

WORLD MIGRATION REPORT 2015

Linkages between Urbanization, Rural–Urban Migration and Poverty Outcomes in Africa

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Background paper

December 2014



International Organization for Migration (IOM)

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
ISSER	Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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I. INTRODUCTION

Urbanization is increasingly being acknowledged as one of the most defining issues of the twenty-first century. More than half of the world's population now lives in towns and cities, and the figure is projected to rise to 75 per cent by 2050 (UN DESA, 2015), with most of this urban growth concentrated in Africa and Asia. Urbanization is critical for economic growth, poverty reduction, the stabilization of population growth and long-term sustainability. The high rates of urbanization in Asia and Africa indicate that global urbanization has shifted to developing countries and emerging economies. There are twice as many people – 2.3 billion – living in urban agglomerations in developing countries as there are living in cities in industrialized nations. In 2030, there will be four times as many, totalling 3.9 billion people, 60 per cent of whom will be below 18 years of age (UN-Habitat, 2014a). Therefore, the future of developing countries is increasingly being determined by urbanization and a population structure that has a disproportionate number of young people. In the developing world, Africa has experienced the highest rate of urban growth during the last two decades, at 3.5 per cent per year, and this rate of growth is expected to hold into 2050. It is estimated that, by 2025, more than half of the population of Africa will live and work in urban centres, compared with 14.5 per cent in 1950, 28 per cent in 1980 and 34 per cent in 1990 (UN-Habitat, 2014a).

Migration is a significant contributor to urbanization, as people move in search of social and economic opportunities or as a result of environmental deterioration. In 2010, more than 200 million people, equal to about 3 per cent of the world's population, lived in a country different from the one in which they were born, and migration within countries continues at high levels. Migration is often equated with international movement, but migration within countries, primarily from rural to urban areas, accounts for a much greater share of human population movements. In Africa, while international migration has received more attention in recent debates on migration, internal migration is far more significant in terms of the numbers of people involved and perhaps even the quantum of remittances and their poverty reduction potential (UNDP, 2009). People who leave the countryside to find better lives in the city often have no choice but to settle in shanty towns and slums, where they lack access to decent housing, sanitation, health care and education, in effect, trading in rural poverty for urban poverty. Given the significant number of people moving to new countries in some regions, migration will shape future demographic trends.

Migration is thus an important component of urban population growth and the urbanization process in Africa. However, the capacity of urban towns to plan for and accommodate the increasing number of migrants by providing employment and access to land and basic amenities is limited. This has led to a largely negative policy position of governments and city authorities on migration to urban areas. Rural-urban migration in particular is typically seen as creating pressure on urban infrastructure, environment and employment, and there is an underlying assumption that the phenomenon is linked to rising levels of urban poverty.

However, despite a largely negative view of urban growth in Africa, urban areas are “becoming not just the dominant form of habitat for humankind, but also the engine-rooms of human development as a whole” (UN-Habitat, 2012b). Despite obvious challenges, growing cities in Africa also provide opportunities for migrants to create livelihoods, engage in entrepreneurship and accumulate assets, thus contributing to human capital development.

This paper offers an analysis of the linkages between urbanization, rural–urban migration and poverty outcomes in Africa. It highlights local responses to increasing urban migration trends in various parts of Africa and discusses how these responses have provided opportunities for inclusive policy responses to urban migration at the city level. The paper also examines local urban partnership initiatives in Africa involving migrants and local governments, civil society and the private sector, and their policy implications.

2. CONCEPTUALIZING MIGRATION, URBANIZATION AND POVERTY LINKAGES IN AFRICA

Urbanization is a multifaceted concept that refers not only to the growth of the population in towns and cities (the share of the national population in towns and cities), but also to the extent to which this growth is accompanied by structural shifts in the economy and employment, and by social and political changes that may occur when people live in large, nucleated settlements (UN-Habitat, 2014a). Various authors (see, for example, Potts, 2008, 2012) have drawn attention to the seemingly contradictory trends in recent urbanization rates in sub-Saharan Africa, pointing out that rapid population growth, as experienced in most of the region's towns and cities, does not necessarily translate into rapid increases in urbanization levels.

A focus on the broader structural aspects of urbanization, rather than on headline urban population growth rates alone, provides a picture of a variable urban experience across the region within, and between, countries. Using the latest census data, rather than projections, Potts (2012, 2013) argues that several large mainland sub-Saharan African countries have experienced periods of rather slow urbanization in recent decades, and that a few African countries in the 1980s and 1990s even counter-urbanized – that is, the share of the urban population dropped (see table 1). Thus, rapid urbanization need not occur just because a capital city is growing fast. Potts (2012) points out that notable exceptions, as shown in table 1, are Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Ghana, which were urbanizing significantly faster. This therefore indicates that, although African urban population growth may be high, the recent urbanization rate is lower than the rate in Asian countries. Despite this apparent slowing of urbanization, the contribution of net immigration to urban growth should not be underestimated.

Table 1: Urbanization growth in large mainland countries in sub-Saharan Africa by census period

Counter-urbanization (drop in portion of urban population)	Slow urbanization (< 2% between censuses)	Rapid urbanization	Uncertain (no census or definitional queries)
Zambia 1980–1990, 1990–2000	Benin 1992–2002	Burkina Faso 1996–2006	Angola
Côte d'Ivoire 1988–1998	Ethiopia 1994–2007	Cameroon 1987–2005	Democratic Republic of the Congo
Mali 1987–1998	Malawi 1998–2008	Ghana 2000–2010	Kenya 1989–2009
Central African Republic 1988–2003	Mauritania 1988–2000		United Republic of Tanzania 1998–2002
	Mozambique 1997–2007		
	Niger 1988–2001		
	Senegal 1988–2002		
	Sudan 1993–2008		
	Togo 1981–2010		
	Uganda 1991–2002		
	Zambia 2000–2010		
	Nigeria 1991–2006		

Source: UN-Habitat, 2014a, p. 22.

Furthermore, issues of settlement definition and settlement reclassification can affect interpretations of African urbanization. Using recent census data, Potts (2012) concludes that Ghana's recent surge in urbanization may in fact be a result of the reclassification of settlements, although the author concedes that, in some large towns such as Kumasi, Tema and Sekondi-Takoradi, urban growth has clearly taken place and has also attracted many migrants. In Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania, complex issues related to definitions have led to overestimations of their urbanization levels. It is therefore argued that the true role of migration in urbanization, with its associated policy implications, can only be understood when analyses evaluate the geographical variability occurring in urbanization within and between countries and indicate how the process has fluctuated over time.

Migration and urbanization and their links to poverty are therefore complex, highly context-specific social processes and phenomena. There are numerous multidirectional and multidimensional linkages between urbanization, migration and poverty; each can act to drive or prevent the others, and each can influence the outcomes of the others. Migration can be a reaction to severe poverty, or a chosen livelihood strategy to improve upon household wealth. For example, in Ghana during the economic slump from the 1970s to the 1980s, migration became the basic survival strategy for families to enable them to cope with difficult economic conditions (Kwankye and Anarfi, 2011). In recent times, the independent migration of girls and women has become common as households have begun to see the benefits of remittances from female members working as domestic workers, as head porters (*kayayei*) or in markets (Awumbila, Owusu and Teye, 2014).

