DATA & EVIDENCE deep TO END EXTREME POVERTY

DEEP THEMATIC PAPER 5

Ending extreme poverty in an increasingly urbanised world

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About DEEP

Our mission is to build evidence, insights, and solutions that help end extreme poverty globally.

We aim to contribute to new global and national data and evidence that governments, decision-makers, citizens and researchers can use to improve people's lives and support the world's poorest people in their efforts to escape extreme poverty.

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Questions:

- **How is urbanisation expected to affect efforts to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030?**
- **What are the leading gaps in evidence on how to reduce extreme poverty in an increasingly urbanised world?**

Summary

Urban poverty has become a defining feature of our time. The global population has shifted from being predominantly rural to majority urban and future population growth is expected to be concentrated in cities and towns (UNDESA, 2018a).[1] Urbanisation is one of the demographic megatrends shaping global population patterns alongside population growth, ageing and international migration (UNDESA, 2018a, p.1). Urbanisation is a complex process, it transforms how people and communities interact with the built environment and potentially transforms "dominant occupations, lifestyle, culture and behaviour, and thus alters the demographic and social structure of both urban and rural areas" (UN Habitat, 2020, p.3). According to UNDESA (2020a):

> When properly planned and managed, urbanisation can reduce poverty and inequality by improving employment opportunities and quality of life… But when poorly planned, urbanisation can lead to congestion, higher crime rates, pollution, increased levels of inequality and social exclusion. (UNDESA, 2020a).

This paper explores the relationship between urbanisation and extreme poverty. Its primary objectives are to provide a high-level summary of the latest well-evidenced research on measures to address extreme poverty in urban areas and to identify areas where further research could contribute value. It is a non-systematic reviewof the leading relationships between poverty and urbanisation, the current body of evidence on measures to address these relationships, and well documented evidence gaps.[2] The report draws on peer-reviewed academic research, grey literature, and blogs from leading institutions and thinkers. This paper aims to identify evidence and literature gaps that might be filled by the Data and Evidence to End Extreme Poverty (DEEP) project, with a focus on DEEP priority countries, while also introducing principles for the prioritisation of research on policies and programmes with potential to promote extreme poverty reduction more generally.

[1] There is no universally accepted distinction between rural and urban. UN estimates are typically sourced from national statistics offices where this distinction is made (UNDESA, 2018a). This paper uses the term urban to mean those locations deemed urban by local definitions.

[2] The search strategy for this paper involved a snowball sampling approach. The search began with the identification of the latest widely cited academic papers, reports and blogs on the relationship between urbanisation and poverty. In the next phase, the research cited by these sources was reviewed. Selected works exhibited methodological rigor and substantive contributions to the overarching theme of our investigation. This encompassed a thorough evaluation of the research design, data collection methods, and analytical frameworks employed in each paper. Specifically, we prioritized studies with robust methodologies, transparent reporting, and a clear articulation of research objectives. The inclusion criteria for papers were limited to the English language and papers, report or blogs published between 2005 and 2023.

How urbanisation is expected to affect efforts to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030

- The data are inadequate to definitively estimate urban poverty, though there are indications that rates are on the rise. Income inequality tends to be higher in urban areas and is also estimated to be increasing.

- The migration of people from rural areas is a critical channel through which urban poverty can occur, particularly if migration is driven by poverty itself. As people move to cities from rural areas, some will continue to experience poverty.

- Ineffective planning of urban regions, or gaps in financing and bottlenecks in implementation of existing plans, have been key channels through which informal urban settlements, or 'slums,' have developed. This has led to areas of high poverty in urban areas.[3]

- The fast pace of urbanisation combined with poor urban planning or implementation has resulted in land shortages and insecure land tenure for many of the poorest urban residents.

- Urban residents living in poverty often have lower access to services than non-poor residents, due to prohibitive costs of services and weak service provision in marginalised neighbourhoods. A lack of municipal resources and complexities around extending service infrastructure to informal settlements are linked to the weak provision of services.

