), p. 28; Human Rights Watch, "Failing Our Children", 2005.
[72]   UNICEF (see footnote 37), p. 13.
[73]   World Bank, "Dhaka: Improving Living Conditions for the Urban Poor", Bangladesh Development Series, Paper No. 17, The World Bank, New York, 2007.
[74]   Lucy Winchester and Racquel Szalachman, "The Urban Poor's Vulnerability to the Impacts of Climate Change in Latin America and the Caribbean: A Policy Agenda", Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean, United Nations, 2006.
[75]   Omar Arias, Gustavo Yamada and Luis Tejerina, "Education, Family Background and Racial Earnings Inequality in Brazil", Inter-American Development Bank, 2003.
[76]   Department for International Development, "Ending Child Poverty" (see footnote 38).

G. Right to political participation

51.   The right to political participation is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; article 21 states that "everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives." It further specifies that, "the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government." For poor city dwellers, the right to political participation is closely related to urban governance practices. The Habitat Agenda defines governance as "the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences"and good urban governance as "characterized by the principles of sustainability, subsidiarity, equity, efficiency, transparency and accountability, civic engagement and citizenship, and security." [77]

52.   These characteristics do not apply to the political reality of most poor urban communities, who have yet to realize their rights fully or to enjoy a relationship with decision-makers that is accountable, transparent or inclusive. Several factors conspire to marginalize political voice and civic participation among the urban poor. Firstly, the lack of responsiveness of Governments to their needs, as reflected by gaps in basic services, undermine the contract with the Government and reinforce the idea that the urban poor are not full citizens of the cities they inhabit.[78] Secondly, there is a demonstrated reluctance to incorporate the needs of poor urban citizens into larger city policies, sometimes from a limited understanding of the extent of urban poverty, other times from a misunderstanding of how to address it.[79] Finally, though some cities have adopted ways to incorporate the political voice of poor urban dwellers into decision-making, they are still the exception and not the rule in a context where votes alone are not enough to ensure sustained and structural change for the urban poor.[80]

53.   The political marginalization of the urban poor underpins all the obstacles that the urban poor face in enjoying the rights outlined above. This exclusion is even greater for migrant and undocumented workers who, for instance, have access to very few legal rights and services. The urban poor have been generally excluded from the processes by which decisions affecting them are made. Since the urban poor are particularly disadvantaged with regard to health and opportunities for education, work and political participation, their exclusion hampers their ability to influence policies that could improve their lives, hold Government officials accountable and contribute their valuable knowledge to development efforts.[81]

IV. Good practices

54.   Various efforts for the enjoyment of rights of the urban poor have been made by local authorities, national Governments, civil society groups, inter-governmental organizations and the private sector at the national, regional and international levels.

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[77] UN-Habitat, Global campaign on urban governance concept paper, 2002, p. 12.

[78] See B. Landau, "Shaping Urban Futures" (see footnote 47).

[79] For instance, forced evictions or other policies designed to halt the flow of rural-urban migration.

[80] Research among poor urban communities does reflect a high rate of electoral participation (see John Harris, "Political participation, representation, and the urban poor: findings from research in Delhi" in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 12 March 2005). However, there are also indications of the voting process being co-opted by client-patron relationships and short-term material promises that do not affect structural changes for the urban poor.

[81] UNFPA (see footnote 5), p. 31.

Partnerships between these actors have taken many forms. The section below identifies various best practices of such initiatives and partnerships.

A. National and city Governments

1. National poverty alleviation strategy (China)

55. The anti-poverty efforts made by the Government of China serve as a useful example of a long-term, phased and integrated approach.[82] Beginning with its rural-oriented development strategy in 1984, it has undergone three phases. Since 2000, the second phase established and improved urban and rural social security systems, and began making investments in human capital. Phase three, beginning in 2006, was characterized by the consolidation and enhancement of human capital investments. The most recent phase, beginning in 2011, is an integrated strategy that combines three components: investment in infrastructure; social security interventions; and measures to empower poor communities through human capital investments.

