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URBAN POVERTY AND DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS

A Critical Review

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INTRODUCTION

Urban poverty and urban development strategies are the subject of increasing discussions in the development community. The participants to this overdue debate come with widely varying experiences and ideological positions, which partially reflects the scale and complexity of the urban development challenge. It is also apparent that there is a lack of successful practical experience and policy expertise within many development organisations.

However, there is an emerging new orthodoxy focusing around urban productivity and the strengthening of urban institutions. Multi-lateral agencies such as UNDP and the World Bank have been the driving force behind the new approach with an increasing number of bi-lateral donors and academics being co-opted into the policy consensus. Both Northern and Southern NGOs have come to this wide debate somewhat slowly despite being acknowledged as vital participants in urban development and poverty alleviation.

NGO participation in the urban policy and programming debate and wider programming issues have been limited by: the NGO sector's lack of consensus and/or global perspective; the dominance of government and academic technical experts; the absence of formal and effective policy development interfaces/fora; the impact of existing demands on urban NGOs. This situation is unfortunate given that many NGOs have experience in urban poverty alleviation and the strengthening of community-based organisations. This experience, however, has not been thoroughly accumulated and disseminated within the wider development community.

In fact, the sharing of understanding and experience with regard to urban poverty and effective development intervention has been, at best, too scant and incidental, at worst, excluding and esoteric. It is hoped that this occasional paper will familiarise readers with the current thinking and practice regarding development work in cities. As a critical review it highlights important policy and programming debates as well as identifying concerns and gaps in development co-operation in urban areas, paying particular attention to the role(s) of NGOs.

Part one provides an overview of the urban challenge, looking at the impact of structural adjustment programmes on the urban poor and the responses of different development entities. Part two comprises of a historical account of why urban poverty has been overlooked

by development agencies, some initial thoughts about understanding poverty in the urban context and provides some guidelines for assessing its nature and scope. Part three looks at the historical and currently evolving approaches and roles of the multi-lateral agencies, urban planners and administrators, and development NGOs to the question of urban poverty. The paper then proceeds to consider the 'received practice' with regard to poverty alleviation, service delivery, participation and social targeting. The paper concludes by proposing a range of research questions.

PART ONE: THE URBAN CHALLENGE

The question of cities and development is firmly back on the agenda of the development community with the issue of urban poverty alleviation demanding much attention. The need to engage in poverty alleviation in cities is great but so too are the difficulties of developing and implementing effective strategies. This section will explain the nature of the urban poverty challenge and will examine past and current approaches to urban poverty alleviation.

1.1 Urbanisation and Institutional Development

Part of the renewed interest has come from the acceptance that urbanisation has been and continues to be a major factor/problem in the social, economic and political situation of most countries in the South. Within the last forty years, the absolute number of the urban population has increased almost five-fold from an estimated 300 million to just less than 1.5 billion. In some developing nations the urban population and the population of major cities has witnessed a more than ten-fold increase. Within this context of rapid urbanisation, there has been an increasing proportion of the urban population living in extreme poverty. Whereas in the 1960s and 1970s slum and shanty town dwellers represented on average 30-60% of urban populations in developing countries, present estimates suggest an average of 50% and rising to 79% in some cities (Harpham et al 1988). It is not only this phenomenal growth in the absolute and relative numbers of the urban poor but the prospect of continued urbanisation and impoverishment over the next twenty years that represents a serious challenge. UNCHS's Global Report on Human Settlements painted a grim picture:

"..the urban population of developing countries will increase by 66% in the next 15 years and treble in the next 40 years...developing countries have the task of providing shelter, services and work in cities for an additional 140,000 people every day. They must seek to do this when more than 300 million are already without productive employment, 700 million people live in absolute or relative poverty, and development prospects for many of them appear more constrained than ever before." (1986:14)

It is not only the scale of urban growth that presents the challenge but more crucially the lack of corresponding increases in the institutional capacities of organisations responsible for urban development. Arrossi et al (1994), for example, argue that "most large urban centres have city and municipal governments whose form, mode of operation and resource base have changed little in recent decades, despite enormous increases in population, resource consumption and waste generation(1994:3). So while the past three decades have witnessed the growth of NGOs and community-based organisations, there is still a recognised mismatch between them and the structures of public bureaucracies in the South (Fowler 1991).

1.2 The Impact Of Structural Adjustment on the Urban Poor

Secondly, with the general implementation of structural adjustment programmes across the developing world during the 1980s it has been the urban poor who have been most severely impacted (Herbert et al 1993). They have borne the brunt of agricultural price liberalisation,

currency devaluation, reductions in basic services expenditure and cuts in basic subsidies for water, fuel and transport. The consequences have been varied; urban prices particularly of food have increased sharply; unemployment and underemployment has risen; urban economic activity has been constrained by due to the cuts in public expenditure; household budgets have been further stretched by user-fees for both economic and social services. There have been resultant changes in the coping strategies of households and urban low-income communities. Nevertheless, the medium and long-term effectiveness of these strategies is dubious and there are concerns that women and children have been rendered much more vulnerable by them (Herbert et al 1993).

The World Bank, for example, have recently employed a new categorization of the poor acknowledging the detrimental effect of structural adjustment programmes, in talking of the New Poor, Borderline Poor Pushed into Poverty (Moser 1993b). The apparently negative employment, economic and social effects on the urban poor of many structural adjustment programmes have resulted in increased political awareness in urban areas and aided the voice of a range of urban social movements and development activists (Stren and Yeung 1993). Oddly and sadly, among many macro-economists there has been relatively little concern about the disproportionately heavy impact of structural readjustment on the urban poor (Cohen 1990).

1.3 Urban Complexity

The challenge of urban poverty alleviation is heightened by the complexity of the urban environment. This complexity is apparent at many levels of organisation and life in the city, such as follows:

Economy: the numbers, size and nature of economic units and activities within the city is frequently bewildering. Conventional economic theory does not adequately explain urban economies neither does it recognise the vibrant and dynamic nature of small scale enterprises, segmented labour markets and the growing influence of informal economic activity. Urban residents can be employed formally or informally in the public and private sectors as well as doing a range of work associated with household or community organisation. The urban economy itself produces complex and changing employment options/conditions and as a consequence urban residents may employ diverse employment strategies to reduce the risk of unemployment.

Communities: whilst it should not be denied that rural areas/villages experience community heterogeneity, the degree of heterogeneity within and between urban communities is often very high. Within the same low income settlement, there can be enormous variations between people's social, economic and cultural positions. People's assets, caste, education levels, accessibilities, health status, social networks, household compositions, local knowledge, income generation activities may exhibit a broad range (Bosjnak 1985). The heterogeneity is further complicated when we compare the nature of different 'low income settlements' which may include so-called squatters, shanty towns, slums (tenements), public shelter projects or street dwellers (Harpham et al 1988). This reflects not only social heterogeneity but the existence of different tenure patterns and urban housing sub-markets.

Institutional: cities are usually complex in the number and nature of institutions that affect people's lives. Community-based organisations, workers co-operatives, trade unions, NGOs, the local state, the local government, public institutions or quangos, political parties and a host of interest groups. It is inappropriate to speak of the institutional environment of the city being crowded but it is certainly more varied and more immediately politicised than that of rural areas. Urban change affects and is affected by these organisations. Development in this context affects a range of institutions and offers widely varying 'choices' of institutional entities to negotiate with.

Political decision-making power: Complexity in the inter-institutional and intra-organisational relations often result in a complicated decision-making and implementation processes. For example, in many countries of the South the structure of the relationship between the local state (agents of central government) and the local government departments is unclear. Within the same local government administration there are often poor relationships and unclear demarcations of responsibilities between different departments. The higher rate of turnover of politicians and more fluid political community structures further complicates continuity in urban affairs.