Global trends suggest that, up to 2050 will, more than 90% of urban population growth will occur in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia (UNDESA, 2018b; Beard, Mahendra & Westphal, 2016). In most lower-income settings urbanisation is occurring faster than historical precedents in higher income settings, and with lower per capita income levels by comparison A study by Glaeser found that the United States became one third urbanised in 1980 while per capita GDP was over USD 5,000 (in 2012 dollars), whereas low income countries recently passing this urban population threshold have done so with per capita GDP below USD 1,200 (in 2012 dollars) (Glaeser, 2013). These trends differ by country context, as do the magnitude of their impacts on extreme poverty. Looking at urbanisation and projected poverty rates up to 2030 in DEEP priority countries, some stand out for prioritising new and better evidence:

- Between 2025 and 2030, it is expected that Tanzania's urban population growth will be the fifth highest in the world; Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Nigeria will all feature in the top 20. Evidence on effective strategies to address extreme poverty in urban areas will therefore be crucial to poverty eradication efforts, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

[3] The terms 'slum' and 'informal urban settlement' are often used interchangeably. In this paper we use the term 'informal urban settlement' as a more neutral framing that avoids stigma unless referring to a source that uses the term 'slum' with implications for how the area is conceived of or is measured.

- Half of the urban population in Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Myanmar, and Nigeria are living in slums according to latest estimates. It will be crucial to understand how to address challenges to delivering services, providing housing and other infrastructure, and ensuring security of tenure in these urban areas.
- Multidimensional poverty is particularly high in urban Ethiopia, Madagascar and Mozambique. Better evidence is needed on how to address the multiple deprivations experienced by individuals and households in urban areas of these countries.

Leading evidence on how to reduce extreme poverty in a an increasingly urbanised world

- There is a dearth of data on urban poverty in low- and middle-income countries. There are also limitations on the disaggregation of poverty data at the city level due to sampling and reporting, as well as major gaps in research examining the specific effects of policy and programme interventions in urban areas. Inconsistent measures relating to urban poverty – not least the definition of what classifies as a city – exacerbate the challenge of measuring extreme poverty in urban areas.

- Most evidence of the impacts of affordable housing schemes is derived from high-income countries. Given that people living in poverty in lower income settings face significantly different challenges, more evidence is needed on effective affordable housing schemes and on upgrading of informal settlements in these settings.

- Better evidence is needed on effective social protection in urban settings Most social protection systems in low- and middle-income countries were designed for rural areas and coverage tends to be lower in urban settings than rural ones. This is often due to high rates of informal employment, lack of formal addresses in informal settlements, and situations where residents require permission to live in urban areas and must evidence this to access social protection.

- There are gaps in the evidence base for understanding which interventions promote decent work and livelihoods effectively in DEEP priority countries. In these settings, employment tends to be largely informal. Most existing research examines middle-income countries in Latin America which may not easily translate to other contexts.

- There are only a few studies that examine the impacts that improved transportation access have on people living in poverty in urban areas. Just 18% of residents in sub-Saharan Africa have access to public transportation; and 39% in Central and Southern Asia (U.N., 2019).

Background

Trends in urbanisation

More people now live in urban areas than in rural areas. And the ratio of urban to rural dwellers is expected to tilt even more towards urban in the coming decades. City populations are projected to reach 6.7 billion by 2050, up from 4.4 billion in 2018, while comparatively slower growing rural populations likely reached their peak in 2021 and are expected to decline in future.[4] By 2050 68% of the global population is expected to live in urban areas, up from 55% in 2018 (UNDESA, 2018b, p.10).

Several factors have contributed to growth in urban populations, including migration from rural areas, birth rates being higher than death rates in urban areas, and the urbanisation of formerly rural areas (UNDESA, 2018b, p.1). Future growth in urban populations is predicted to largely be driven by Africa and Asia, which will be home to 2 billion urban dwellers by 2050 (UNDESA, 2018b). DEEP priority countries are expected to have particularly high growth in urban populations. Between 2025 and 2030, it is expected that Tanzania's urban population growth will be the fifth highest in the world; Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Nigeria will all feature in the top 20 (UNDESA, 2018b).

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 commits to making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Targets include access for all to adequate, safe, and affordable housing, basic services, sustainable transport and enhanced capacity for participatory human settlement planning and management. A New Urban Agenda was also agreed at the UN Habitat III conference in 2016, aimed at 'readdressing the way cities and human settlements are planned, designed, financed, developed, governed and managed' (United Nations, 2017, p.3). The agenda established a 'shared vision' of cities for all, centred around commitments to achieve more inclusive cities (United Nations, 2017). As this agenda gains momentum, demand for evidence on effective policies and programmes to address poverty in an increasingly urbanised world will likely grow.