Large differences in income and living standards between places, as well as the general perception that migrant households are better off than non-migrant households, act as incentives for people to move (Clemens and Pritchett, 2008; Sabates-Wheeler, Sabates and Castaldo, 2005). Studies on urbanization indicate that, with regard to internal migration in Africa, key pull factors are income, employment, and other opportunities for personal success and development in the more developed urban centres, all of which are severely limited in rural areas (Black et al., 2006; Kwankye et al., 2009). Even when formal employment figures decline, cities offer more opportunities in their huge informal labour markets (Songsore, 2003a).

Migration can also contribute to urban poverty and the development of informal settlements. Migrant communities – enclaves of internal and international migrants of the same nationality, place of origin or ethnic group – are a common phenomenon around the world, and have been recorded in Africa's urban centres since the pre-colonial era. Various factors drive migrants to congregate in particular areas of the city, including social networks, exclusion from housing or employment in indigenous neighbourhoods, xenophobia and protection in numbers (Agyei-Mensah and Owusu, 2009). Many of these migrant communities emerge in urban slums as these areas become a primary destination for internal and intraregional migrants, thus feeding into the "urban divide" that characterizes many of Africa's urban areas. Spatially, the urban divide in Africa is reflected in the high incidence of slums and informal settlements.

While rural–urban migration has slowed in many parts of Africa (Potts, 2009), there is considerable movement within and between cities. Obeng-Odoom (2011) argues that, despite their shared geographical location on the African continent, cities in Africa have different pre-colonial and post-colonial experiences that make them unique. Therefore, the stereotypes of African cities as being parasitic, abnormal and poverty driven (UN-Habitat, 2008:7–9) do not reflect the entire situation and are increasingly being contested (Obeng-Odoom, 2011). More recently, the view that cities in Africa "can be major assets for political, social and economic development" and "accelerators of development" (UN-Habitat, 2010a, 2014a) has been increasingly acknowledged.

Bakewell and Jonsson (2011) argue that, despite the common portrayal of African cities as dangerous, squalid environments, part of the attraction of African cities has been their purported role in preparing

potential migrants for onward journeys, especially those in Morocco for onward movement to Europe. To this extent, African cities may be recognized as zones of departure. However, the authors further note that it is far too simplistic to consider African cities primarily as places of arrival or departure and that it is necessary to understand how mobility interacts with the development and change of urban space, as well as how the life of the city transforms people's mobility.

Studies on the movement of Ghanaian traders in markets in the two largest cities of Ghana, namely Accra and Kumasi (Awumbila et al., 2010), and of Nigerian traders in Lagos (Afolayan, Ikwuyatum and Abejide, 2010) highlight how economic life in cities stimulates mobility and initial phases of migration across the world. The huge markets of Accra, Kumasi and Lagos attract people and their products from all over the world and encourage further movement across the world. In order for a city to function and to have functioning markets, the people, even poor, relatively low-skilled people, must move for trade. Therefore, the notion that people migrate out of African cities because of the lack of employment, poor living conditions and poverty, which is the dominant view in much of the migration literature, may not always be true, as the case of the movement of traders illustrates (Bakewell and Jonsson, 2011).

The above discussion on the linkages between the processes of migration, urbanization and poverty highlights not only their complexity, but also the diverse range of contexts within which they occur in Africa. Poverty can force or prevent migration, but most often it limits the types of migration and destinations open to poor people, and determines the conditions under which they migrate as a livelihood strategy. In return, migration is one of the key contributing factors to urbanization in Africa, although natural increase and the reclassification of settlements are major contributing factors. Over centuries, rural–urban migration has led to the emergence of many migrant communities in cities, a form of social capital that is important in successful migration outcomes. Due to land and housing problems and the attraction of the informal economy for migrants with low human capital, these migrant communities tend to be based (and therefore expand) in urban slums, with negative effects both on urban poverty and on the experiences and living conditions of migrants. The discussion also highlights the fact that the poor are not a homogeneous group but have differentiated access to resources and institutions and therefore have different capacities to undertake migration (Sabates-Wheeler, Sabates and Castaldo, 2005).

3. AFRICA'S URBAN TRANSITION: KEY ISSUES AND PROSPECTS

Africa's urban transition is proceeding rapidly, with the accumulated relative growth rate of its cities now among the highest in the world. Although in absolute terms Asian cities still remain the world's fastest growing, the global share of African urban dwellers is projected to rise from 11.3 per cent in 2010 to 20.2 per cent by 2050. For decades, such intense demographic pressure in urban areas has been a source of justifiable concern for African governments and international observers. The accelerating urban transition, that is, the shift from rural to urban population majorities, has been described as perhaps the most decisive phenomenon since independence in most African countries (UNECA, 2014). The literature on migration, urbanization and human development identifies certain key issues in the process of Africa's urban transition, as described below. These issues are discussed in the light of their implications for migration and poverty outcomes.

3.1. An increasingly urbanized future for Africa

Although data from recent population censuses (Potts, 2009 and 2012) indicate that Africa is not the world's fastest urbanizing region, Africa's urban population has been growing at a historically unprecedented rate for decades. In 1960, Johannesburg was the only city in sub-Saharan Africa with a population of over 1 million inhabitants; however, by 1970, there were four cities (Cape Town, Johannesburg, Kinshasa and Lagos), and by 2010, there were 33 African cities with populations of over 1 million people (UN-Habitat, 2014a). Again, although the rate of natural increase in towns and the reclassification of settlements into urban areas account for a large percentage of this increase, significant long-term migration into urban settlements accounts for some of this growth. Furthermore, taking into account the future impact of climate change – particularly the predicted debilitating impact on agriculture and rural livelihoods – in triggering urban migration, as well as the impact on mobility patterns caused by new natural resource finds such as oil and gas in many African countries, Owusu and Oteng-Ababio (2014) argue that it is plausible to predict an increasingly urbanized future for Africa. Table 2 shows the cities in Africa that are projected to grow the fastest by 2025.

Table 2: Large African cities with the highest growth rates, 2010–2025

Country	Urban agglomeration	Population (2010)	Projected population (2025)	Compounded annual growth rate (percentage)
Burkina Faso	Ouagadougou	1,911,188	4,794,937	6.32
Niger	Niamey	1,222,066	2,924,441	5.99
Somalia	Mogadishu	1,425,660	3,309,145	5.77
Uganda	Kampala	1,593,698	3,540,246	5.47
Côte d'Ivoire	Yamoussoukro	885,463	1,960,093	5.44
United Republic of Tanzania	Dar es Salaam	3,414,656	7,275,731	5.17
Malawi	Lilongwe	738,171	1,537,717	5.01
Madagascar	Antananarivo	1,900,107	3,897,676	4.91
Zambia	Lusaka	1,718,855	3,495,778	4.85
Nigeria	Abuja	2,010,282	4,000,226	4.69

Angola	Huambo	1,038,581	1,996,751	4.45
Rwanda	Kigali	960,803	1,834,549	4.41
Kenya	Nairobi	3,236,589	6,142,867	4.36
Nigeria	Onitsha	866,635	1,642,341	4.35
Kenya	Mombasa	940,333	1,775,088	4.33
Nigeria	Port Harcourt	1,806,612	3,371,338	4.25
Angola	Luanda	4,790,142	8,924,042	4.24
Guinea	Conakry	1,715,207	3,195,422	4.24
Nigeria	Enugu	775,975	1,439,445	4.21
Congo	Kananga	846,101	1,558,833	4.16

Source: Calculations from UN DESA, World Urbanization Prospects, the 2011 Revision Database, cited in USAID, 2013, p. 32.