1.4 Responding to Urban Poverty

Rapid growth in urban populations and urban poverty, the impact of structural adjustment programmes and the complexity of the city or urban system itself has presented a serious challenge to the development community - a challenge that is yet to be successfully engaged. There have been an evolving range of responses to urban poverty since the 1960's but the effectiveness of these programming responses has been very limited. Annis (1988) has argued that:

"..the best urban ideas from the populist era have not worked very well. Quite honestly, no one who knows the turf well knows what to do, leading to a kind of intellectual agnosticism that weighs heavily against boldness. Today's urban technicians are generally to be found pondering a set of policy options that - they believe - range from those that flatly make matters worse, to those that merely do not work well, to those that work under restricted conditions but cannot realistically be financed or implemented on a wide scale." (Annis 1988:134-135)

This challenge of effectively countering urban poverty at both the programming and national policy level was implicitly conceded by the World Development Report:

"..It is difficult for urban poverty projects to reach the poorest people. The most comprehensive study by the [World] Bank found that people in the middle rather than the lower part of the urban income distribution tended to gain the most...Project-level interventions, such as shelter projects, often do not have much influence on the overall urban policies of recipient countries." (1990:132)

1.4.1 Growth and Modernisation

The initial predominant responses to the urbanisation of cities was for governments to seek to provide direct public delivery of housing and large-scale investment in trunk infrastructure. This was seen as part of the modernisation and growth process of cities. The primary reason was that of helping the growth of cities as part of fuelling and strengthening the national economy. The rush towards economic growth through import-substitution strategies was seen as ultimately beneficial, as the benefits of such growth would trickle down to all. The approach of extensive state intervention and the mass production of public goods dominated urban development practice throughout the 1960s and early 1970s.

1.4.2 Basic Needs Provision

The sheer pace of urbanisation, the limited financial resources of national government and the increasingly visible impoverishment of significant sections of the urban population brought home the reality that most governments were unable to meet the needs of the urban poor by direct public provision of good shelter and services. The emphasis during the 1970s and early 1980s was that of meeting basic needs in cities and encouraging self-help. Many governments initiatives in this respect were dependent on funding from the World Bank and bi-lateral donors. The main approach to meeting basic needs in urban areas was that of the providing sites and services for some low-income communities combined with upgrading projects for other more established slum communities. Typical sites and services projects involved providing areas of land equipped with basic urban services to people to construct their own shelter. Additionally, some infrastructure and social facilities were provided alongside financing for plots and building materials. Although there were and are cases of material improvement in many of these projects, many evaluations have shown little impact with regard to the overall socio-economic situation of the slum (Bapat and Crook 1989, Harpham and Stephens 1991 and Karamoy 1984). Frequently, these projects failed to reach the poorest groups or to be scaled-up into governments' overall urban policy and funding priorities. There were also serious problems with the financial and political sustainability of urban poverty projects as well as the constraints of the larger policy and institutional environment.

1.4.3 Urban Management and Productivity

The next and still influential shift in urban development interventions by multilateral and government revolved around the concepts of urban management and the development of enabling strategies to encourage the bottom-up provision of services. Urban management is seen as the focused activity of developing, managing and co-ordinating resources to achieve urban development resources. This approach is often seen as entailing policies concerned with the following: strengthening institutions (both public and private) concerned with urban development; decentralisation of decision-making; the reform of public administration for privatisation; training of senior management staff; encouraging service provision by parastatal, private sector and non-governmental organisations; regulatory reforms and the development of incentives and facilitative measures that encourage communities and various

groups to invest to initiate and invest in their own development initiatives. This approach of enabling markets, regulatory reform, privatisation and institutional capacity-building is seen as improving the productivity of cities and the opportunities of the poor.

If the city is viewed as a important centre of economic and social production, the enhancement of urban productivity is viewed as removing bottlenecks (be they regulatory, infrastructure or institutional) that constraint urban economic growth and social welfare. Urban productivity is thus argued to be enhanced by removing regulatory constraints in employment, housing, land and services markets that disadvantage the urban poor; by decentralisation of urban management responsibilities and powers to managerially- and financially-strengthened local government; by expanding the quality and coverage of trunk infrastructure to reduce unnecessary and debilitating costs to business and households. In this context, the enhancement of urban productivity is seen as helping poverty alleviation by stimulating greater economic and employment activity in the city and by opening up the political and administrative space for basic urban services to be provided by a broader range of development actors.

1.4.4 Policy Rhetoric and Practice Realities

A debate concerning urban productivity and its relationship to urban poverty alleviation has dominated urban development policy thinking over the past five years. It represents an attempt by donors, governments and planners to break away from spatial concerns of "housing and watering" the urban poor to looking at the interrelationships between poverty, 'productivity' and environment (World Bank 1991). However, the discourse and development strategies focused around urban productivity improvement and urban poverty alleviation are confused. The discourse is dominated by poor definitions and many unsupported generalisations while the resultant development strategies (mainly software orientated) have shown little effectiveness in impacting urban poverty. Both the discourse and strategies are still very much rooted in the dominant but much criticised macro-economic strategy of structural adjustment. We are now at a point of time in which there is a theoretical movement away from large government projects which are spatially-focused to an emphasis on policy and institutional environments as they encourage the non-statist provision of urban services and open powerful economic and social opportunities for the poor (Harris 1992, Moser 1993a, Stren 1992, Werna 1992, World Bank 1991, UNDP 1992).

However, in practice, there is still a very strong focus on projects and sectoral programmes, concentrating on shelter and basic infrastructure. This is hardly surprising as policy debate around urban management and productivity enhancement has: been weak on providing practical guidance on developing and implementing appropriate city-specific actions programmes; has assumed that a baseline capacity exists within local government to pursue this new approach when in fact this capacity has been less than minimal in many cases; has not accounted for the fact that there may be little political incentive to adopt this new approach. For governments, at least, the projects are visible, easier to execute and have a more readily identifiable impact.

This geographic project focus to urban development has survived several decades. Although the emphasis has changed from purely architectural solutions, through to community based housing and service provision, the physical and spatial concerns of housing, water, sanitation

and transportation, still dominates most policy and programming. Even in service-based agencies such as UNICEF many staff still take the locality as their target rather than defining their target as a social grouping. The approach of both governments and donors to urban development and urban poverty alleviation has generally not institutionalised social and economic issues such as employment, education and health (Moser 1993b). The work on small enterprise perhaps challenges the spatial view of urban development by focusing on enterprise rather than the locality in which the household lives.

Critique needs to be made of the disjuncture between urban development policy and practice in order to advance the effective implementation of development strategies. More critique needs to be focused on the current multilateral approach which has led to the highly sectoral programming of assistance and increases in donor funding to institutions concerned with the management of cities. Is this approach among the most effective and efficient ways to tackle urban poverty alleviation?

1.5 The Urban NGO

Against the tension in official agencies can be placed the actual and perceived roles of NGOs in urban development. In reality NGOs are involved in a myriad of small scale interventions, covering most sectoral areas and social groups. The role of the urban NGOs is perceived by official agencies as providing the basic interface between large scale programmes or services and the community or individuals.

Despite a great deal of positive publicity for NGOs it is not always clear whether this is due to the work of a small number of very successful agencies. Some observers have argued that the vast majority of small urban NGOs have a weak strategy, little long term vision or perspective and are obsessed with the daily minutiae of their micro-interventions. It is not certain that the average NGO could meet the requirements of the official sector's evolving view of their role in urban development.

PART TWO: UNDERSTANDING URBAN POVERTY

2.1 The Poverty of Cities

Within the development NGO community and beyond, little concerted and high-quality enquiry has been given to analysing the extent and the nature of poverty in cities despite the generally acknowledged growth in the relative and absolute numbers of the urban poor. The reasons for this oversight are varied but interlocking. Traditionally, cities have been viewed as more wealthy, having better service provision and smaller proportion of the absolute poor. This led to the arguments focused around the 'urban bias' of public sector investment, arguments that ignored the critical economic role of cities and urban systems in the national development endeavours. It also failed to take account of the fact that the poorest urban groups were in many cases as materially deprived as their rural counterparts, and they were the group most adversely affected by typical structural adjustment programmes.

