Stream 3: Poverty in Urban Spaces

This call is for forward-thinking, relevant research which examines how urban spaces are changing and identifying the emerging challenges for reducing urban poverty. This includes understanding of towns and peri-urban areas, and new interventions that can tackle urban poverty at scale.

Background and research gaps

In 2008, UNFPA reported[1] that more than half the world's population live in urban areas and this proportion is predicted to increase to two thirds by 2030.

Global wealth is concentrated in the world's cities. An estimated three quarters of economic production now takes place in cities with just 600 urban centres now generating roughly 60 per cent of global growth[2]. For example, in Ethiopia and Uganda, cities contain just 5 per cent of the population but generate a fifth of GDP[3].

It is important to note that smaller towns and cities are growing more rapidly than larger ones. Around two thirds of the urban population - and most of the urban poor - in developing countries are located in urban centres with less than 1 million inhabitants[4]. Peri-urban areas and small towns are also growing and these are relatively under-researched. Urbanisation brings with it possibilities of improved access to jobs, goods and services for poor people in developing countries and beyond as globalisation trends connect cities world-wide[5]. It also provides opportunities for new forms of social and political organisation, with new spaces opening up for voices to be heard. Populations find themselves in closer proximity to various levels of the state - municipal/metropolitan, regional/provincial and national.

In principle, there are many opportunities for the poor within an urban or peri-urban centre. Research in Senegal suggested that exit from poverty was easier for people in towns (60 per cent escaped over a 30-year period compared to 25 per cent in rural areas).[6] A new World Bank detailed study of internal migration shows that much poverty reduction comes from people moving to small towns/peri-urban settlements, and engaging in rural-nonfarm activities.[7] That said, what is the current and changing reality for poor people and are the potential economic, social and political gains of an urban life actually being realised?

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[1] UNFPA State of the World's Population Report 2008

[2] UNFPA State of the World's Population Report 2008

[3] See Paul Dorosh and James Thurlow (2012) "Can Cities or Towns Drive African Development", UNU-WIDER Working Paper 2012/50 for a discussion on Uganda and Ethiopia.

[4] Satterthwaite and Tacoli (2003) Reducing Urban Poverty: Some Lessons from Experience. London. IIED

[5] See Robert Muggah (2012) Researching the Urban Dilemma: Urbanisation, Poverty and Violence. IDRC/DFID.

[6] Cisse, R (2011) 'Les facteurs d'interruption de la transmission et les experiences de sortie de la pauvrete' CPRC Working Paper. Manchester, Chronic Poverty Research Centre.

[7] Luc Christiaensen, Joachim De Weerdt and Yasuyuki Todo (2013) 'Urbanisation and Poverty Reduction. The Role of Rural Diversification and Secondary Towns'. Policy Research Working Paper 6422, World Bank.

In fact, we know less about patterns of growth in African towns and cities and how far they are producing similar income and employment effects compared to other parts of the world. Further research is needed to understand why African urbanisation may not be being driven by jobs in big cities, as occurred in parts of Asia. What does this mean for the kind of work people are doing and for their economic and social vulnerability? How can urban growth be harnessed to deliver better outcomes for the poor? There are also under-researched links between new patterns of growth and resource extraction.

Current rates of poverty within urban areas are high. The World Bank report that 70 per cent of urban residents in African cities live on less than $2 per day. Despite impressive economic growth, India and China, respectively, have 17 per cent and 20 per cent of global slum dwellers[8]. Already more than 1 billion of the world's 6.6 billion people live in urban slums (some 32 per cent of urban dwellers), often in overcrowded conditions, extremely vulnerable, with little access to services, water and sanitation, security and reasonable housing[9]. It is estimated this number will rise to 2 billion by 2030.

Existing data sets do not show (or may even hide) the scale and deprivation in urban areas. There are significant gaps in the quantitative data on who the poor actually are, and what groups are under- or over-represented, and what the drivers of vulnerability and sources of resilience are. The intense pressure on services can be greater than the local economic opportunities provided in an urban context, and therefore the potential of urbanisation for poverty reduction and job creation, may not be realised.

Different parts of Africa are developing different patterns of growth. East Africa is now rapidly urbanising and contains three of the world's twenty fastest growing cities: Kigali, Kampala and Dar es Salam[10]. There is also a growth of 'Satellite Cities', planned new urban areas using private and public investments adjacent to existing cities. But who will benefit from these new centres and areas of growth, and how will they create new patterns of inclusion/exclusion?[11] New urban structures are also developing in conflict and post-conflict settings as displaced people settle rapidly in large numbers.