2. Participatory budgeting (Brazil)

56. Brazil pioneered the concept of participatory budgeting in the city of Porto Alegre in 1989.[83] The initiative was designed to enhance accountability and transparency, and allow citizens greater influence on how municipal budgets were spent. The model allows citizen representatives of neighbourhood associations from throughout the city, including the *favelas*, to participate in meetings where they influence how available investment funds (usually 15 per cent of the overall budget) will be spent. Since its establishment, most figures cite impressive improvements in water and sanitation indicators. For instance, in the first 10 years since the introduction of participatory budgeting, the share of households in the city with water connections increased from 75 per cent to 98 per cent, and sewage coverage rose from 46 per cent to 98 per cent.[84]

57. The Porto Alegre model has since been replicated in many forms throughout Brazil, the rest of Latin America and elsewhere. In the more than two decades since the introduction of participatory budgeting, limitations with the model have been identified. These include concerns that it can limit participation to short-term projects rather than to deeper, ongoing political engagement; it can depend too much on the office of the mayor, making it susceptible to corruption; it encourages a focus on short-term planning; and it may not allow for urban poor communities to address the underlying reasons for their exclusion.[85] However, it is clear that where there is a strong commitment to transparency and improved urban governance, and when combined with investments in educating the urban poor participants, the model is an innovative tool to be used alongside others in addressing the deprivations of urban poverty.

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[82] Lu Mai, "Poverty Eradication in China: A New Phase", China Development Research Foundation, 2011 (available from www.un.org/esa/socdev/csocd/2011/Lu.pdf).

[83] Donald P. Moynihan, "Citizen Participation in Budgeting: Prospects for Developing Countries" in *Participatory Budgeting*, ed Anwar Shah, The World Bank, New York, 2007, p. 66.

[84] Gianpaolo Baiocchi, "Participation, activism, and politics: the Porto Alegre experiment and deliberative democratic theory" in *Politics & Society*, 2001, vol. 29, No. 1.

[85] Brian Wampler, "A Guide to Participatory Budgeting" in *Participatory Budgeting*, ed Anwar Shah, Washington D.C., The World Bank, 2007, pp. 45-47.

3. Community Organizations Development Institute (Thailand)

58.   In Thailand, the Community Organizations Development Institute[86] provides a useful example of the role that the Government can play in enhancing urban governance by nurturing and collaborating with community-based networks or federations. Formed in 2000 when the Government of Thailand merged the Urban Community Development Office and the Rural Development Office, the Institute was a response to the realization that poor urban communities had been left out of the economic growth of the previous decades. Earlier, the Urban Community Development Office had begun a programme providing low-interest loans for community-based savings and credit groups who demonstrated sufficient capacity to manage the funds, which were used for a variety of activities, from income-generation to housing improvement and relocation. The real innovation of the Institute was in its solution to the challenge of scaling up the programme. It linked individual savings groups into larger networks or federations of slum dwellers, who managed and on-lent the funds to their member organizations. These networks were particularly effective because they (a) decentralized decision-making processes, making them closer and more responsive to communities and the needs they identified for themselves; (b) created a means for poor urban communities and municipal authorities to engage with each other constructively thanks to the ability of the networks to negotiate, advocate or influence urban policies, and collaborate with city-wide initiatives; and (c) provided ways for poor urban communities to share experiences and pool resources.

B.   Civil society groups

1. Orangi Pilot Project - Research and Training Institute (Pakistan)

59.   The Orangi Pilot Project of the Research and Training Institute,[87] in Pakistan, which organizes community-initiated and community-implemented sewage construction in the poor urban settlements of Karachi, is a useful model of partnership between civil society and Government. The Institute is a community-based organization that organizes committees of poor urban residents to oversee, finance and construct basic, cost-effective underground sewage systems in otherwise underserved Orangi Town. It provides technical guidance and one eighteenth of overall financing, while the committees fund the rest. State agencies support the initiative by providing funding for larger infrastructural investments, such as treatment plants. The results show improved health indicators, particularly in infant mortality rates, an effective, low-cost sewage system and a community that reports significant decreases in the perception of social marginalization and stigmatization.

3. Luanda Urban Poverty Project (Angola)

60.   The Luanda Urban Poverty Project[88] in Angola provides a useful case study for a on-governmental organization-led integrated approach to alleviating urban poverty that is grounded in community participation and partnerships to improve urban governance. Started in 1999 by a coalition of three non-governmental organizations (Care International, Save the Children UK and Development Workshop), the Project partners with the

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[86] Celine d'Cruz and David Satterthwaite, "Building homes, changing official approaches", Poverty Reduction in Urban Areas Series, Human Settlements Working Paper No. 16, IIED, London, 2005.

[87] Arif Hasan, "The Sanitation Program of the Orangi Pilot Project: Research and Training Institute, Karachi, Pakistan" in *Global Urban Poverty: Setting the Agenda*, eds. Allison M. Garland, Mejgan Massoumi, and Blair A. Ruble, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2007.

[88] See UN-Habitat, Best Practices Database (http://www.unhabitat.org/bp/bp.list.details.aspx?bp_id=1121).