2.2 The Complexity of Cities

Juxtaposed against this has been the problem of examining and understanding poverty at the level of the city (Boyden 1991, Stren and Yeung 1993). The social, economic and geo-political complexity of urban areas presents real challenges to researchers. Cities have amorphous and heterogenous populations which reflect diversity across and within space, time, communities, households and societal groupings. The consequence of this complexity is that much research has focused either at the macro or micro level, with a minimal amount of influential outstanding research at the city-wide/meso level:

"...there is currently a large volume of small pieces of research which lacks a broad view. Meanwhile, macro-descriptions and analyses at national and international level are so aggregated that, at best, they are only useful for broad comparative perspectives." (Arrossi et al 1994:11-12)

2.3 Understanding Poverty and the Urban Poor

Additionally, there has been the assumption on the part of policy-makers that they knew naturally who the poor were, what the nature of the poverty was, as well as the needs and wants of poor people. This has led to the overemphasis of income and consumption measures, whilst neglecting other important aspects and poor people's own criteria of poverty, vulnerability and well-being (Chambers 1989). Far too often poverty line estimations have been constructed on the basis of cash wages/income sufficient to enable individuals to purchase necessary diet, services, shelter and clothing. Recently more insightful estimates which account for household size and composition have been used more vigorously.

Nevertheless, few take into account the fact that an enormous number of urban residents derive non-wage income in the informal sector. Surprisingly there have been few longitudinal studies of urban poverty - studies which are important to recognising the differentiated nature of people's experience of poverty and for understanding the processes affecting urban well-being (Oxfam 1988).

2.4 The Urban Edge of Poverty

There has also been a general tendency to overlook the different impact of poverty in the urban context. Commonly, indicators are taken at the national level and then disaggregated to urban and rural populations uncritically. Yet if you consider most indicators of poverty or conversely well-being, the urban context presents particular dilemmas. Lack of subsistence agricultural production means that labour may be the only asset that poor urban people have. Access to education may be much more critical in the urban context where high unemployment exists and high skills and education qualifications are mandatory for even low level jobs. Indicators of personal safety are far more important also in the urban context where there is relatively less social cohesion (IIED 1994 and Moser 1993b).

2.5 Reconceptualising Urban Poverty

Fundamentally, most conceptualisations of urban poverty have not accounted for the social and political context of people's lives. The dynamic organisational and institutional characteristics of people's lives needs to be understood. Analyses which understand poverty in the context of fluid and evolving societal processes and not as a static state need to be stressed. In particular recent advances in thinking and analysis regarding vulnerability and livelihoods, differentials, household strategies and community organising need to be incorporated into conceptualisations of urban poverty (Chambers 1989). As such, there is a need for development organisations to include strategically quantitative and qualitative anthropological and sociological research techniques in urban development work.

Poverty is not monolithic neither are 'the poor' a homogenous group. It is unfortunate that many reports continue to paint anecdotal and somewhat misleading descriptions of the urban poor. Despite the evidence of numerous studies and accumulated experience, the urban poor are still characterised predominately as rural migrants who are marginal (socially, spatially, economically and politically) from the urban centre. The nature of social structures and relations in confluence with the larger (inter)national macro-economic structure and historical development of metropolitan areas has generated a heterogenous set of groups that can be regarded as the urban poor. The salient features of these groups is not their supposed rural origins or their ethereal 'marginally'. Rather it is the interrelationships of their economic and education opportunities, their care commitments, their health and shelter status, that patterns and abilities with regard to community organising.

Poverty should not be identified with a certain set of indicators at one level or the other, but rather should be seen as being created by the interrelationship of a range of determinants operating contemporaneously at the levels of the individual, household and community. So

while individual level indicators lend themselves to economic measurement and are generally used, they can present a misleading picture of poverty/well-being due to the fact that they exclude household and community level determinants. All three levels must be considered together and over time:

"..a household can have food on the table, a new fridge, and children in school. However, if there is no adequate child care provision, households with children cannot release women for income generating work. If there is no running water due to city level shortages, road conditions make transport slow and time consuming, dengue is rampant due to flooding, and personal safety is problematic due to the scale of social unrest, the entire community is affected and experiences vulnerability...the capacity to cope in such a context is dependent not only on individual capability, but also and more importantly on household composition and community level organisational structures"(Moser 1993b:9)

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Having acknowledged the variable but often interlocking determinants of poverty we can see that the qualitative nature of people' poverty varies greatly. Poverty due to short-term unemployment or ill-health is a very different condition to poverty due to old age and permanent disability. The gender composition and life-cycle of the household, among many other things, can determine the severity of poverty.

2.6 Guidelines for Analysing Urban Poverty and Well-Being

It has been noted above that there exists much confusion in defining and understanding poverty. This has led to even greater semantic confusion between poverty and vulnerability, with some authors regarding poverty as a static concept and vulnerability as the dynamic and more important concern. In such a framework, poverty is associated with lack or want whereas vulnerability concerns defencelessness, insecurity and exposure to risks, shocks and stress.

It is true to say that professional definitions of poverty have overlooked the concerns of poor people which consistently include vulnerability (Chambers 1989). Nevertheless, from a programming and policy development perspective it is maybe more useful to regard vulnerability as major component of urban poverty not as separate to it (ACORD 1992, Amis 1993, Rakodi 1993). Other components of urban poverty that should be the focus of analysis could include:

- a. status - that is, who one is or socially defined and treated(gender, ethnicity, age and class.
- b. physical health (how one is) and its determinants such as access to clean water, health provision and education, diet, environment
- c. material poverty, lack of resources or access to productive resources such as surety of land tenure, education, income generating opportunities and roles
- d. political powerlessness or lack of control.

In developing a framework for analysing urban poverty there are number of points that should be considered as follows:

1. NGOs need to uncover local conceptions of poverty and well-being. These can vary dramatically between and within social groups and spatial locations. These definitions may often stand at odds with professional definitions of poverty. Anthropological investigation may be a useful starting point for highlighting this information.

Inextricably linked to this process must be the task of investigating and understanding local social processes and structures (Oxfam 1988). As Arrossi et al argue "... the first task for a researcher of a Third World city is to uncover the indigenous order and to outline its evolving form. Only by knowing the structure of a local social order can one begin to predict and direct the change" (1994:23). This represents a challenge to the existing approaches and priorities of development agencies in urban settings. It implies:

- a. institutionalising qualitative base-line research by creating set funding and recruiting skilled social scientists with development practice expertise.
- b. developing innovative but transparent research methodologies at an organisational level which can manage urban complexity.

2. NGOs should develop definition of sustainable livelihood in the urban (system) context. Adopting Chambers and Conway's approach, we could define livelihood as including:

"..the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living; a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihoods for the next generation"(Chambers and Conway 1987)

There needs to be analysis of the particular importance of such capacities, asset and accessibilities in the urban context (Rakodi 1993). Additionally, there needs to be an explicit consideration of the physical and social environment as this is often a more powerful indicator of people's well-being than their economic status (Bapat and Crook 1989, Harpham and Stephens 1991).

3. It is essential to assess the nature of long-term trends and short-term shocks to the urban system, low income individuals/ households susceptibility to it and their coping strategies (both in predicting and adapting to anticipated changes and in responding to unexpected developments).

4. Examine poverty longitudinally in order to identify the conjunctionally poor and structurally destitute. This point cannot be overstated as it is often only by long-term investigation that the particular patterns of poverty are accurately observed.