In terms of voice and governance, urban governance structures are often poorly placed to respond to multiple challenges around service provision, adaptation and poverty reduction. States can respond to unplanned urbanisation as a threat rather than a dynamic opportunity. To some extent, new inequalities of access are being created as cities develop which are linked to unequal access to political power. The governance structures of small towns and peri-urban areas are largely unknown and under-researched. These are often the places where poor migrants are first forced to settle, giving them very little access to services or any official arm of the State.

Research is needed across a broader range of areas to increase understanding of the dynamic changes catalysed by increased urbanisation, its impact on poverty and the

[8] UN Habitat 2006.

[9] International Development Committee session on urbanisation and poverty (2009) HMSO

[10] Economic Intelligence Unit World in Figures 2010

[11] See Society for International Development GHEA Outlook #18.

effectiveness of a range of policies and interventions that can reduce urban poverty rates and protect the livelihoods of the urban poor[12].

Overarching research questions

From the above it is clear that there is a very wide-ranging research agenda. At the same time, there are priority areas that call for a focussed research strategy. The Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research therefore invites researchers applying under the *Poverty in Urban Spaces* stream to consider a central set of research questions:

What is the specific pattern of new urbanisation in Africa and what is the impact of this pattern (or patterns) on poverty and poverty reduction? What specifically is driving and shaping the expansion of secondary towns, peri-urban areas and cities in Africa? How important are these in economic and social terms? How are new patterns of urban growth including/excluding men and women? What are the emerging challenges for tackling urban poverty reduction at scale? What are the future sustainability and environmental implications?

In order to answer these overarching questions, applicants will be expected to consider the following:

Governance

- What kinds of policy choices and governance frameworks enable urban centres to manage and address the challenges of poverty, vulnerability and inequality?
- What governance challenges are raised by the spread of smaller towns and cities in Africa? In what respects do these differ from larger cities? For example, who governs new peri-urban spaces where the reach of 'official governance' might be limited, and how do these communities engage with political power?
- Are approaches to urban governance emerging that specifically and effectively address the challenges of poverty and vulnerability in these new urban scapes?

Livelihoods

- What do we understand about the urbanisation of poverty and growing urban inequalities for men and women within cities and towns?
- How can land markets and land tenure systems be used to increase security of tenure for the poorest, and to stimulate investment in basic services and housing to alleviate the formation of slums?
- How best to design appropriate interventions to promote urban livelihoods and enterprise development that benefit the urban poor and different groups within the urban poor?

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[12] DFID is currently funding a range of work on urban issues, including a focus on urban violence with IDRC and a focus on urban growth, urban poverty measurement, climate change and adaptation in urban areas and urban food security with IIED. ESRC has a substantial history of funding research on the economic, social and cultural aspects of urbanisation. The indicative list of overarching questions in the next section covers a forward looking, emerging research agenda not currently being funded.

- How do poor men and women access justice and security in an urban and peri-urban setting?

Harnessing opportunities and delivering social change

- What are the new models of 'delivery' that deliver sustainable improvements in health, education and financial services in urban centres?
- How are urban actors innovating to improve the reach and impact of services for different groups of poor users?
- What are the barriers to delivering at scale and how are these being overcome?
- What is the role that technology can play in overcoming physical and financial constraints to delivery?
- What is the role of external actors in delivering social change?

Research approach

ESRC and DFID recognise the need for a suitable research approach to effectively respond to the overarching questions posed above. Therefore research projects funded under this call are encouraged to:

- include cross-country comparison and some attention to fragile states
- analyse existing survey data, including administrative data
- use disaggregated data and recognise the difference experiences of men and women
- employ mixed methods research, with a balance between quantitative and qualitative analysis
- use technology innovatively to gather information in under-researched areas, and recommendations on how technology could further be used to increase accountability in urban settings
- include partnerships with the private sector, NGOs and innovators working at a local level in urban spaces.

Geographical focus

The focus for this Research Programme is on Africa but may include relevant comparative work in Asia and Latin America.

However, applicants should note that proposals which include any comparison with Middle-Income Countires (MICs) must demonstrate that the research will generate new knowledge of global relevance that has the potential to benefit the lives of poor people in Low-Income Countries. Applicants will be required to demonstrate how research undertaken in Middle-Income Countries has the potential to reduce poverty in one or more Low-Income Countries and what will be done during the lifetime of the funded project to ensure that this happens. Proposals must describe what their programme will do to ensure that poor people living in low-income countries benefit from their research.