Government agencies and community-based organizations in the municipalities of Cazenga, Sambizanga, Kilamba Kiaxi and Cacuaco, in Luanda. It is funded by the British-based Department for International Development. The Project has won recognition for its approach that facilitates the ability of poor urban communities to self-manage such basic services as water and sanitation, handle waste, and engage with municipal planning and advocate for pro-poor policies at the national level. At the same time, the Project helps local governments dialogue with and respond to poor urban communities by incorporating the needs they identify. The key components of the Project are community coordinated and managed water and sanitation services, waste management and child care; livelihood training, facilitating engagement in the municipal planning process; and access to credit and savings schemes.

4. South African Homeless Peoples' Federation (South Africa)

61.   The South African Homeless Peoples' Federation[89] provides a compelling case study for how community-generated associations can drive self-built housing improvements. Formed in 1996, the Federation brings together a network of autonomous savings and credit groups from across South Africa. It was created to address a void in housing improvement options for the urban poor, who are largely unable to meet the requirements to qualify for the national housing subsidy. The Federation requires that members commit to a savings and credit group. It assists them by providing bridge financing to secure land tenure and build homes; facilitates exchanges between member neighbourhoods and cities to increase knowledge, skills and practices to address common needs within poor urban communities; assists communities in mapping and surveying their settlements to identify needs and collect data for negotiations with municipal authorities; and constructing demonstration homes that are instructive for both Government partners and Federation members.

C.   Private sector

1.   Manila Water Company (Philippines)

62.   The Manila Water Company, Inc.[90] is a compelling example of a public-private partnership that has been largely successful in providing improved access to water for the urban poor in Manila. In 1997, the Company won a Government concession to serve the east service zone of Manila, encompassing a population in which the urban poor make up 40 per cent of inhabitants. By approaching them as a viable customer base and revenue source, the Company's customer-centred culture and model of community engagement was successful in extending the water infrastructure to informal settlements, reducing illegal tapping and maintaining a profitable enterprise. It provides a useful illustration of how market forces might be harnessed to improve water access to the urban poor when combined with a pro-poor approach and anchored by a strong public partner.

2.   Compromissa Empresarial para Reciclagem (CEMPRE) (Brazil)

63.   Cooperatives that organize poor, urban informal workers who make a living by sorting and collecting waste exist in cities across Latin America, Asia and Africa. The case

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[89] Ted Baumann, Joel Bolnick and Diana Mitlin, "The age of cities and organizations of the urban poor: the work of the South African Homeless People's Federation and the People's Dialogue on Land and Shelter", Working Paper No. 2 on Poverty Reduction in Urban Areas, IIED, 2001.

[90] USAID, "Enabling Water Services Deliver for the Urban Poor in Asia: Best Practices Review and Workshop", 2006.

of CEMPRE in Brazil shows how cooperatives can partner the private sector to improve job creation and waste management among the urban poor. CEMPRE[91] is a non-profit association created in 1992, financially supported by private firms operating in Brazil, that helps waste pickers form cooperatives in order to secure better prices for the wastes they sell to industrial recyclers and waste processers. These cooperatives have been shown to be effective at securing better working conditions, higher pay and opportunities for members to gain further education, collect savings and more.[92]

D. Regional actors and initiatives

1. Decent work programmes

64.   The work of the International Labour Organization (ILO) with national and regional bodies is a model of both international support and regional coordination for poverty eradication. At the national level, ILO works with individual Governments to build comprehensive poverty alleviation strategies through the decent work country programmes. ILO works with each country to integrate decent work as a key component of their development strategies, and provides expertise, capacity and technical assistance to help each Government implement them.[93]

2. Regional offices

65.   ILO also works to strengthen regional institutions, such as the African Union and regional economic communities, in their efforts to eradicate poverty. By facilitating strategic exchanges and coordinated approaches across countries, this regional cooperation provides a means of embedding employment into each Government's national development strategy.[94]

E. International community

1. World Summit on Sustainable Development outcomes in Africa

66.   The United Nations Development Programme, in partnership with the Economic Commission for Africa, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, provides technical support to 35 African countries that have embarked on the process of preparing and implementing national strategies and plans of action plans based on the Millennium Development Goals.[95] This initiative showcases a model of international support and coordination that equips individual country Governments to undertake strategies best suited to the particular poverty challenges they face.

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[91] Martin Medina, "Globalization, Development, and Municipal Solid Waste Management in Third World Cities" in *Private Sector Involvement in Solid Waste Management*, GTZ, 2005.

[92] See Oscar Fergutz, Sonia Dias and Diana Mitlin, "Developing urban waste management in Brazil with waste picker organizations" in *Environment and Urbanization*, vol. 23, No. 2, October 2011, p. 23.

[93] See ILO, Decent Work Country Programs ()www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/program/dwcp/index.htm.