5. Recognise and assess indicators of poverty and well being at the levels of the individual, household and the community. This is crucial as:

"...indicators of vulnerability and well-being focus at individual, household and community levels - for beneficiaries can be targeted in different ways in relation to a variety of roles, relationships and social functions...focusing on one set of indicators misses the fact that it is the interrelationship between the three which determines what poverty means to low-income men, women and children" (Moser 1993b:9).

So for example, per capita income and household type and/or structure is increasingly acknowledged by development practitioners as an interrelationship between individual and household level indicators. Community level indicators such as sanitation, transport, electricity supplies affect individuals' health or educational attainment and households' income.

Reviews of secondary sources, direct observation, interviews with individuals, key informants and a range of mixed or interest groups and a range of analytical games that involve ranking, oral stories and diagrams can be used to analyse urban poverty (Borrini 1991, OXFAM 1988, Patel 1990 and Shah 1994).

6. Attempt to link micro and meso-level participatory research findings to quantitative data on national level poverty. If NGOs are serious about urban poverty alleviation they must seek to influence the design of macro-level policy. In order to do this, NGOs must understand and articulate their findings in the wider context of national poverty and macro-level policy.

PART THREE: TRENDS IN THINKING AND PRACTICE

This section will discuss the currently evolving views and roles of key actors in urban development interventions.

3.1 Multi-lateral Donor agencies

The past seven years have seen the evolution of macro-paradigms of urban management by organisations such as the World Bank, IMF, UNCHS and UNDP. In part, this has been a response to the obvious situation of cities in organisational turmoil and the ambiguous success of project-centred initiatives. This turmoil is reflected in: the inability of both state and local government approaches to effectively manage and regulate urban life; the declining delivery, maintenance and quality of essential urban services and; the limited impact, accessibility, scaling-up and sustainability of projects and programmes.

The World Bank, UNDP and UNCHS have placed the strengthening of institutions at the core of their urban development agenda, and jointly launched the Urban Management Programme. However, the broad process of this new Programme seems derived largely from models of the North (Arrossi 1994 and Stren 1992b) and ignores issues of the nature and persistence of urban poverty beyond regulatory reform (Moser 1993a and Harris 1992). It appears to overlook such crucial factors as culture, historical understanding and the strategic position of the informal sector in developing countries.

The World Bank's policy paper fully embodies this renewed top-down approach to cities. It announces the Bank's broad theme of 'greater efficiency' and the interrelated priorities of productivity, poverty reduction and environment. It sees key constraints as being infrastructure deficiencies, the regulatory framework governing urban labour and housing markets, weak municipal institutions and inadequate financial services. As such, the Bank's current foci concern issues of policy reform, the management of urban infrastructure and financial services, and the improvement in frameworks and the financial and technical capacities of municipal institutions.

To 'manage' urban poverty a number of measures were recommended. However, the paper failed to address questions concerning the implementation of such measures and the plight of the very poorest in urban areas. It is not directly concerned with the needs of people or with disaggregating varying groups and factors within the urban environment (Moser 1993a). This is a significant weakness and represents the missing of major opportunities. In fact, the paper and that of UNDP's outlines what is essentially a technical agenda, relating to regulatory mechanisms, privatization and governance. Werna (1992), whilst acknowledging that governance and decentralisation are now global concepts, questions how appropriate they are to the local conditions of developing countries, echoing the concerns of both Stren (1992a) and Harris (1992).

Much discussion in the paper is focused around 'deregulation', institutional capacity building, and inter-agency co-ordination of planning and service delivery.

The three key weakness, over and above those outlined above, are:

1. The concept of urban management is used in a vague way and there certainly is not any consensus over its definition. This has serious implications in terms of the policy frameworks developed for urban development and poverty alleviation. Widely differing conclusions and policies can develop from the reading of the same texts (Werna 1992).

The main overlap in the varying definitions is that they entail some form of strengthening of local institutions that support development. The potential efficacy of the suggested institutional development strategies is questionable. The effect of restructuring and developing new organisational systems for local government may only be very minimal. The critical importance of process, ownership of reorientation, the specificity of national and city contexts, the politics of urban change/life and the practical strategies of strengthening non-statist institutions and sectors has to be genuinely engaged. Beyond this, one could question the appropriateness of the urban management concept and its practical objective which some see as a uncritical, speedy universal move towards privatisation (Stren 1992b).

2. There is a disjuncture between the growing informalisation of the economies of many Southern countries and the widespread implementation of the urban management concept. There are serious doubts as to whether urban management even with its implicit emphases of regulatory reform and privatisation will be able to keep pace with the fluidity and indeterminacy of informalisation in indigenous economies. As Stren argues:

“..The 'fit' between the African informal city and the institutional forms and ideas underlying urban management will surely be one of the most important challenges of the next decade”(Stren 1992b)

This is an important concern given the growing recognition of the importance of the informal sector in development. It will be necessary to focus attention on how the particular society and the indigenous economy organises itself and conceive mechanisms and processes that support and strengthen those aspects which are developmental. This may entail policy makers and development practitioners rethinking and adapting their conceptions of the urban management process to take account of local socio-cultural and economic context.

3. Discussions regarding regulatory reform to improve resource allocations for shelter have overlooked the spatial impact of such policy changes. Such policies could in fact increase the problems associated with peripheral sprawl, environment degradation and inner city slum downgrading.

In fact the rhetoric of shelter enablement is surprisingly silent on the question of desired end states in spatially terms. The discourse is dominated by discussion of peripheral upgrading, land tenure regularisation and service extension - matters which all concern existing housing stock in developing countries. The real challenge of the coming years is that of bridging the gap between the high and rising rate of new household formation and the rate of creation of new housing stock.

The current policy consensus does not seem to address this primary problem of the

increasing and huge demand for new shelter and thus the implication is that we will witness heightened overcrowding, increased sub-division, escalating sharing and rental prices and an incredible build-up in unmet demand for shelter. Urban development and poverty alleviation needs to acknowledge and maintain its links with planning despite the current focus of the development community on institution-building and enablement. The importance and central purpose of planning needs to be protected within current policy discussions that stress deregulation and the enablement of institutions and markets. As Burgess et al argue:

"..Planning should consist of establishing goals and standards for urban development and elaborating their implications for existing land uses, housing, infrastructure, economic development and resources use. These goals and standards must aim at rationalising the character and development of the urban form in line with its environmental support capacity, efficiency, cost-minimisation criteria and social goals." (Burgess et al 1994:48)

3.2 Planners and urban administrators

Urban planners and administrators are currently moving towards an organic paradigm in trying to conceptualise the city and its attendant development problems. Cities are now perceived as growing, living, changing and in some cases, dying.

"Hitherto, people have been concerned with pathologies and how to get better housing infrastructure, not destroying the environment, etc. This was the approach of aspirin, surgery, anti-biotics. But perhaps the approach ought to be in terms of urban management, keeping the body healthy, preventative rather than curative medicine. A body remains healthy because there is a continuous communication system or a set of systems composing the body, ensuring no part is starved of oxygen, that wastes are removed and exchanges taking place between parts to ensure survival." (Harris, 1992)

This organic paradigm again stresses urban management but lays an emphasis on increasing so-called urban productivity. Typically policies to heighten productivity include the enablement of markets, reform of regulatory regimes, large scale trunk infrastructure and services investment, developing human capital resources, an emphasis on city-wide or sectoral programmes and policies as opposed to projects, institution. Increased productivity is seen as vital to growth which is not seen by some as not having any trade-offs with poverty alleviation.

Given the growing use of the urban productivity concept it is surprising that is little shared understanding and discussion around its implications. No clearly agreed definition of urban productivity dominates the development community but rather a myriad of varying and irreconcilable meanings. Participants of the discussion have focused on labour productivity when the key issue should be total factor productivity with a concurrent understanding of how relative factor productivity improvements impact on urban productive. That this central concern is not receive general attention is somewhat surprising.