Urbanisation, chronic poverty and impoverishment

Urbanisation is often seen as a route of escape from poverty, as cities are known to be 'powerhouses of economic growth – contributing about 60% of global GDP' (UN, 2019). Cities are hubs for entrepreneurship and innovation due to the diversity of their populations, concentration of commerce and connectivity to other places through transportation links (UNDESA, 2018b, p.1). They also tend to have better access to services, with economies of scale in the provision of services such as water, electricity, health and education (UNDESA,

[4] Population projections are subject to debate. For an in-depth analysis of Africa's demographic projections see Paice (2021).

2018b, p.1-2). A recent cross-country analysis of the relationship between demographic factors and select household characteristics found that people residing in urban areas were associated with higher wellbeing than those in rural areas (Castañeda et al., 2016)

On the other hand, widespread inequalities within cities are indicative of uneven benefits from these opportunities (Grant, 2010; OCED, 2018; Ravallion, Chen & Sangraula., 2007; UNDESA, 2018b; UNDESA, 2020b). The urban environment necessitates people are in the cash economy; residents also require access to a range of safe, reliable and affordable public services, including water, sanitation, energy and transportation. Income inequality measured by the Gini coefficient was found to be higher in urban areas in 36 out of 42 countries with available data (UNDESA, 2020a). Urban income inequality has also been on the rise: 'for more than two-thirds of the world's urban population, income inequality has increased since 1980' (UN Habitat, 2020). Cities are often segregated between haves and have nots. Residents of disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods are at risk of chronic poverty, where economic opportunities are limited, living costs are high and infrastructure and basic services are poor or prohibitively costly (Grant, 2010; UNDESA, 2020a). Stigmatisation of entire neighbourhoods can also occur, inhibiting opportunities in communities 'associated with poverty, crime and violence' (Grant, 2010, p.13).

There are no definitive estimates on the number of people living in income poverty in urban areas due to lack of sufficient data and differing criteria used to set poverty lines. Internationally recognised income poverty thresholds, such as USD 1.90 per day, have been found to inadequately to reflect the higher cost of food and non-food needs in urban areas. Estimates on the decline, and in some cases elimination, of extreme poverty in urban areas have been criticised for the inappropriateness of existing poverty lines and the misclassification of urban residence and boundaries (Satterthwaite, 2014).

Using World Bank Poverty Assessments to set country specific urban and rural poverty lines, Ravallion, Chen, & Sangrula (2007) estimated there were 745 million people living in urban poverty in 2002. By all estimates poverty is highest in rural areas, though there are indications that this balance may shift as the world becomes more urbanised. Ravallion et al (2007) found that urban poverty rates increased between 1993 and 2002 while rural poverty rates were on the decline.

Studies of multidimensional poverty similarly indicate that poverty is higher in rural areas than in urban areas, though a closer examination reveals higher rates of urban poverty in certain countries. [5] According to decomposed data from the Multidimensional Poverty Index,

[5] Multidimensional measures of poverty are used to capture the non-income dimensions of poverty that people experience in their daily lives. The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) uses 10 equally weighted indicators of health, education and standard of living. A person is defined as multidimensionally poor if they are deprived in at least one-third of indicators.

urban multidimensional poverty is particularly high in Madagascar, Mozambique and Ethiopia (see Table 1 below). Other indicators, such as adequate shelter, often used as a proxy for poverty, also reveal high rates of urban poverty. In five out of eight DEEP focus countries, the proportion of urban residents living in slums is over 50%, with a high of 77% in Mozambique (see Table 1 below).

Links between urbanisation and other drivers of extreme poverty

The relationship between urbanisation and poverty is influenced by other drivers of extreme poverty. Cities are a central destination for internal and international migration. Rural residents go to cities in search of jobs, access to services and other opportunities. Cities are also often the gateway for international migration (UNDESA, 2018b, p.1). Economic growth and technological change also fuel urbanisation, drawing people from rural areas into cities for varied opportunities (UNDESA, 2018b, p.3). Climate change is another driver of rural-urban migration due to its negative effects on farm and non-farm incomes in rural areas, while urbanisation and urban poverty pose significant challenges for climate adaptation. For example, the built environment limits where floodwaters can go, and poor households are more likely to live in flood prone areas of cities (Douglas et al, 2008). Instances of drought also contribute to the overuse of groundwater and urban water shortages, land subsidence and salt intrusion. There is also a high risk of exposure to extreme weather events and sea level rise in coastal cities. People living in poverty often face the greatest exposure to these risks due to poor quality housing, a lack of access to services, as well as the livelihoods activities in which they are engaged.