Much of this rapid urban growth, however, has been accompanied by a high level of poverty and inequality, rather than by economic and inclusive growth, as has occurred on other continents. Specifically, unlike in all other global regions, urbanization in Africa has not contributed (through economies of scale and value added production chains) to overall growth in GDP. Therefore, the prevailing global view that cities are engines of growth and human development may very well be challenged by the unfolding realities in Africa, unless the urban economic and general developmental progress is translated into more broadly shared well-being among countries' socioeconomic strata.

World Bank projections demonstrate that urbanization in Africa is taking place without development due to inadequate investment in basic infrastructure (Sharma et al., 1996). In the year 2000, about 30 per cent of the population living in urban areas in Africa lacked access to a safe water supply. If current investment patterns continue, the figure will grow to almost 50 per cent by 2020. However, the percentage of rural Africans with access to potable water is projected to increase from about 38 per cent in 2000 to over 50 per cent by 2020 (Sharma et al., 1996).

3.2. Intermediate and smaller cities absorbing most of the urban growth

The second key aspect of Africa's urban transition is that most of the projected urban growth will take place in intermediate and small cities and not in megacities such as Lagos or Cairo, as shown in table 2. Data indicate that on average the "million plus" cities typically absorb only some 25 per cent of countries' urban growth, while intermediate-sized and smaller cities attract the significant balance of about 75 per cent (UN-Habitat, 2014a). Thus, the vast majority of the additional urban dwellers will continue to add to the intermediate and small cities. Africa's largest cities are not absorbing, and are not projected to absorb, the bulk of current and future urban population growth.

Thus, while megacities have captured much public attention, most of the new growth will occur in smaller towns and cities, which have fewer resources to respond to the magnitude of the change. This therefore implies that the need for urban management is greatest in these intermediate-sized and smaller cities (UN-Habitat, 2008). Furthermore, it is likely that urban slum proliferation, which is characteristic of so many large sub-Saharan African cities, may also become a distinct feature of intermediate-sized and smaller cities, unless radically different urban-spatial, urban-economic, urban-social and urban function development policies are implemented.

3.3. The simplistic view of rural–urban migration as the major cause of urban poverty

The long-held view that rural–urban migration is the principal cause of urban poverty has led many policymakers to tend to favour solutions that try to reduce poverty in rural areas, while also attempting to prevent rural–urban migration in the hope that this will prevent the transfer of poverty to cities. This perception by policymakers is currently being contested as being misguided (Martine et al., 2008; Owusu, 2008; Awumbila, Owusu and Teye, 2014). Studies indicate that the best-known policies that have successfully controlled rural–urban migration have been very harsh; for example, colonial policies that limited the rights of rural dwellers to move to urban areas. During apartheid in South Africa, policymakers instituted strict policies to control rural–urban migration, and in the long run they failed to control it. Recent studies (Tacoli, 2008; Awumbila, Owusu and Teye, 2014) argue that rural-to-urban migrants themselves benefit from relocation, and that there is very little evidence to suggest that migration increases urban poverty. Therefore, the anti-urban attitudes of policymakers, who often view migration as a factor that exacerbates urban poverty and should be directly controlled, must be questioned. In 2005 in Zimbabwe, poor slum dwellers, who were mainly migrants, were evicted from shanty towns in the Harare area as a way of dealing with unhygienic conditions that were in fact a product of the failure of city authorities (UNDP, 2009). Similarly in Ghana, migrants living in the slum area of Old Fadama in Accra are highly vulnerable to illegal government evictions, which are sometimes violent, thereby causing insecurity. Indeed, as discussed in section 6, the slum area of Old Fadama was demolished in June 2015, thus evicting thousands of migrants from the area. Ravallion, Chen and Sangraula (2007) argue that urbanization is generally a positive factor in overall poverty reduction, and that higher rates of increases in urban population tend to be associated with higher rates of overall poverty reduction. Rural poverty levels tend to fall more rapidly in countries with higher rates of urbanization.

This indicates that, as argued by Tacoli (2008), migrants are a highly heterogeneous group with many from better-educated, better-connected and wealthier rural groups, and it is therefore important not to conflate migration and urban poverty. In fact, urbanization and migration have great potential to reduce poverty and inequality, and consequently there is a need for the transformations that accompany urbanization to be better managed.

3.4. A “new face” of poverty concentrated in urban slums and the urban informal economy

Rapid urban population growth in the context of poor economic performance in most African countries has created a “new face” of poverty, which is characterized by a significant proportion of urban populations living in overcrowded informal settlements, or slums. Recent estimates by UN-Habitat (2014a) show that sub-Saharan Africa is the only region where no tangible progress has been made in improving the lives of slum dwellers in line with the targets set under the framework of the Millennium Development Goals. While the proportion of urban residents living in slum settlements declined from 70 per cent to 62 per cent between 1990 and 2010 (see table 3), the actual number of slum dwellers doubled from 103 million to 200 million over this period (UNFPA, 2007). If these patterns and trends continue unchecked, the region’s socioeconomic prospects will increasingly be determined by the lives of the urban poor, as urban areas will continue to grow faster than rural areas.

Table 3: Proportion of the urban population and the urban slum population in sub-Saharan Africa, 1990–2012

Year	Proportion of urban population (percentage)	Proportion of urban population living in slums (percentage)	Urban slum population at midyear (thousands)
1990	28.3	70.0	102,641
2000	32.7	65.0	143,255
2010	37.2	61.7	198,168
2012	38.2	61.7	213,134

Source: Calculations from UN-Habitat, Global Urban Indicators Database 2012, cited in UN-Habitat, 2012b, pp. 150–151.

Urban population growth in sub-Saharan Africa is driven partly by the rural to urban migration of young adults seeking jobs and other livelihood opportunities, but also by the natural increase of the population characterized by a young demographic profile. For poor migrants, the first point of arrival in a city is often an informal settlement or slum such as Kibera in Nairobi or Old Fadama in Accra, and their first jobs are often in the informal sector. Early migration models viewed urban informal sector employment as a temporary staging post for new migrants on their way to formal sector employment (Banerjee, 1983), but decades of experience in developing countries has shown that the informal sector has persisted and grown, and graduation to the formal sector has been elusive.

