Migration to the cities and new vulnerabilities

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Understanding diversity and complexity among migrants

- Wealthier rural residents migrate permanently to the cities for work and education
- Poorest rural groups are more likely to migrate to local towns and other rural areas, temporarily or seasonally
- Women heading their households are a large proportion of rural-urban female migrants
- But also growing numbers of rural groups who lose their livelihoods move to urban centres
- As well as IDPs (conflicts and environmental change)
Diversity in the forms of migration

• Urban to urban migration a significant share of movement – often two-thirds of all migrants
• Still a large share of circular and temporary migrants – possibly the most vulnerable because they are often excluded from full citizenship rights
• Increasing cross-border regional migration (eg in Southern Africa), exposing migrants to xenophobia
• Net in-migration to a city can hide significant out-migration
• Most cities have a mix of all, making it difficult to devise specific policies for ‘migrants’
Data on urban poverty and disadvantage, and migration

• Data on urban disadvantage based on income/assets, housing and access to basic services
• Sometimes disaggregated by sex, age and ethnic group – but NOT by migrant status
• Very large data gaps also on populations living in informal settlements, the homeless and those living at their workplace
• In some cities, one-half to three-quarters of the population live in informal settlements – but not all of them are migrants
Migrants’ disadvantage: incomes

- No significant differences with non-migrants among non-poor groups – not all migrants are poor
- But higher overall levels of income poverty (2/3 of all poor in Vietnam’s main cities are migrants) – migrants are a large proportion of the urban poor
- High levels of unstable, informal employment
- Migrant households are more likely to be food insecure than non-migrants – but both are disturbingly high in Southern Africa (78 and 65%)
- In many cases, migrants reduce their own living costs to support rural relatives
Access to housing and shelter

• A large proportion of migrants in low-income settlements, but with important variations
• Older settlements are often home to lower-middle income groups - who lived there for several generations after migration (eg ‘notified slums’ in India)
• More recent settlements are more often home to recent migrants and people displaced within the city (eg Old Fadama in Accra), often tenants
• The latter are more likely to have inadequate shelter, basic infrastructure and access to services
A notified slum in Bangalore
A ‘first generation’ slum in Bangalore
Non-income poverty in low-income urban settlements

- Very large data gaps on people living in these settlements
- The settlements themselves often do not officially exist (but can be home to as much as 70 percent of the city’s population – as in Dar es Salaam)
- Lack of basic infrastructure has huge impacts on health, especially child mortality rates and stunting
- Environmental hazards are substantial as many settlements are in marginal areas subject to flooding and landslides
Women migrating on their own: a more vulnerable group?

• An increase in the independent migration of women as shown by urban sex ratios – but with regional variations
• A higher proportion of women headed households among migrants – push factors
• More employment opportunities, but often in low-paid, insecure jobs (gender-segmented labour markets)
• In informal settlements, additional burdens due to lack of basic services and infrastructure, and risk of gender-based violence
Infant and child mortality rates in Kenya
(source: APHRC, 2002)
Environmental hazards in Mathare, Nairobi
Environmental hazards in Old Fadama, Accra
The challenge for city governments

• City and municipal governments have a huge importance in addressing the needs of their residents
• But in many cases lack resources and capacity, and perhaps most importantly political will
• Smaller urban centres often have even less capacities and resources, yet are demographically important (and also attract migrants)
• Blaming urban poverty on migrants is not realistic: but while not all migrants are poor, in many cities they are a large proportion of the urban poor
Local initiatives to reduce risk

• Risk as the outcome of exposure and vulnerability – both need to be better understood in urban contexts
• Need for more accurate data on low-income settlements and groups – eg mapping and enumerations – including migrant status
• Most strong urban poverty reduction programmes are place based, with a focus on tenure, housing, basic services
• Migrants are more likely to be included where these programmes are city-wide (and nation-wide)
• Baan Mankong in Thailand; over 100,000 ‘slum’ households
• Asian Coalition for Community Action: over 1,000 community initiatives in 18 countries
• 30+ national federations of slum/shack dwellers, all with mostly women-managed savings group at base, all with many initiatives (where possible with local government)