Channels between urbanisation and poverty

Rural migration to urban areas

The concept of 'push' and 'pull' factors are often used to explain why people living in poverty in rural areas move to urban areas (Cities Alliance, 2022). Push factors include the effects of climate change on returns from agriculture and limited non-farm economic opportunities, while pull factors include 'better job prospects, education, health facilities, or freedom from restrictive social or cultural realities' (Cities Alliance, 2022).

The migration of people from rural areas is a critical channel through which urban poverty can occur, particularly if migration is driven by poverty itself. The majority of people living in poverty continue to reside in rural areas; most estimates suggest 80% (see for Castañeda et al., 2016, for a recent estimate). As people move from rural areas, some proportion will continue to experience poverty in urban areas (Ravallion, Chen & Sangraula, 2007, p.23). Recent estimates indicate there are 763 million internal migrants globally, many of which have moved to urban areas (UN-Habitat, 2020, p. xvii).

Unplanned urban growth and informal urban settlements

Ineffective planning of urban regions has been a key channel through which informal urban settlements have developed, leading to pockets of high rates of poverty in urban areas. These areas tend to suffer from the neighbourhood effects described above with regards to poor infrastructure and access to services, limited economic opportunities, and other factors leading to chronic poverty and low social mobility.

Around one in four urban residents was living in slums in 2016 (UNDESA, 2020b). While the proportion had been decreasing, the absolute number has increased to over 1 billion; recently the proportion increased slightly, from 23% in 2014 to 23.5% in 2018 (UNSD, 2022; UN, 2019). Globally, two thirds of those living in slums (around 560 million people) are in Asia, with India accounting for half of total, and Bangladesh also ranking high (UNDESA, 2020b, p. 121). India is also home to one of the largest informal urban settlements in the world, Bharavi in Mumbai, with an estimated population of 1 million people (Habitat for Humanity, 2017).

Housing and land tenure

Secure housing and land are critical to escaping poverty. These are often the only assets people can use to improve their wellbeing and livelihoods (Prindex, 2020). The fast pace of urbanisation, combined with poor urban planning and weak implementation, has resulted in land shortages and insecure land tenure for many of the poorest urban residents (UNDESA, 2020b, p. 123). People living in poverty are frequently pushed to the periphery of cities. This exacerbates many of the challenges they face around access to livelihoods opportunities,

public services, and affordable and sustainable transportation. Housing and land security are highly political sensitive and progress in these areas requires strong political commitment, public finance, and a conducive legal and policy structure.
Much of the formal private housing available in cities is only accessible to middle- and upper-income residents, with low-income residents left to find housing in informal settlements or homeless (UNDESA, 2020b, p.124). Funding for social housing has been cut in many contexts and many governments have failed to intervene to control property and land speculation (UNDESA, 2020b, p.123). Where urban renewal projects result in the relocation of poorer residents to areas distant from livelihoods opportunities, these can also have an adverse effect on poverty (UNDESA, 2020b, p.123). It has been estimated that 3 billion people will require adequate and affordable housing by 2030 (U.N., 2019).

An estimated 75% of land worldwide is not legally documented, leaving people without security of tenure. Women are disproportionately impacted by legal land tenure issues (Habitat for Humanity Great Britain, 2017). A survey conducted in 140 countries found that 1 billion people feared losing their home or land, with rates of insecurity being higher in urban areas (Prindex, 2020). In sub-Saharan Africa, nearly half of all urban respondents feared losing their home, 30% of which cited a lack of money or other resources as the reason for their insecurity (Prindex, 2020 p.17).

Access to core urban services

Urban residents living in poverty often have less access to services and infrastructure than non-poor residents, either due to prohibitive costs of services or due to poor service provision in areas where households living in poverty tend to reside. They may also pay a higher price for lower quality services (Beard et al., 2021; Beard et al, 2022). Satterthwaite (2014) has summarised the high barriers to accessing services among low-income households with the following observations:

> Many urban centres (especially the more successful ones) are places where the costs of non-food needs are particularly high, especially for low-income groups who live in informal settlements where costs such as rent, water (from vendors or kiosks) and access to toilets (pay-to-use) are particularly high… In most cities, large sections of the low-income population live in peripheral locations and face high time and monetary costs getting to and from work or accessing services. They often face high costs keeping their children at school (many have to send their children to cheap 'private schools' because they cannot get places in government schools) and for health care services (especially where there is no public provision for these).
>
> (Satterthwaite, 2014, p. 571)