Because most people moving into urban areas are from poor rural areas, they tend to live in slums where rents are quite low. Most urban centres in Africa inherited colonial spatial planning, where the wealthy and the poor are separated, with the latter (usually migrants) living on the periphery of city centres (Skinner, 2008). Urban migrants tend to live in poor neighbourhoods and in poor housing structures. For instance, a study by Omar (2013) shows that, in Nigeria, many urban migrants live in very poor slums characterized by crime and a lack of social services. Studies in other African countries, including South Africa and Zimbabwe, demonstrate that immigrants in many African cities still live in slums (see Okeke, 2014).

Table 4: Urban slum growth rates, slum population growth and slum population

Country	Slum population growth, 1990–2000 (percentage)	Slum population (percentage)	Rate of urban growth 2020–2025 (percentage)
Angola	159	86.5	3.06
Burkina Faso	34.6	59.5	4.98
Burundi	40.1	64.3	4.03
Côte d'Ivoire	105	56.6	3.05
Democratic Republic of the Congo	117	76.4	3.72
Egypt	19	17.1	2.03
Ethiopia	107	-	3.57
Ghana	69	-	2.85
Guinea	63	-	3.72
Kenya	41	54.8	4.05

Liberia	24.7	-	3.24
Libya		-	1.31
Malawi	99	67.7	4.80
Mali	71	65.9	4.23
Morocco	13	13.1	1.41
Mozambique	99	80	3.32
Niger	81	81.9	5.44
Nigeria	86	64.2	3.42
Rwanda	241	68.3	4.23
Senegal	43	38.1	3.29
Sierra Leone	164	97	2.91
South Africa	47	28.7	1.05
Sudan	131	94.2	3.01
Uganda	72	63.4	5.21
United Republic of Tanzania	25	-	4.7
Zambia	57	57.3	4.27
Zimbabwe	19	17.9	2.65

Source: USAID, 2013, p. 29.

In Accra, higher rents and the required cash deposit of two to three years' rent in better neighbourhoods prevent poor migrants from living in well-planned neighbourhoods (Owusu, Agyei-Mensah and Lund, 2008). Occupancy of rooms in slums is usually high, ranging from 2 to 20 persons in a single small room. The working environments of many rural–urban migrants are also very poor and generally unhygienic. The economic activities of the migrants tend to contribute to the deplorable state of their living environments (Awumbila, Owusu and Teye, 2014). Studies in slum settlements in Nairobi (Zulu et al., 2011) also indicate that limited economic opportunities in rural areas push people to migrate to the city, where they endure poor living conditions in slum settlements because these are the only places in the city where they can afford rent and save some money for investment in their rural homes. However, Zulu et al. (2011) further note that people who have been relatively successful economically and who own fixed property, such as housing, are likely to live in the slums for a long period of time in order to protect the property they own there and to acquire more.

A recent study in Accra shows that about 92 per cent of migrant households in the Old Fadama slum do not have access to water in their residences. As a result, they buy water on a daily basis from neighbours or use water from wells. About 94 per cent of the migrants in the same slums do not have toilet facilities in their residence (Awumbila, Owusu and Teye, 2014). According to Jacobsen, Webster and Vairavamoorthy (2013), in addition to Accra, African cities facing acute water challenges include Kano, Ibadan and Abuja in Nigeria and Lunda in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It is important to note that, not only are services generally unavailable in poor migrant communities, but those migrants that do have access end up paying more for these services than do people in rich neighbourhoods. For instance, in Ghana, the average cost of 1,000 gallons of water in 2013 was 80

pesewas (equivalent to about 40 USD cents), but migrants in slums pay 30 pesewas (about 15 USD cents) per bucket, which is roughly 2 gallons. These poor migrants are also required to pay each time they use the public bathhouse or visit the toilet. Consequently, people without money tend to defecate in the nearby bush, thereby further contributing to the pollution of their living environment. Poor environmental conditions in these slums, coupled with limited access to basic necessities, have created conditions for flooding and diseases such as typhoid fever and cholera.

In Kenya, which has an urbanization rate of 4.3 per cent, about 71 per cent of all urban dwellers are estimated to be living in informal settlements. These settlements are characterized by extreme poverty, poor sanitation, inadequate social services, insecurity, social fragmentation and poor livelihood opportunities. Emerging evidence shows that the traditional advantages that urban areas enjoyed in health and social indicators over their rural counterparts have either drastically dwindled or even reversed in favour of rural areas (Zulu et al., 2011). Between 1 million and 2 million migrants reside in cramped conditions in the slums of Nairobi without proper access to sanitation or affordable clean water. Children in such areas are exposed to enormous risks, health risks in particular. A survey conducted by the African Population and Health Research Center in the year 2000 in various slums in Nairobi found that, not only are morbidity risks for all major childhood illnesses higher for slum children compared with children elsewhere in Kenya, slum children also have less access to health care, including immunization, and subsequently face higher mortality rates than even their rural counterparts (Zulu et al., 2011).

A study conducted in Korogocho and Viwandani slum settlements in Nairobi provides rich insights into how slum dwellers live and how poverty and migration status interacts with health issues over people's lives (Zulu et al., 2011). The study indicates that, contrary to popular perceptions of slums as homogenous residential entities, they are highly dynamic and heterogeneous. While slum populations are generally very mobile, about half of the slum population was relatively better off and sedentary in the slum area, living there for 10 years or more, despite the poor health outcomes that slum residents exhibit at all stages of their lives (Zulu et al., 2011). In terms of food security, the study further found that households that are more likely to be food insecure are those with low incomes, that are female-headed, or that are headed by someone with no education or who is a recent migrant (Zulu et al., 2011). The unique vulnerability of recent migrants suggests that specific intervention programmes need to be targeted at the highly mobile slum population, which may be subjected to specific risks and conditions.

Despite these findings, more recent UN-Habitat (2014a) data show that not all slum dwellers suffer from the same degree or magnitude of deprivation, nor are all slums homogenous. For instance, surveys conducted in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone and Sudan show that slum dwellers there are likely to experience a combination of shelter deprivations, whereas in countries such as Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya and Senegal, most slum dwellers tend to suffer from one or two shelter deprivations. The report also shows that female-headed households suffer disproportionately from multiple shelter deprivations. Furthermore, a slum resident in Cairo may be better off than a non-slum dweller in Lagos, Luanda or many other cities in sub-Saharan Africa in terms of health, education or environmental conditions. These differentiated levels of social inequality and exclusion can adversely affect the social and economic development of cities and regions (UN-Habitat, 2014a).

Despite these challenges, studies in several African countries indicate that, although urbanization increasingly concentrates poverty, it also provides opportunities for escaping poverty. Urban poverty and slums are, however, a growing problem in developing countries. This problem needs to be addressed through integrated approaches at the local level. A report by UN-Habitat (2010a) advocates for pro-poor programmes in cities that would provide better and legally protected living conditions, as well as education, training, jobs and access to social services.