There is also much conceptual confusion regarding the urban side of productivity. Are we talking about a social, economic or spatial concern? In reality, productivity should be linked to the concept of the urban economy and improving its performance. This brings a dilemma for urban professionals whose concerns reflect the fact that cities are far more than economic centres. How do they develop policies which give primacy to the urban economy and yet incorporate the general well-being of people's lives?

Burgess et al (1994:12) also questions, " who captures the benefits of urban productivity improvements and how are they distributed...what guarantees are there that the market will organise the distribution of productivity investments in ways that harmonise the goals of efficiency and equity...what will be the effect of these [productivity] policies in generating or diminishing inter-urban, regional and spatial inequalities?"

It could be argued that productivity enhancement policies could in fact reinforce income differentials and urban vulnerabilities whilst overlooking social priorities and analysis. Poor urban workers could face prospects of increased exploitation in deregulated labour markets. In the absence of subsidies it is very unlikely that profit-oriented providers of infrastructure and basic services will be willing to deliver services to the many groups of the urban poor.

3.3 Northern NGOs and Southern Urban NGOs

Many Northern NGOs have been apparently committed to an almost exclusive orientation on rural development and have been somewhat apathetic to projects which were explicitly urban. Of course, some NGOs were often involved in sectoral projects which were implicitly urban in the fields of health care, transport, water-supply. The arguments for a rural orientation were often that the majority of the nation's population lived in rural settings and as such the bulk of the poor were to be found here. The cities, it was said, had already received a disproportionate share of government investment (leading to the construction of the 'urban bias' arguments) and therefore NGO resources should be directed to rural settings.

However, throughout the 1980's, there was a growing realization that over the following two or three decades the majority of people in most developing nations would be living in cities. Furthermore, it was acknowledged that once you disaggregated statistics regarding the social and economic position of intra-urban groups and areas, certain urban populations/groups were experiencing poverty parallel to that of their rural counterparts:

"...there was a general recognition that not all urban residents were equally well off and indeed that the poorest urban groups could, in many respects, be as materially deprived as the rural poor...it has become clear that one of the groups most adversely affected by the components of a typical structural adjustment programme is the urban poor.." (Rakodi 1993:1)

Other events and trends, beyond rapid urbanisation, were swiftly allocating increased and or new roles within the cities for NGOs, such as: disaffection with bi-lateral and multi-lateral programmes; the negative impact of structural adjustment programmes on the urban poor

with NGOs trying to fill the gaps left by a reduction in government service provision and regulation; increased donor and academic attention and appreciation of NGO work; and the increased emphasis on the development of civil society.

Despite these pressures, some NGOs, accustomed to working in small 'bounded' rural communities, have been reluctant to work in urban areas due to the amorphous and heterogeneous population of large cities and the difficulty of applying skills developed rurally in this new setting. Often times, they have been tempted to view the urban poor as merely transported rural villagers, despite a mass of evidence to the contrary. Consequently, much research design, problem identification and development programmes were based on rural models, on the unconscious assumption that what worked well in the countryside would work well in the city. Yet urban life is complex and distinct, reflecting diversity across space, time, groups, households. NGOs are still struggling with the impact of the complexities of intra-urban/slum/familial differentials, urban social organisation and differentiation, community participation and politicking and sustainability in their development programmes.

However, since the mid-1980s a growing number of NGOs have been engaged in diverse forms of development interventions in urban areas, some utilising interdisciplinary and inter-ethnic perspectives. The recent World Bank, UNDP and UNCHS policy papers regarding urban issues all acknowledge the particular strengths, advantages and contributions that NGOs have made and could make to service delivery, policy-making and institutional capacity-building in urban areas. Harris (1992) outlines a model of NGO participation in the urban management programme but concedes that there are many serious questions to be asked with respect to the NGOs and CBOs in the urban environment.

It seems that the admiration and critical attention with which NGOs are received (Bendahmane 1991, Cernea 1988, Clark 1991, Davidson and Peltensburg 1992, Fowler 1991, Korten 1987, Carroll 1992) needs to be further defined and placed into a realistic context. In particular, relatively little attention has been given to the role and impact of urban NGOs and the specific nature of the NGO in the socio-economic and political environment of the city. There are many outstanding questions regarding the performance, cost effectiveness, sustainability and critical capacities of the urban NGO.

Can we make any general but tentative comments about the urban NGOs? The urban NGO operates in a crowded institutional environment which some see as restricting its autonomy and involving it in a much more complex intervention process. Paradoxically, the urban NGO may experience closer relationships with the state and a wider funding base possibly creating much greater space for effective programming. The urban NGO may be more able and willing to affect policy-makers, through social and spatial proximity to decision-makers. Whilst there are a number of urban NGOs coordinating integrated development programmes, the sheer scale and complexity of urban poverty is a powerful force in keeping urban NGOs focused on narrower issues or sectoral concerns.

Urban NGOs find social targeting much more demanding and difficult given the social, economic and geographic complexity of the city. The staff of urban NGOs also tend to live apart from the communities and groups from which they work due to their different class background, and some have a low-level of direct interface with their clients despite the

relatively small problem of mobility as compared to rural areas.

Evaluations of urban NGO programme impact have largely been piecemeal and scarce. There are two main reasons offered for this. One is that few NGOs undertake thorough baseline research as part of programme planning and therefore their subsequent impact cannot be reliably assessed. Both baseline research and the measurement of programme impact are particularly demanding (yet possible) in the complex, fluid and interactive urban context.

Secondly, until the last five years there has not been a great emphasis or pressure to assess NGO performance. It was sometimes simply assumed that their programmes were having a positive impact and that possibly certain aspects of development could not be measured or evaluated!

There has not, to our knowledge, been any major reassessment of the capacity of urban NGOs to perform effectively the roles being increasingly advocated for them by different actors in the development community (Harris 1992, UNCHS 1993, Stren 1993, Hardoy and Satterthwaite 1988). Urban NGOs are often ill prepared to take on more prominent roles or larger programmes. Many NGOs simply do not have the spare absorptive capacity. Growth in the general NGO sector in many countries has already placed great strains on the limited local management expertise available.

In the current context there is a danger that NGOs will be lured into playing substantial and substitutional roles for the local state. Within the more flexible regulatory regime, with increased indigenous and international recognition and increasing direct funding by bi-lateral aid agencies, urban NGOs may be tacitly drawn into urban management systems purely as service providers. Their roles as development catalysts, policy critics, development practice innovators and advocates for the urban poor may be overshadowed by the weighty tasks and relational implications of service provision.

This could be particularly problematic where NGOs have been envisaged as inputs to Structural Adjustment compensatory packages. In many countries, particularly in Africa, a significant NGO input has been designed to negotiate the economic and social consequences structural adjustment programmes (Fowler 1992). This has created difficulties because the government and World Bank have not engaged in thorough consultation, planning and programming with the NGO sector and the influx of increased funding has heightened competition between NGOs on the ground. Some would go further and argue that the increased focus on urban NGOs in this compensatory/reactive context has led to the formation of many quasi-NGOs that exhibit little voluntary motive, development expertise or programme impact.

There is a growing concerns that organisational weaknesses have inhibited many urban NGOs from performing well in the past, in part because donors assumed incorrectly that the organisational capacity existed to meet the challenges of the programmes. There is a need to consider how strong and effective urban NGOs are as institutions and how any constraints may be confronted constructively.

SECTION FOUR: THEMATIC ISSUES IN THE URBAN CONTEXT

4.1 Poverty Alleviation

Obviously, there is no single effective and replicable approach to poverty alleviation. Adequate interventions seem to vary across countries, depending on factors such as the development of the NGO/CBO sector, the strength of the government institutions and the country's social and economic structure. Three actors are directly concerned with poverty alleviation initiatives: governments, NGOs and multi-/bi-lateral agencies.

4.1.2 Governments

Governments, theoretically, can alleviate the worst aspects of poverty by directing expenditure to the most vulnerable groups and by creating an enabling environment within which the initiatives of the other actors can develop and flourish.