Spatial, economic and political obstacles often drive inequalities in access to services in urban areas, with entire neighbourhoods often being marginalised through historic processes dating back to colonial divisions (Pierce, 2017). Evidence of biases in urban planning and service provision have been studied across DEEP focus countries, including in India (Pierce, 2017), Bangladesh (Baffoe & Roy, 2022) and Nigeria (Adama, 2012). There is also 'widespread concern that public utilities [have] been undermined by decades of poor management and limited public investment, [leading] to the introduction of private-sector and market principles' (Beard & Mitlin, 2021: 2). Limited access to or affordability of available services such as water and sanitation, waste management and transportation has both a direct impact on urban poverty and wellbeing while also posing indirect constraints to escaping poverty (Avis, 2016:15; Beard et al., 2022).

Water and sanitation (WASH) have been highlighted as services that are often unequally distributed within cities. Limited sanitation services in informal urban settlements, for example, risk the spread of diseases and put urban residents living in poverty at risk (Habitat for Humanity, 2017). A recent study of access to WASH in sub-Saharan Africa found that urban rich households were 227% more likely to have access to improved sanitation facilities than urban households living in poverty (Armah et al., 2018, p.25). The study also found that Madagascar has the lowest access to improved water and sanitation in 2015, at 45% and 15% respectively (Armah et al., 2018, p.10).

Food insecurity

Urban households are more likely to rely on markets for their food intake than rural households who may rely at least in part on their own agricultural production. Poorer households in urban areas are also likely to spend a significant portion of their income on food and are therefore vulnerable to the sudden food price increases that have been seen in recent years. A recent study on the impacts Covid-19 in Myanmar, for example, found that 26.1% of urban residents experienced food worries and 10.6% skipped meals in June and July 2020, compared to 15.8% and 2.7% in rural areas (Headey et al., 2020). As the pace of urbanisation continues, food insecurity in urban areas will become increasingly significant. Urban food security is a relatively overlooked area of poverty reduction programming, with global food policy debates being largely focused on rural areas (Crush & Riley, 2019). For example, SDG 11 on promoting inclusive, safe, and resilient cities does not include a target on food security (Crush & Riley, 2019, p.47). Challenges related to food availability and access vary significantly between rural and urban areas and adapted programming will therefore be needed to address the specific challenges of food insecurity in urban areas.

Urbanisation and poverty in DEEP focus countries

Without significant course correction, it is predicted that DEEP priority countries will maintain some of the highest rates of extreme poverty by 2030. They are also predicted to become among the most urbanised countries in world between now 2030. UN population projections indicate that, between 2025 and 2030, Tanzania will have the fifth highest rate of urbanisation in the world and the remaining countries in sub-Saharan Africa all feature in the top 20, with rates over double the global average (UNDESA, 2018b). Evidence on the elimination of poverty in these increasingly urbanising contexts will therefore be critical.

Available indicators also show that DEEP priority countries are characterised by high rates of urban poverty. The proportion of urban residents living in slums, often used as a proxy for urban poverty, is over 50% in five of the eight focus countries. Mozambique stands out, with over three quarters of the urban population living in slums. Multidimensional poverty, as measured by the Multidimensional Poverty Index, is also high in focus countries. In Madagascar, 41.23% of urban residents are estimated to be multidimensionally poor, followed by 40.79% in Mozambique and 39.22% in Ethiopia. The elimination of extreme poverty in these contexts will require a focus on the unique challenges faced by those experiencing poverty in urban areas.

Table 1: Urbanisation and poverty rates in DEEP priority countries

Country	Projected extreme poverty headcount (millions)[i]	Urban population growth 2025-2030 (%)[ii]	Urban population living in slums (%)[iii]	Prevalence of multidimensional poverty (MPI) in urban areas (%)[iv]
India	51	2.13	35	9.19
Tanzania	24	4.59	40	27.09
Bangladesh	4.6	2.08	47	14.52
Nigeria	110	3.36	54	22.93
Myanmar	0.2	1.94	56	11.91
Ethiopia	17	3.86	64	39.22
Mozambique	24	3.95	77	40.79
Madagascar	24	3.65	61	41.23

Data sources: i. Abidoye et al, 2021; ii. UNDESA (2018b); iii. World Bank (2018); iv. Alkire et al., (2021).