4. MIGRANTS, URBAN LIVELIHOODS, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE INFORMAL SECTOR

African labour markets are characterized by high informality and a lack of adequate labour market statistics for policy planning and decision-making. In many African countries, over 60 per cent of the labour force works in the informal sector. This is an indication that the formal sector has not been able to create sufficient long-term employment for the population. Formal employment represents only a small fraction of total employment in the region. For instance, a study of intraregional labour flows in the countries of the Economic Community of West African States shows that the formal sectors in Benin, Liberia, Mali, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea and Nigeria accounted for only between 3.9 per cent and 25 per cent of employment in these countries, and there is an increasing shift into the informal sector (Awumbila et al., 2014). There is no doubt that the informal sectors of Africa's labour markets are the single most important source of employment in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa. In Ghana, the informal share of the workforce rose from 83.9 per cent in 2000 to 86.2 per cent in 2010 (GSS, 2013), while in Benin, Togo and Guinea, informal sector employment accounted for 94 per cent, 80 per cent and 75 per cent of the workforce in 2010, respectively (UNDP, 2011).

Studies indicate that rural–urban migration has contributed to the dominance of informal employment in urban areas (Chen, 2006). A major reason why only a very small number of rural–urban migrants are in the formal sector is the fact that they have low levels of education. While the percentage of the literate population is quite high in some Africa countries, such as Ghana (71.5%), the populations of other countries, such as Benin, Guinea and Liberia, exhibit lower levels of education. Less than 40 per cent of the population aged 15 years or above is literate in Guinea, a figure that is lower than the general literacy rate for sub-Saharan Africa, which is estimated at 61.6 per cent (UNDP, 2011). Thus, many young people who migrate to urban centres are entering the labour force with very low levels of education (African Progress Panel, 2012). In addition, there is limited emphasis on vocational education in Africa in general (Martin, 2011). For instance, employment opportunities in Benin exist in the tourism, garment, transport services, chemical, telecommunications, food processing, commerce and handicraft industries, yet most of the youth who migrate within the region do not have vocational skills in these areas (Education Development Center, 2011). The dominance of the informal sector is also related to the fact that there are no strict barriers to entry into this sector. Indeed, in Ghana, it is perfectly legal to do business in one's own name without formal registration (Kwankye and Anarfi, 2011).

In many developing countries, informal activities provide employment opportunities for millions of people beyond the formal economy, supplying the main source of employment and income for the majority of the poor in urban centres, and poor urban women in particular. Thus, the informal sector has been described as “the big story in African cities” (African Centre for Cities, 2014). In Old Fadama, which is considered to be Ghana's largest slum and is inhabited mostly by migrants from the rural north (Housing the Masses, 2010), most residents earn their living from business transactions within the slum itself and mostly in the informal economy.

Although the informal sector is dominated by women, a significant proportion of men also work in this sector. A recent survey carried out in two informal settlements in Ghana (Awumbila, Owusu and Teye, 2014) shows that the slums are booming with various forms of entrepreneurial businesses, which are mainly in the informal sector and tend to be gendered. Migrant women work mainly as petty traders, food vendors, catering (chop bar) assistants, head porters (*kayayei*), shop assistants and hairdressers, while migrant men work as, among other things, artisans, labourers in the construction sector and operators of motorcycle taxis (*okada*). A significant proportion of men in Old Fadama are also involved in the collection and sale of scrap metal (that is, the electronic waste, or e-waste, business). Despite this work, migrants

working in the informal economy face particular vulnerabilities that do not allow them access to adequate social protection.

Of the informal economic activities, informal street trading alone occupies about two thirds of women, accounting for about 10 to 20 per cent of total employment in African cities and providing an important source of livelihood with low barriers to entry (Alter Chen, 2012). Street trading also plays an important role in the smooth running of the urban economy, especially in terms of the supply of goods and services to customers (Steel, Ujoranyi and Owusu, 2014). A lack of jobs in the formal sector and urban poverty are the main drivers of street trading (Hassan, 2003).

In most cases, migrants in urban centres rely on social networks to move to cities and to work in the informal sector. Studies carried out in the slums of Accra show that migrants rely on social capital for their initial accommodation in the urban area, training and work (Awumbila, Owusu and Teye, 2014). Similar situations in which poor migrants have used social capital as a substitute for economic capital to enhance their economic survival and success have been documented in other parts of Africa and Asia (see Woolcock and Narayan, 2000; Sander and Maimbo, 2003).

Not only are urban livelihoods in Africa highly informalized, but they tend to remain insecure. Many urban migrants in the informal sector do not enjoy social benefits or favourable working conditions. For instance, they tend to lack an assured salary, pensions, sickness benefits or job security. Furthermore, informal traders in many African countries, including Ghana, South Africa and Zimbabwe, generally operate under hostile conditions (African Centre for Cities, 2014). This is because street traders and other informal workers operate in strategic areas where there is heavy human and vehicular traffic, resulting in tension over competing uses of public space (Owusu and Oteng-Ababio, 2014). In Zimbabwe, migrants working in the informal sector are usually harassed by city officials and are coerced into making unofficial payments before being allowed to work (see box 1).

Box 1: Harassment of traders in the informal sector in Zimbabwe

Most of the working population in Zimbabwe is employed in the informal economy, with 84 per cent of people who earn an income working in this sector. Most of these people are migrants who work in wholesale or retail trade, or are involved in the repair of motor vehicles. The informal traders in Zimbabwe's capital sell several food items that originate from South Africa. While selling food on Harare's streets is potentially lucrative, traders' incomes are low and they suffer frequent losses in the highly constraining regulatory environment. Since the 2005 "clean up" operation "that saw the demolition of anything deemed illegal by the authorities from housing to informal trading infrastructure", the City of Harare has barred all informal trading in the city's central business district. However, in the absence of jobs in the formal sector, migrant traders continue to sell goods on the streets. Such traders can operate only when they pay bribes to municipal police, and the goods of those who refuse to pay are usually confiscated and those traders may also be arrested. In view of these challenges, more women trade during the day than men, and then leave in the evenings, when police are most likely to come to chase the traders away. Trade at night is dominated by male traders.

Source: African Centre for Cities, 2014.

In Accra, the relationship between traders, who are mostly migrants, and city authorities is similar to that in Zimbabwe. According to Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah (2008), street traders in Accra are always on the run, trying to avoid arrest by city officials. Another challenge of urban migrants working in the informal sector is that they work in very unhygienic environments for many more hours for lower incomes than those employed in the formal economy.