[94] See ILO, Regional Office for Africa (www.ilo.org/public/english/region/afpro/addisababa/activities/coopau.htm).

[95] Economic Commission for Africa, *Sustainable Development Report on Africa*, 2008 (available from www.uneca.org/sdd/documents/SDRA.pdf).

2.   Cities Alliance

67.   Cities Alliance[96] is a global coalition founded in 1999 by the World Bank and UN-Habitat, whose activities are run and implemented by member cities themselves. It is made up of city authorities from around the world, national Governments, development agencies, non-governmental organizations and multilateral institutions dedicated to addressing urban poverty. It provides cities and governments with technical assistance in three basic areas: slum upgrading programmes, city development strategies, and national policies on urban development and local government. Its support for cities or national Governments rests on four basic criteria: they must be committed to improve their cities and local governance for all its residents; adopt a long-term and inclusive approach; implement reforms fully to achieve delivery at scale; and empower local government by decentralizing resources. Cities Alliance models several useful approaches, most notably:

(a) It prioritizes social inclusion of the urban poor themselves as a prerequisite to sustained development;

(b) It models good governance principles in the relationship between the international donor community and member cities by promoting initiatives that are designed and led by cities themselves;

(c) It facilitates sharing between cities in the developing world to help apply best practices and lessons learned through real experiences.

V.   Recommendations

68.   In order to address the challenges that urban poverty poses to a growing population on a global scale, the following measures should be taken:

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[96] UNFPA (see footnote 5). See also Cities Alliance www.citiesalliance.org.

(a)   **Promote rights-based and participative development policies and good governance. Development policies that fully consider the human rights of the poor should be implemented. Central to this effort is the enhanced political participation of the urban poor themselves. Aside from fulfilling an integral human right, promoting good governance that engages affected communities in the policymaking process has been shown to enhance development efforts. Local knowledge of needs and constraints are invaluable to the policymaking process. Often innovations grown within poor urban communities to fill the service void are viable options that can be scaled up. Meanwhile, meaningful buy-in from traditionally excluded poor urban communities may enhance the sustainability of initiatives in the long run, as some of the examples in the previous section demonstrate.**

(b)   **Promote the establishment of social safety nets. Given the fragile economic resilience of poor urban communities where employment is unstable or uncertain, and where the bulk of incomes go towards immediate survival, social safety nets should be established to make households better equipped to recover from shocks. Initiatives that help the urban poor cope with unemployment, casual or informal employment, uncertain daily wages and disaster should be established.**

(c)   **Empower the urban poor by investing in human capital. Given the links between low wages, limited access to quality education and low skills, measures to enhance the human capital of the urban poor should be taken. Quality education and vocational training to boost access to higher wages and stable employment could have a significant impact on long-term poverty alleviation among the urban poor.**

(d)   **Apply an integrated approach. Understanding that the hazards of urban poverty are multidimensional and require interventions that span urban planning, public health, education, food security and more, it is important to avoid a fragmented approach.[97] Instead, an integrated approach should be applied. This may take the form of several measures implemented in tandem, such as infrastructure investments to improve access to water and sanitation, enhanced vocational training and micro-credit programmes.**

(e)   **Strengthen international cooperation. As the example of the national poverty alleviation strategy adopted in China shows, a long-term approach may be better suited to the systemic impact and multi-sectoral dimensions that are required to address urban poverty. Thus, there is an urgent need to coordinate the international development effort in order to direct right-based foreign investment to where it can have a greater impact and avoid waste. International south-south cooperation may also yield benefits as developing countries facing similar urbanization challenges share lessons and successful strategies.[98]**

(f)   **Incorporate particular regard for vulnerable groups. All these measures should mainstream gender and pay special attention to the needs of children, older persons and disabled persons. Multiple discriminations based on castes, ethnicities, religion and so on should be addressed through programming.**

69.   **As the global urban population continues to grow at a rapid pace, the need to focus attention on ensuring their full enjoyment of basic human rights must become**

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[97] See UNFPA (footnote 5).
[98] See the Millennium Project for a discussion on the positive impact of fostering exchanges across federations of slum dwellers.

a priority for the future. In order to ensure that the needs of the urban poor – and particularly those of vulnerable groups living in urban poverty – are met, various actions need to be taken at the local, national, regional and international levels. An approach to alleviating poverty for urban populations that integrates infrastructural development, social safety nets and investments in empowering and educating poor communities will prove essential. Equally crucial will be a human rights approach to development that effectively addresses the ways urban poverty threatens rights to health, water, shelter, food, education and work. Lastly, improving political participation for the marginalized urban poor is the linchpin to strategies aimed at addressing the challenges of growing urban poverty.