Evidence from leading policy and investment areas

There is a general gap in data and evidence on urban poverty in low- and middle-income countries and limited research looking at the specific effects of policy and programme interventions in urban areas. The limited availability of evidence relative to its expected importance led Haddad (2012) to observe that 'if a quarter of all African poverty is urban, I'm guessing that less than a quarter of all recent African poverty research is urban.' There is a longstanding need for data that can be disaggregated at the city and neighbourhood level, as well as for improved data on informal urban settlements.

Slum clearance and upgrading

'Slum clearance' initiatives are a widely debated policy area in the urban poverty space. Clearances in countries such as India and Ethiopia have been damaging for the urban households that have been displaced from their land and livelihoods (Patel, 2011; Gardner, 2017). These initiatives are typically motivated by increasing land prices in urban centres and by commercial interests. They often focus on formalisation through home ownership which can be ill-suited to the circumstances of people living in poverty and those that lack documentation to qualify for mortgages or public subsidies (King et al, 2017). People living in poverty are often displaced to more peripheral areas of cities through these initiatives and often become disconnected from livelihood options as a result, thus deepening their poverty (King et al., 2017). Despite the negative impact they have urban poverty, these initiatives remain a widespread practice. In January 2022, the city of Port Harcourt in Nigeria bulldozed 15,000 homes under the charge of 'sanitising' the area (Adedinni, 2022). Teferi and Newman (2017) observe that 'slum relocation and clearance... were tried and rejected in most developed cities but ha[ve] now been adopted almost universally in developing country informal settlements' (Teferi & Newman, 2017, p.2).

On the other hand, upgrading initiatives typically involve the improvement of basic services and infrastructure in situ. This might include improvements to housing, transport, sanitation, waste disposal and the expansion of access to health and education (Cities Alliance, 2022). While this area has been relatively well researched, mixed results from these programmes indicates further evidence is needed to support improvements to programme and policy design. A systematic review examining the health and socio-economic impacts of upgrading strategies found the evidence to be limited and of low quality (Turley et al., 2013). One study of high-rise developments in Addis Ababa, for example, found mixed results for poor households. The study found positive economic benefits through the integration of the affected neighbourhoods into the formal economy but found negative effects on trust and community networks – essential to poor households' resilience (Teferi & Newman, 2017).

Affordable housing and land tenure

There is very limited evidence on the implementation of affordable housing schemes in low-income countries. Further study on the security and affordability of housing is needed in lower-income contexts, where urban household expenditure on housing balanced against other living costs vary considerably and land and housing insecurity is often higher. In Ethiopia, for example, housing and food costs together account for 80% of annual expenditures for the poorest (Matsumoto & Crook, 2021). A recent evaluation using a framework developed by the OECD found that Ethiopia has made progress in building more

units, however these remain largely out of reach for the poorest households (Matsumoto & Crook, 2021).

Limited evidence was identified for secure land tenure interventions in urban areas, with the preponderance of research focussed on land tenure in rural areas. Various initiatives have sought to promote secure land tenure. For example, the UN-Habitat's Global Campaign for Secure Tenure was launched in 1999 to promote longer term solutions to secure tenure in urban areas. There are several national and city level initiatives promoting secure land tenure, however very few of these have been studied and therefore evidence on their effectiveness is limited. Durand-Lasserve et al. (2007) observed:

> Given the intellectual and financial investments made to date on land titling programmes, it is therefore surprising to note that there is a dearth of independent evidence to support or challenge the application of land titling as the most appropriate policy to… reduc[e] urban poverty (Durand-Lasserve et al., 2007 p.9)

Evaluations of these initiatives are sorely needed, not least because of the potential negative effects that could be produced through land speculation and gentrification (ACHR, 2018).

Social protection

Social protection systems in low- and middle-income countries have largely been developed to address rural poverty (Devereux & Cuesta, 2021; Gentilini, 2015). They often do not, therefore, account for higher costs of living in urban areas and the unique barriers to accessing services (Devereux & Cuesta, 2021). Social protection coverage has also been found to be lower in the urban areas of low- and middle-income countries. Analysis of household survey data from 112 countries found that 21.3% of urban populations were covered by some form of safety net, compared to 27.7% of people in rural areas (Gentilini, 2015, p. 40-41). This disparity is particularly significant in South Asia where 27.5% of the poorest were covered by social protection in rural areas compared to 0.7% in urban areas (Gentilini, 2015, p.23).