Although the earnings of migrants in the informal sector tend to be irregular and lower than those in the formal sector, some workers in the informal sector may earn more than those employed in the civil service. The above-mentioned study of migrants in two slums in Accra carried out by Awumbila, Owusu and Teye (2014) shows that a significant proportion of migrants living in informal settlements were earning adequate incomes. The e-waste business, which involves salvaging materials from discarded electronic and electrical equipment to sell to businesses, appears to be among the most profitable work in the slums studied. This activity is undertaken mainly by male migrants from northern Ghana, Niger and Nigeria. A chain of e-waste activities, namely the collection, recycling, repair and refurbishment, and trading of metals, takes place in the slum (Prakash et al., 2010). The study showed that, despite its risky nature, this hierarchical e-waste business is highly lucrative, with daily earnings from 15 Ghanaian cedis (about USD 7.50 at the time of the study) for scrap collectors to between 40 and 200 cedis (about USD 20 and USD 100, respectively) for e-waste refurbishers, who are higher in the labour hierarchy. These earnings are higher than the salaries of lower and middle level officers in Ghana's public service and certainly several times higher than what they were earning in their home regions. The study also highlights individual cases of migrants from Nigeria who can earn as much as 1,000 Ghanaian cedis (about USD 500) on a very good business day as scrap dealers. When one compares these earnings with the income they would have made in their rural areas, there is no question that migration has improved their earning capacity.

While their jobs and livelihoods in urban areas are not decent when compared with other higher income earners in the urban economy, the little money they saved from informal sector activities contributes to sustaining several families and households in areas of origin. In the study in Accra, over 75 per cent of the migrants assessed the current financial situation of their households as more than adequate or adequate (Awumbila, Owusu and Teye, 2014).

The economic activities of poor migrants in urban centres demonstrate their efforts to provide valuable services and to be a part of an urbanizing Africa. Although their movements to the city could be seen as contributing to the urbanization of poverty, these migrants are working hard to ensure the redistribution of the urban wealth to deprived and marginalized rural areas. Based on a study carried out in South Africa, Vearey et al. (2010) argue that migration to urban areas offers marginalized rural people an opportunity to earn an income, save some of their earnings, accumulate assets and send remittances back home.

The above discussion highlights the significance of the informal sector for migrant livelihoods. Although the informal sector is often seen as precarious, unregulated and lacking income security, it offers employment opportunities to poor migrants and particularly to poor migrants in slums, as described in box 2.

Box 2: Migrant entrepreneurship in slums in Ghana

The study by Awumbila, Owusu and Teye (2014) of the livelihoods of poor migrants living and working in the informal settlements of Nima and Old Fadama in Accra indicates that, despite living in a harsh environment with little social protection, the overwhelming majority of the migrants (88%) believe that their overall well-being had been enhanced by migrating to Accra. Using their own ingenuity, the migrants build houses and create jobs in the informal sector and beyond in order to survive and to live in Accra. In addition, they contribute to poverty reduction and human capital development back home through remittances and investments. However, official assessments and perceptions of urban poverty do not take into account the fact that poor people are attracted to urban areas to make use of the multiple economic opportunities there, and instead focus on headcount measures that do not recognize these dynamics. The findings show that urban slums are not just places of despair and misery, but places where migrants are optimistic and make the most of their capabilities while attempting to move out of poverty, despite the obvious difficulties. Thus, there is a need for a more nuanced understanding of the linkages between the migration of the poor to urban areas and the impacts that this has on their long-term prospects to escape poverty.

Source: Awumbila, Owusu and Teye, 2014.

4.1. Cross-border movements and migrant livelihoods

In many regions in Africa, cross-border traders work in an important part of the informal economy, contributing significantly to household incomes, as well as to national and regional economies, and to poverty reduction in general. Despite this importance, studies indicate that cross-border traders, who are often women, face significant challenges at borders, including high and fluctuating duties, the unwarranted confiscation of goods, long queues and physical harassment. A survey for the Southern African Migration Project (Crush, Peberdy and Williams, 2006) that monitored the activities of traders as they passed through 20 land border posts connecting 11 Southern African countries indicates that women comprise a significant proportion of traders and constitute the majority of the traders crossing through 9 of the border posts surveyed, including 2 of the busiest, namely Lebombo (South Africa) and Beitbridge (Zimbabwe). Most traders cross borders frequently and for short visits to purchase goods to sell in their home countries, or they buy goods in their home countries to sell in another country. The types of goods they carry vary widely, but food is dominant – fruits and vegetables, as well as meat, fish and eggs, which has implications for food security. In Zimbabwe, two decades of political and economic problems have transformed it into a migrant-sending country, and many of these migrants end up working in the informal sector in South Africa. Findings from the Southern African Migration Project survey show that almost half of the surveyed migrants went to South Africa to find work in the informal sector (Tawodzera, 2012). Furthermore, the cross-border movement of remittances between South Africa and Zimbabwe has grown into a large industry dominated by Johannesburg-based Ndebele migrants.

In a study of peri-urban areas of Accra and of some of the effects of urban growth pressures on migrants' and indigenes' access to land, Owusu (2007) argues that urban growth in Accra is reconfiguring where social groups are located in the land economy of the city. He draws attention to the influx of migrants into peri-urban areas, which creates both opportunities and challenges, and argues that the impact and effects of these movements are not uniform across all groups of people. The real losers are poor indigenes and poor migrants, who find it difficult to engage actively in the urban economy due to limited education and alternative skills training outside of agriculture. Increasing numbers of cases of indigene landlessness are being reported in the peri-urban areas of the large cities of Accra and Kumasi, where an active land market has developed (Owusu, 2008).

5. VULNERABILITY OF URBAN MIGRANTS TO GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

Although economic opportunities and the search for individual well-being are often drivers of migration, environmental factors also play an underlying role. In some cases, such as the occurrence of a natural disaster, the environment is a direct cause of migration; in others, such as the declining availability, or quality, of land for farming, it is one of many contributing factors. Those who migrate for environmental reasons are more likely to move to an urban location in their own country than to cross borders.

The expansion of cities generally occurs at the expense of forests and other natural environments or ecosystems, while increasing pollution (especially air pollution) and its related diseases. A report for the Foresight projects (United Kingdom, Government Office for Science, 2011) concludes that a key factor in the relationship between environmental change and migration is that many migrants in fact move *towards* heightened environmental risk, not away from it, often as part of rural–urban migration. Many of these movements are to the larger coastal cities, where migrants usually live in areas increasingly prone to flooding, poor sanitation and disease. For example, in Nairobi, the slum communities of Korogocho and Viwandani are located in close proximity to environmental risks, including the Nairobi refuse dump site, heavily polluted rivers and a heavy industrial zone (Archambault, de Laat and Zulu, 2012). Cities face particular challenges in adapting to climate change, as many are located in low-elevation coastal zones, which may be vulnerable to sea-level rise, increased storm intensity and flooding. As noted in the report for the Foresight projects (United Kingdom, Government Office for Science, 2011:19), low-income migrants in cities may not have the human, social or financial capital to protect themselves from these risks. In this context, it is necessary to address the particular challenges of the vulnerability of poorer urban migrants in low-income cities.

Studies indicate that a migrant’s environmental “footprint” can be greater when he or she lives in a city. This is due to differing production and consumption patterns, which strain urban infrastructure and services, as well as the food production capacity and freshwater resources of surrounding rural areas. Ineffective urban planning that does not address such migrant inflows and unchecked development exacerbate this situation.