The willingness and ability of government to identify and assist the most vulnerable groups through the construction of safety nets and compensatory measures is constrained in many countries. On the political front certain sections of the urban poor seem to be viewed as either as expendable and inarticulate or as a potentially volatile political grouping/issue. At an organisational level, the lack of trained and experienced staff in social targeting and the dearth of expertise in devising complex assistance packages has been a distinct constraint on the effective fulfilment of this role. Financially, the ability of government to provide targeted assistance to the most vulnerable must be questioned given the limited domestic resources of some countries. Therefore, even in situations where the nature and extent of poverty is established, difficult decisions regarding the prioritisation of assistance have to be made, some of which have turned out to be very poor decisions (Karamoy 1984).

The concept of the government's enabling role is now firmly located within the discourse on urban productivity. As such poverty alleviation lies in improving the urban productivity by promoting measures which will improve human capital resources, intensify productive investments and facilitate access to employment opportunities. Measures currently favoured include: easing regulations as they affect the informal and small business sectors, increasing the access of households and communities to finance, land and infrastructure, developing better access of the poor to basic services such as education, health and family planning (Burgess et al 1994).

Section four (Urban Planners) raised serious concerns of the efficacy of such productivity measures, implemented as a general strategy or part of a much broader one, to alleviate the worst aspects and extent of poverty. These concerns revolve around the distribution of the benefits of productivity improvements, the negative medium-term reinforcement of the poor's vulnerabilities, the impact on the physical environment and the probable cuts coverage of basic urban services. Given this and the general persistence of a large body of urban poor it is vital to expand and improve the coverage of safety net/compensatory measures

4.1.2 Non-governmental Organisations

NGOs are thought to have the advantage of being close to the target population and being able to respond flexibly to needs as they arise. In somewhat cooler terms, they are seen as mobilising resource outside of the state's budget and working in a complementary way beside government programmes. Mitlin and Satterthwaite (1992) see urban NGOs as having an important role to play not so much by implementing large programmes but by acting as multipliers, providing support and guidance to hundreds of community-led initiatives.

In reality there may be just a limited number of NGOs that are co-ordinating or facilitating integrated development interventions in urban areas. Most urban NGOs seem to be engaged in sector-specific interventions or on micro-policy reform work. This can be seen as a response to the limited financial and organisational capacity of urban NGOs relative to the scale of urban poverty in most developing world cities.

Among NGOs, several approaches to poverty alleviation have been popular including:

- * promoting income generation and small enterprise development initiatives;
- * the application of appropriate technology;
- * enhancing the effective use of resources;
- * influencing (through innovation, joint-work and lobbying) the organisational set-up of institutions that have responsibility for urban services;
- * fostering community participation;
- * lowering the cost of delivering basic urban services;
- * strengthening cooperative survival strategies.
- * technical services to shelter groups

In her review of successful NGO income generation and small enterprise programmes funded by the Ford Foundation (all but one being urban in nature), Tandler (1989) outlines some traits that characterise better performing NGO programmes: all focused on a specific trade initially; credit was used as a starting point with the NGO functioning as a broker; NGO leadership developed good links with powerful institutions and people; the economic activities and marketing channels existed prior to the programme and powerful consumer groups were often in favour of production by the beneficiary group.

There are a range of factors that inhibit the effective implementation and sustainability of particular poverty-alleviation strategies, such as, lack of up-to-date data, legal and institutional constraints, inability of the very poorest to get credit, the overlooking of gender and social structure/relation issues and inappropriate programming practices.

NGO poverty alleviation strategies are limited to the extent that:

1. they have been/ are traditionally small (Edwards and Hulme 1992)
2. there is frequently no assessment of their overall impact (Marsden et al 1994)
3. they allow government to restrict the innovation of certain strategies
4. there is a tense and inefficient environment caused by competition for funds and/or

duplication of efforts between several urban NGOs (Fowler 1991)
5. the question of sustainability is overlooked (Salmen 1990)

4.2 Service Delivery

The improvement or facilitation of access to basic urban infrastructure services has been recognised as an important component of any convincing strategy geared towards combatting urban poverty. Access to such services are seen to achieve a range of objectives, from the relief of basic human suffering and restoration of dignity to 'improved productivity and reduced health costs'(Menendez 1992).

Within the literature concerning urban service delivery, there is an great stress on macro-level paradigms/approaches. Werna (1992) cogently explores the arguments that range over concentration versus devolution, true versus false devolution, public versus non-public delivery, formal versus informal service delivery approaches. Obviously, there is a risk of viewing systems/arrangements for urban services delivery as monolithic and exclusive. It should be remembered that much scope for innovation exists in basic service delivery. Within the public sector itself, there is great latitude in terms of the institutional arrangement to deliver or facilitate access to services, examples being state private trusts, semi-autonomous municipal departments, wholly owned municipal enterprise, state public company, metropolitan development authorities to municipally controlled foundations. Similarly on the side of non-public provision there is a range of options such as joint-ventures, leasing, franchising, contracting out or pure private production. The potentially powerful cooperation between NGOs and CBOs is also another form of non-public provision.

Empirical evidence indicates that the effectiveness of any one approach employing a selected set of development actors with prescribed roles and practices varies according to the specific situation. For example, Davey(1992:39) carried out a study of different forms of urban service provision in 13 urban areas in developing countries and concluded that:

"Regrettably, neither the case research nor wider experience indicate categorically which arrangement works best in respect to any particular service. Our findings have to be fairly agnostic."

Batley (1992:56) reinforces the point in his investigation of different systems of urban service delivery:

"..the broadest conclusion from this paper should be that it is not the specific practices [from state to non-state agencies] but a capacity to identify and analyse the problems and practices in any particular case and build solutions on what exists and works."

Given the recognised limited effectiveness of the various espoused systems of service delivery, co-operation between them has been advocated. 'Integrated services' has become a euphemism for multi-sectoral inter-agency approaches to service delivery. It is thought that the disadvantages of one given system can be offset by the attributes of another.

However, such 'co-operation' can increase the complexity of urban service delivery. It is easier to plan and implement the activities of one agent, rather than two or more with differing agenda, politics, operational policies. The literature seems surprisingly lacking in case-studies focusing on the successful co-ordination of integrated urban services delivery. Such information would also be invaluable given the current trend towards privatisation and fragmentation in service provision.

Korten (1991) and Stren (1992b) argues that the emphasis of investigation with regard to service delivery should be on understanding processes which lead to successful solutions (or to failures), given the cultural norms and the level of formalisation in urban communities. There are serious questions that need to be raised concerning the efficacy and sustainability of integrated urban services delivery as it is currently being executed. Thomas (1994) argues that integrated urban services are in fact reaching different households with varying services rather than services being convergent and synergistic in effect. Integration of services is, therefore, only taking place at the level of the supplying institutions. Moser argues that lack of a coherent cross-sectoral planning methodology tends to result in " a christmas tree approach with arbitrary interventions in different unconnected sectors" (1993a:3).

Harpham and Stephens (1992) raise serious and pertinent questions concerning integrated services in the context of slum improvement projects and present a range of findings: are the poorest being reached, are slum improvement projects really benefitting those reached or increasing their indebtedness, mobility and poor nutritional status, how cost effective and sustainable is this approach? They conclude by noting that "...multi-sectoral improvement is still to a great extent, a rhetorical phase, rather than an actual activity. projects claiming a multi-sectoral approach do exist, but in reality services are still delivered vertically in most cases" (1991:46).