Social protection interventions have been relatively well studied, though evidence gaps on their effectiveness remain. A review by Brown (2015) found substantial evidence on the effectiveness of cash transfer programmes, though comparably less on social insurance and labour market interventions. Few studies appear to focus on the specific needs of urban residents and the challenges these people are likely to confront in accessing benefits from social protection. Mozambique stands out as one of the first countries in Africa to introduce an urban cash transfer programme which could be studied. The expansion of social protection programmes to better include urban areas could also be important in countries

such as India and Ethiopia, which are home to some of the largest social protection schemes in the world, but which are predominantly designed for rural areas.

Decent employment and livelihoods opportunities

Employment among urban residents living in poverty is characterised by high rates of informality (Gentilini, 2015; Jessen & Kluve, 2019). Most countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia have informal employment rates in urban areas greater than 70% (ILO, 2018). Analysis from the International Labour Organization (2018) shows that there is a strong relationship between poverty and informality, though some countries also have high rates of poverty among workers in formal employment. The analysis shows, for example, that 59.5% of formally employed people in Madagascar were living on less that USD 3.10/PPP per capita per day, as were 92% of informally employed people (ILO, 2018, p. 49-50).
Chen and Beard (2018) highlight three categories of self-employment common in cities – home based workers, street vendors and waste-pickers – that exemplify the types of risks and insecurities faced by informal workers in many cities around the world:

> Home-based workers produce many goods and services for domestic and global markets from their homes, often in informal settlements and slums… [They] are negatively affected by evictions and relocations, unequal access to core public services (notably, electricity, water, sanitation, and transportation), and single-use zoning regulations, which ban commercial activities in residential areas.
>
> Street vendors sell goods and service in convenient locations, typically at lower prices. Most city governments issue too few licenses or permits for the large numbers of street vendors who work in the city… Vendors are exposed to ongoing forms of harassment by policy and city officials…
>
> Waste pickers collect and sort waste to reclaim recyclable items that are used by industries as raw or packing materials. Despite the public service they provide to the city, the environment, and the economy, waste pickers are often denied access to waste, or face confiscation of the waste by city authorities or municipal street cleaners. Organizations of waste pickers are rarely allowed to compete with private companies for solid waste management contracts" (Chen & Beard, 2018:3-4).

A wide range of interventions to improve employment outcomes have been studied, including formalisation of jobs (Jessen & Kluve, 2019), training, employment services and subsidised employments programmes, and the extension of social protection to informal workers (Kluve et al., 2017). A systematic review of interventions to improve labour market outcomes for youth found 33 evaluated interventions in urban areas. Study results indicated that young people exposed to youth employment programming had improved employment outcomes and higher earnings (Kluve et al., 2017). However, few evaluations were identified in lower-income settings, with only India and Ethiopia featuring in the analysis. The evidence base on formalisation has also been found to cover largely middle-income countries in Latin America (Jessen & Kluve, 2019). More evidence on the promotion of decent work in DEEP

priority countries, where informality and working poverty tends to be particularly high, could therefore contribute value.

Transportation

The need for accessible transportation in low- and middle-income countries has risen on the agenda in recent years. As little as 18% of residents in sub-Saharan Africa had access to public transportation as of 2018; in Central and Southern Asia just 39% had access (U.N., 2019). Transportation for urban residents living in poverty is key to unlocking their access to economic opportunities and social services such as health and education. This is particularly true for those that have been pushed to marginal areas of cities. At the same time, many cities are experiencing rapidly increasing traffic congestion that contributes to commute times and air pollution. Air quality in low- and middle-income countries has progressively worsened. In 2016, 97% of cities in low- and middle countries with more than 100,000 inhabitants had air quality that did not meet guidelines compared to 49% of cities in high income countries (UNDESA, 2022).

Few studies are available of the impacts of improved transportation access for urban residents living in poverty. A recent evidence gap map on the effectiveness of transport interventions in low- and middle-income countries found that evidence is primarily focused on the outcomes of transportation infrastructure, particularly roads (Malhotra et al., 2021). Studies identified by the gap map also found mixed results for poor households. For example, assessments of investment in transport and energy infrastructure in China, India and Thailand found that investments are not likely to benefit poorer households in the short term (Cook et al., 2005).

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