6. POLICY RESPONSES

There is no question that Africa is witnessing rapid urban growth and it is therefore argued that investing in cities is central to securing the next stage of Africa's development. The growth of slums and informal settlements is an indicator that urban planning, management and governance have failed to address the challenges of urbanization in many African countries. Millions of urban residents are living in poverty in cities, confirming that urbanization and growth processes have been geared towards the benefit of specific elite classes and groups. As shown in table 3, more than 62 per cent of the population of cities in Africa lives in informal settlements and the percentage will continue to increase unless current approaches to urban development change radically.

Nevertheless, with the appropriate policies and strategies in place, Africa's urban transition could transform the development prospects of countries across the region. Unfortunately, however, many African governments and international development organizations have, since the mid-1970s, increasingly adopted policies designed to inhibit or discourage people from moving into urban areas. Today, approximately 80 per cent of African countries have policies in place to prevent rural–urban migration (Black and Sward, 2009). At the same time, international development organizations have increasingly withdrawn support for urban development initiatives in favour of rural development projects, often justified by the argument, among others, that improving standards of living in rural areas will help to mitigate the growth of urban poverty.

The State of African Cities 2014 report (UN-Habitat, 2014a) indicates that migration patterns in sub-Saharan Africa today are largely rural–urban and transboundary, yet the response of governments has been hostile to migrants, typifying them as rural dwellers who do not share the “right to the city”. In Nigeria, for example, several million migrants were expelled in the early 2000s. Despite this, people find ways to re-enter urban areas. In Ghana, attempts have been made to return female head porters operating in urban markets of Accra to their areas of origin in the north of Ghana (Awumbila and Ardayio-Schandorf, 2008), without success. More recently, in Ghana in June 2015, the Accra Metropolitan Assembly demolished the largest informal settlement in Accra, Old Fadama, evicting an estimated 50,000 people, mostly migrants from the northern regions of Ghana and from West Africa. Awumbila and Deshingkar (2015) argue that forced evictions and other sweeping anti-migration measures taken by central and city governments in general do not provide long-term solutions to urban growth, instead they often worsen the risks of already poor and vulnerable people and create deeper exploitative conditions for migrants. The stigmatization of rural migrants in urban areas also reflects an inability to view urbanization as a potentially positive process.

Many governments in Africa have started to promote new urban developments away from their major population concentrations. Satellite cities are being established to guide population pressure away from the capitals, while urban development corridors are being promoted to disperse geographically both economic activity and populations. These interventions show that important notions of urban geography are becoming priority areas in a good number of African nations. In box 3, the strategies put in place by the Government of Ghana to address the challenges of urbanization are discussed. As noted by Owusu and Oteng-Ababio (2014), these strategies could engender a segregated society unless they are addressed.

Box 3: Migration and urban planning in Ghana: Producing an urban society with two faces?

Until recently, Ghana had lacked a comprehensive and clearly articulated policy framework for urban development. In 2012, the National Urban Policy Framework was adopted, coinciding with the formulation and implementation of numerous projects and programmes that directly affect urban development. These include plans to develop new cities and towns in the Greater Accra Region, such as Hope City and City of Light (Appolonia), as well as the King City project near Sekondi-Takoradi, which will mainly cater to expatriates and the growing middle class related to the recently developed oil industry. These newly planned communities are expected to accommodate thousands of workers and residents and are to be constructed outside built-up areas. The aim is to create new growth poles to function as counterweights to ease congestion in the major cities.

Besides the newly planned towns, there are a number of ongoing projects that will positively affect sustainable urban development in Ghana by 2030. These include the establishment of “development zones” to serve as spatial enclaves for special development interventions such as the Savannah Accelerated Development Authority Zone, the Western Corridor Development Zone, the Eastern Corridor Development Zone, the Forest Belt Corridor and the Capital City Region of Accra-Tema. Also being planned are the Land Administration Project (first and second phases), which, supported by the World Bank, aims to improve land administration and land-use planning and management; the Bus Rapid Transit project to improve intracity mobility; the National Spatial Development Framework and the Western Region Spatial Development Framework projects; and the expansion of the oil and gas pipeline network. In addition, the Public Private Partnership Bill for the financing and delivery of urban services and infrastructure was recently passed by Parliament.

Owusu and Oteng-Ababio (2014) argue that these future developments, although largely positive, indicate that Ghana is likely to produce an urban society with two faces. There will be, on the one hand, world-class cities with solid infrastructures and services (such as Hope City), inhabited by the middle and upper classes, and, on the other hand, teeming cities composed of informal settlements that are overwhelmed by the pressures of excessive congestion, inadequate sanitation and waste management, and poor housing, which will be mainly inhabited by lower-income groups and the poor. As small-scale production in Ghana’s low-income communities is not well developed, livelihood opportunities for the majority of low-income urbanites seem bleak. There are important outcomes of this unfolding urban scenario, and most important is the extent to which the deprivation of the majority will affect the overall well-being of the affluent. Indeed, policymakers and other key actors in Ghana’s urban landscape will need to assess and confront the negative outcomes of urbanization with policies that can effectively deal with these formidable challenges.

Source: Owusu and Oteng-Ababio, 2014.

To address the challenges of rapid urbanization, several governments in Africa have developed in the last few years national urban policies to promote a more transformative, productive, inclusive and resilient urban development for the long term, with the support of UN-Habitat (2014b). UN-Habitat’s agenda seeks to unravel development potential and drive city development in an inclusive, productive and sustainable manner in Africa. Table 5 shows that eight African countries have so far developed or are in the process of developing national urban policies under this framework. This new generation of national urban policies promotes urban space and territoriality and the positive role of urbanization in national socioeconomic

development, and provides an overarching coordinating framework to address urban challenges. These policies are aimed at maximizing the benefits of urbanization while mitigating inequalities and potential adverse externalities. They guide the urbanization process by promoting more compact, socially inclusive, better connected and integrated cities and territories that foster sustainable urban development and are resilient to climate change (UN-Habitat, 2014b).

Ghana's national urban policy "represents a bold attempt to comprehensively intervene in the urban sector to facilitate and promote the sustainable development of Ghanaian cities and towns – a development process which is all-inclusive and takes account of the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups" (Ghana, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, 2012:3). With a focus on the broader national development vision, the goal "is to promote a sustainable, spatially integrated and orderly development of urban settlements with adequate housing, infrastructure and services, efficient institutions, and a sound living and working environment for all people to support the rapid socioeconomic development of Ghana" (Ghana, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, 2012:21).

Table 5: Countries in Africa with national urban policies

Country	Name of policy
Burundi	Lettre de politique nationale d'habitat et d'urbanisation
Ghana	National Urban Policy Framework
Kenya	Draft national urban development policy
Mali	Politique nationale de la ville
Morocco	Villes sans bidonvilles (Cities Without Slums), politique de la ville
Nigeria	National Housing and Urban Development Policy
South Africa	Draft integrated urban development framework
Uganda	National Urban Policy

Source: UN-Habitat, 2014b.

Several African countries have also adopted national migration policies or have developed national migration profiles to provide a policy framework to deal with the challenges of migration and urbanization.