Increasing emphasis is also being given to the utilisation and maintenance of facilities and services once provided and the pivotal role of slum or community-based organisations in this. Community-based organisations (CBOs) are increasingly being viewed as important agents in urban service delivery. See Cheema 1992, Davidson and Peltenburg 1992, Korten 1987, McAustan 1992, Rondinelli 1991, Turner 1988b, Watts et al 1992. Their endemicity to the urban community is regarded as furnishing them with broad and incisive knowledge of community needs, values and patterns of organisation. They can play a pivotal role in forming and strengthening organisational capacity in the community and in working in partnership with municipal and international NGO agencies. The direct funding of these CBOs by multi/bilateral agencies is a major question one within development community at present (Fowler and James, 1994).

The problems of urban service provision by CBOs include

1. the control of projects by local elites and men (Salmen '91)
2. their lack of capacity to generate organisation (Rondinelli '91)
3. the short life of the organisation due to specific needs and opportunities, expensive solutions and long delays (Bamberger '91, Salmen '91, Rakodi '83, Batley '92)
4. the difficulty of developing effective partnerships between CBOs and outside agencies

A key concern for urban NGOs will be to strengthen the capacity of community based development groups/organisations. CBOs will increasingly need to develop a heightened understanding of meso-level economic and social trends, transform many of their systems and structure to ensure more effective programme operation and policy critique in their defined community, construct positive and longer-term working relationships with other development actors. There will be increasing external pressure on CBOs for this to take place as the local government and national urban-specific institutions seek to bring CBOs more formally into urban planning and management.

4.3 Community Participation

The rationale for community participation has been discussed extensively in development literature (Oakley 1994, Moser 1987). The definition of community participation most widely quoted is that of Paul (1987):

"In the context of development, community participation refers to an active process whereby beneficiaries influence the direction and execution of development projects rather than merely receive a share of project benefits."

Most writers agree, to varying extents, with Paul's five proposed objectives to which community participation can contribute. It is interesting to note within the literature which order specific writers give in the listing of these five objectives. Academic and NGO literature frequently start, as Paul did, by listing empowerment and building beneficiary capacity; whereas in many publications by bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies, writers list firstly sharing project costs, increasing project efficiency and increasing project effectiveness. Possibly, this may reflect the fact that agencies vary considerably in the relative priorities they assign to each objective.

One of the most controversial issues in the field/literature is whether efficiency and empowerment are complementary or conflicting objectives with regard to community participation in urban projects. Bamberger outlines that there is a widely held view that an organisation must decide which of these two primary objectives to pursue. He classifies the World Bank and most bi-/multi-lateral as organisations that use participatory approaches in urban projects exclusively in pursuit of efficiency objectives. There is an alternative view that efficiency and empowerment objectives are complementary stages in a long-term evolutionary strategy for an urban programme. Recently, this view seems to be more widely acknowledged and considered within the Bank (World Bank 1994.)

Both Moser (1989) and Bamberger (1990) feel that to assess the nature of community participation in urban projects you need to look at:

1. the agents or organisational groups involved
2. the medium or methods used
3. the project/programme's level or scope

4. the participants vis-a-vis community heterogeneity
5. the juncture and intensity of participation

With regard to point (4), Salmen (1987) cites several examples where organisers of supposedly participatory projects were unaware that large segments of the target population were effectively excluded from participation in projects and from access to their benefits. Moser '87 notes the exclusion of women from such projects, and also the differing and exploited nature of their participation once they are involved. In Moser (1989), UNICEF are accused of concentrating on politically non-threatening groups of children and women, and of identifying community participation in welfarist terms of bringing women into the development process as better mothers.

4.3.1 Participatory Tools and Methods

There are questions about whether the tools for participatory approaches are sufficiently developed for use in urban settings and by project officers, very few of whom are likely to be trained social scientists. So while there is an increasing documentation of strategies for promoting community participation and of factors influencing the degree and success of participatory approaches, there remains a clear need to develop capacities in development agencies to operationalise these vital strategies and processes in the urban context.

Many of the benefits of community participation only occur when a project is operational and is sustained through time. However, there is little critical analysis and documentation of experience regarding the role of community participation in the design of sustainable urban programmes. That said there is a growing body of knowledge and experience in the various urban development sectors, e.g. Primary health care, small enterprise development, urban shelter enablement to be able to draw together some guidelines regarding participatory approaches to project implementation and sustainability, guidelines which could well be more than tentative in their recommendations (Bamberger 1989, IIED 1994, Oakley 1995).

4.3.2 Participatory Urban Research

Currently, there does not exist a general body of knowledge/experience regarding participatory approaches to urban research. This does not mean that such participatory tools and approaches do not exist. Urban NGOs and CBOs are employing such participatory approaches but the lack of documentation and inter-organisational sharing has prevented the dissemination of methodological innovations and experiences to those outside the informal urban network (Mitlin and Thompson 1994).

There are an increasing number of attempts to adapt participatory rural appraisal (PRA) for use in urban contexts (Collier and Santoso 1992, Borrini et al 1991, Kelly 1994, Lietmann 1993, Patel 1990). Kelly (1994) argues that PRA is difficult in urban areas due to the complexity of identifying 'community', the constraints to social mapping of urban resources, the high mobility of poor people and their consequent unwillingness to engage in participatory planning processes. However, Shah (1994) concludes that many participatory methods developed in rural areas work equally well in urban situations require innovative and constant adaption. The author also notes that due to the intensive nature of the process in

participatory urban appraisal the planning process gets linked with the political and administrative process quicker than happens in rural areas. This can be represented both an opportunity or threat to the intensity and integrity of community participation in the urban situation.

4.3.3 Social analysis

Despite these difficulties, a number of writers continue to acknowledge the need to take social factors in particular into consideration in urban project identification and planning and this can and should be done using participatory processes (Blackman 1993, Cernea 1985, Shah 1994) and there is some agreement as to what specific factors should be assessed, some being, for example:

- * socio-cultural and demographic characteristics of the intended beneficiaries
- * social organisation of productive activities
- * cultural acceptability of project and project organisation
- * methods of eliciting commitment/participation
- * project accessibility to different socio-cultural groups
- * the role of gender

Despite the recognition of their importance, the participatory analysis of social factors in urban communities has not been institutionalised in any thorough manner vis-a-vis the consideration allotted economic, financial and technical factors within the work of many development agencies.

While the above-cited works by Cernea, Baum and Tolbert, and Salmen highlight the social factors likely to affect project outcomes, guidelines on how to collect and analyse data on these factors in an urban setting are still needed. Almost all the examples cited are of problems that occur when these factors are not taken into account. Little information is available on how to use social analysis to avoid these problems in project identification and planning.

4.4 Social Targeting

Social targeting refers to the deliberate seeking out of groupings within society who, by virtue of their position in the social structure, suffer disadvantage. There are a number of different targeting practices, each presenting certain constraints and weaknesses (Oxfam 1988).

Until the mid-1980's it appears that most actors in urban poverty alleviation were preoccupied with interventions focused on geographical locations within which good and stable income and health were lacking. Great emphasis was placed on upgrading sites and providing services for supposedly all within a geographically-defined poor community. The existence of intra-slum and even intra-household differentials and their impact on the utilisation and maintenance of services were not frequently considered. Whole social groups within slums were unwittingly denied access to services near at hand. In fact certain upgrading

programmes increased the vulnerability of the most poor.

There is now widespread acknowledgment that the approaches of slum upgrading and the provision of sites and services is of no guaranteed value in terms of NGOs fulfilling their often stated aim to work with the very poorest and vulnerable. UNCHS(1992) and Arrossi et al (1992) also admit the limited usefulness of the current trend towards 'enabling strategies' in terms of the participation and benefits for the poorest groups in urban areas.

Social targeting shifts the emphasis from static physical considerations and organisational capacities to the understanding of social structures and processes that leave certain groups of people disadvantaged and vulnerable at numerous levels.