Furthermore, several countries in Africa have developed national youth policies to support youth employment. These policies are typically introduced to strengthen or to create labour market institutions that help young people access jobs, promote entrepreneurship and directly train them towards market needs (ISSER, 2009). Although there is considerable rhetoric regarding the participation of young people in policy processes, in practice they tend to be treated as passive clients with a limited ability to shape their own destinies (Bordonaro and Payne, 2012). Furthermore, although numerous policies and programmes exist to promote youth entrepreneurship, very little is known about the likelihood of success of these programmes. It is important that these policies be synchronized, otherwise they risk being implemented as stand-alone policies.

Civil society organizations are also beginning to participate in the urban policy space in some countries in Africa. The Ghana Federation of the Urban Poor is a network of community savings groups in informal settlements and poor communities in Ghana, including in four of Ghana's five largest urban areas: Accra,

Kumasi, Ashaiman and Takoradi. The alliance was borne out of an eviction crisis that threatened over 50,000 residents of Old Fadama, the largest informal settlement in Accra. It is helping communities to make improvements through daily savings, to create community settlement profiles, and to negotiate and build partnerships with local governments and other stakeholders. Through these partnerships, the Ghana Federation of the Urban Poor is working with the People's Dialogue on Human Settlements, a community-based non-governmental organization established in 2003 to provide community-led solutions to address urban poverty in Ghana and to help communities to improve their living conditions. These initiatives have the potential to involve civil society and the urban poor in ensuring that policymakers and planners hear their voices and concerns, thereby realizing inclusive urban development.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The evidence therefore indicates that African countries will continue to urbanize, with migration, particularly rural–urban migration, continuing to play an important role in the urbanization process. In an increasingly urbanized world, the development challenges of the twenty-first century will be met in cities and towns and no longer in rural areas, and the global perspective needs to shift appropriately. In this urban transition, by 2050 about 95 per cent of the world’s population, whose numbers will have grown by between 2 billion and 3 billion, will live in the towns and cities of the developing world. In sub-Saharan Africa, where the rate of urban growth is twice that of the global average, more than half of the region’s population will be urban by 2030.

Pervasive urban poverty and urban slum proliferation, so characteristic of Africa’s large cities, are likely to become even more widespread under current urban development trajectories, especially given the continuing and significant shortfalls in urban institutional capacities. Since the bulk of the urban population increases are now being absorbed by Africa’s secondary and smaller cities, the sheer lack of urban governance capacities in these settlements is likely to cause slum proliferation processes that replicate those of Africa’s larger cities. The towns and satellite cities now being established to relieve pressures on the largest African urban concentrations may also add to further urban slum proliferation because these new towns almost exclusively cater to the residential needs of higher-income groups.

This indicates that managing urban growth in Africa will require the establishment of realistic and sustainable national urban development policies, enhanced urban management capacities within cities and towns of all sizes, and significant improvements in access to urban livelihood opportunities, as highlighted in *The State of African Cities 2014* report (UN-Habitat, 2014a).

The literature thus indicates that the link between migration and poverty is complex and dependent upon specific circumstances under which migration takes place. In Africa, however, the influx of young people from rural to urban areas has mostly been seen as a development challenge, and largely leading to an increase in urban poverty. Consequently, development and government policies have generally focused on discouraging people from moving from rural to urban areas. These viewpoints can be problematic as they are often based on a very crude method of measuring poverty, via a headcount of the poor, and they fail to provide a holistic assessment of the dynamics behind the movement of poor people to urban areas, such as their access to more remunerative opportunities and the beneficial impact that their move has on their families (Awumbila, Owusu and Teye, 2014). However, as this paper has shown, urbanization is a key variable in social and economic change and for the emergence of innovations in social life. In a similar vein, movement to cities (rural–urban migration) is also necessary for a reduction in overall poverty and improvements in the general well-being of the majority of Africa’s population. This shows that a more balanced and nuanced understanding and conceptualization of the linkages between rural–urban migration, urbanization and their role in poverty reduction are required.

Nevertheless, as UN-Habitat (2014a) and UNFPA (2007) note, Africa’s population is currently still well below the 50 per cent urban threshold. This implies that a major reconceptualization of countries’ approaches to urban development can still be undertaken. Given the rapidly changing global conditions, especially those associated with environmental and climate change, looming resource scarcity and the dire need to move towards greener and more sustainable development options, Africa has the opportunity to take a global lead in innovations towards greener, healthier and more sustainable urban societies. Fortunately, one of the Sustainable Development Goals recently agreed on by world leaders, namely Goal 11, commits to “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable by 2030” (United Nations, 2015), and thus provides the opportunity for African governments to change the negative perception of “cities as vessels of problems” to cities as “accelerators and facilitators of sustainable urbanization and development” as UN-Habitat (2014a) urges.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

As highlighted in a recent World Bank report (Jacobsen, Webster and Vairavamoorthy, 2013), the pathway to end poverty and boost shared prosperity will necessarily go through Africa's cities. Cities fuelled by migration will therefore increasingly define Africa's growth potential and future. Thus, it is important that efficient, safe, inclusive and sustainable cities be built to harness the potential of urbanization. Towards this end, the following recommendations are proffered:

- Reduce intracity inequalities by upgrading informal settlements through the provision of integrated infrastructures and services that target marginalized groups, including the poor, youth, women and elderly people.
- Strengthen inclusion to ensure that poor and vulnerable groups are not left behind. A commitment to pro-poor social programmes, inclusive urban development and inclusive governance structures, and investment in public goods and services have gone a long way in reducing inequalities in many cities. Investments in infrastructure and basic services for the poorest or most vulnerable groups have not only drastically reduced urban poverty levels, but also bridged the urban income divide.
- Address housing needs and improve access to basic social and health services for poor people in urban slums to ensure the survival and well-being of all people and to break the cycle of poverty, as it is in cities, more than anywhere else, that people have the potential to escape poverty.
- Focus on an urban planning approach that takes into account rural–urban linkages, as this will promote cities that can offer livelihoods to rural migrants, as well as to those living on the urban periphery. These urban areas will be best equipped to drive economic growth that can help to lift all residents out of poverty. Thus, there is the need for governments in Africa to move away from a development approach oriented around an artificial urban–rural dichotomy and to focus on an approach that will see settlements along the rural–urban continuum forming an interdependent system. Improving connectivity between rural, urban and peri-urban areas can lead to greater economic and social opportunities in all regions (Zulu et al., 2011). Thus, rural–urban migration, the expansion of peri-urban areas and the growth of market towns all offer greater social and economic opportunities for rural residents.
- Address the negative external social and environmental costs that come with ill-managed urbanization.
- Diversify economic activities through the creation of new economic hubs oriented towards sustainable and value-added production and exportation in areas of origin.
- Ensure that migration remains part of the solution in policies and programmes aimed at addressing the challenges of urbanization. They should focus on migration more as a circular process where links are maintained between sending and receiving areas and between rural and urban areas. The right not to migrate should also be recognized and people's survival in their area of origin should be facilitated. There should be programmes to enhance access to local jobs and sustainable livelihoods so that migration becomes a choice and not a necessity for rural populations.

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