While in principle there is acceptance of the potential usefulness of social targeting, there is less shared experience in its actual practice. There are various case studies in which 'target groups' are identified but little is written on the process of identification. Possibly, this is because the actors may have unconsciously regarded their methods as very specific and/or irregular, containing no lessons for other practitioners. Alternatively, it may be that some agencies simply assumed that certain social groups suffer disadvantage regardless of where they are found in time and space. So although Norris(1988), for example, found that female headed households are engaged in the highest number of income-earning activities and are the most impoverished, Moser(1993), citing numerous research studies, outlines how it is a mistake to regard such households as always being among the poorest in urban areas.

NGOs have understood relatively little of the social structures and processes of cities. Some NGOs have targeted groups nutritionally, assuming that malnourishment reflects multiple-disadvantage. Yet the interventions in these cases have usually stayed within the health sector and tackled symptoms and not causes. Other interventions have not taken account of the fact that extreme disadvantage and poverty often produces an invisibility and inaccessibility to 'broad' research and service provision.

The mere collection of information for social targeting can be problematic if staff are not prepared to be patient and innovative in their approach to this task (Oxfam 1988). Street children, for example, are often highly suspicious of adults, and the nature of their lives being essentially public makes the gathering of any type of specific/sensitive information difficult; structures sampling techniques or other forms of methodological sophistication are difficult, if not impossible, to organise given their chaotic lives and the limited staff resources of NGOs (Ali et al 1990). Arrossi et al (1992) point to the fact that there is usually much existing information about urban areas and groups but that this information is dispersed and/or often anecdotal or impressionistic. There is a need for it to be pulled together and synthesised.

The choice of indicators to measure disadvantage, poverty and vulnerability and so to highlight extremely disadvantaged groups varies widely. This is partly reflective of the complex nature of the relationships between factors and the differing priorities of agencies involved in work with the urban poor.

Both Oxfam (1988) and Arrossi et al (1992) draw attention to the fact that longitudinal perspectives are essential for identifying disadvantaged groups and the processes that

imprison them. They go on to note that these perspectives are practically non-existent in many reports/studies relating to urban groups and areas.

There is often a wide gap between identifying certain groups and understanding the processes, relationships, felt needs, social norms and behavioural patterns that shape their lives. In not giving consideration to understanding the target groups, 'social targeting' has often left itself open to the charge that it results in interventions with a strong welfare aspect to them; targeting of the causal chain is ignored. Groups are sought out to be assisted as opposed to being empowered. The social conditions which produce their disadvantage are rarely challenged. This criticism, in general, is unfair. The fault, if any, lies with the goals, resources and the ideological commitments of the intervening NGO. The identification, for example, of street children and female-headed households as disadvantaged need not lead to 'recuperative' or 'women in development' project responses.

UK NGOs have increasingly supported/promoted income generating projects for disadvantaged urban women. For a variety of social and political reasons it has not often been possible, even if desired, to target participation in these projects to solely female heads of house. Furthermore, many of such projects have aimed to increase the productivity of women in activities traditionally undertaken by women, with a preference for supporting production-based projects as opposed to those in the service and distribution sectors which are far more widespread in the urban areas in many southern countries (Buvinic 1980 and Moser 1989). One largely overlooked income generating activity has been the street food trade. Recent research has shown this to be a vital urban survival factor for the most disadvantaged women in cities (Tinker 1987 and Cohen 1986).

Similarly, targeted assistance to urban children in especially difficult circumstances has been in danger of being short-term and welfarist in nature. At times, it has neglected to accommodate the basic features of children's behaviour, roles and organisation. They have also ignored the increasing economic contribution that children have needed to make under conditions of adjustment (Herbert et al 1993). There is a good and growing understanding of urban children facing extreme circumstances and there exists successful development programmes with them (Myers 1991 and Thomas 1992). Although programme replication may be inappropriate, the employment of specific processes in work with these children and the need for social mobilisation within the host society is clear (Thomas 1995).

PART FIVE: CONCLUSION

KEY RESEARCH ISSUES

There are a number of large research questions that NGOs will increasingly need to contribute to if they are serious about articulating their developmental experience in the wider policy context. Urban NGOs should, from their experience, have something to say concerning the impact of urban productivity improvement on the lives of the poor and the sustainability of the urban environment. However, there are a number of smaller but strategically vital research questions that concerning effective urban poverty alleviation and urban NGOs that must be investigated.

5.1 The Role of the Urban NGO in Development co-operation

There is a need to consider the actual main roles that urban NGOs are playing in development as opposed to the continued abstract debate about what roles they could play. Many authors see urban NGOs as supplementing and replacing state services. Other see them as an increasing interface between state bureaucracies and communities and/or as strengthening the capacity of community based organisations. An alternative view holds that urban communities themselves are evolving autonomous survival strategies to cope with the urban crisis confronting themselves and that is largely unconnected with NGO initiatives and yet in terms of overall impact is more significant than NGO (or state) interventions. The reality is likely to be more complex than any of these views suggest. For this reason, research into the current and changing roles of urban NGOs in practice and their overall impact will probably be of more value than arguments in the abstract.

Alongside this there must be a major assessment of urban NGO capacities - organisational, human, financial and administrative capacities (Sahley 1995). INTRAC is currently looking into this unexplored but crucial question. The development community needs to consider how strong and effective urban NGOs are as organisations and how any constraints may be confronted constructively.

5.2 Programme Performance

There has been little evaluation of the performance of poverty alleviation strategies by both urban NGOs and governments. Such evaluation is needed to intensify the exchange of valuable experiences such as those related to intervention processes, resource mobilisation, the design of sustainable programmes to name but a few. Performance assessment criteria should cover such areas as the improvement in beneficiaries lives, the strengthening of community capacities, public policy impact.

One specific/particular need is to look at the intervention/operational system of the urban NGO, that is "the way that an NGO actually does what it sets out to do developmentally, including

its gender recognition, technology choices, participatory methods and so on " (Fowler 1991).

5.3 Institutional Development and the Urban NGO sector

Consideration should be allocated to trends with regard to the number and diversity of urban NGOs; the nature of their collaboration, co-operation and competition; the urban NGO-state relations; the strength of the sectors policy formulation. The impact of direct funding of urban NGOs and changes in the partnership with Northern NGOs also raises serious concerns that demand systematic research and less unsupportable generalisations.

Appropriate NGO strategies to facilitate the organisational and institutional development of CBOs whilst improving their material circumstances need to be assessed. How do we work with and strengthen these 'less formal and visible' but developmentally crucial CBOs?

5.4 Social Targeting Methodologies

Despite the many strengths of social targeting it is an approach that still needs considerable refinement and improvement (Cheema 1986, Harpham and Stephens 1991, Menendez 1991 and OXFAM 1988). The lack of a clear strategy for targeting potential beneficiaries has meant that many programmes have failed to reach the most poor

If both equity and effectiveness are major concerns in urban programme planning, then targeting is essential, and a consistent and well-thought out approach to targeting could improve the impact of urban programmes.

Linked to this Cernea (1991), Marsden and Oakley (1991) and Korten (1990) have raised the need to have a body of sociological and social development know-how that is transferable and useable in operational work in urban areas. Too often programme evaluations cite examples of problems that have arisen when social factors, relations and structures are not taken into account. However, very little information is available about how to undertake and use social analysis to avoid these problems. Research into social analysis (including participatory urban approaches), their methods and effectiveness would be useful.

5.5 Conceptualisations of urban poverty - methodologies and meso-level strategies

There is a distinct need to develop practical methods for analysing urban poverty in its various dimensions. Analysis is neglected in favour of developing immediately measurable definitions. Currently, most definitions of urban poverty focus on the construction of some poverty line measured according to some indicator of welfare, such as per capita income, food ratio, household consumption. These definitions all have shortcomings (some of them serious) and more importantly they each do not identify the same groups as poor. Thus, the choice of a definition itself can lead to formulations of widely differing poverty alleviation strategies.

We need to move beyond measurable single-indicator definitions or basic caricatures of poverty. The dynamic nature of urban poverty needs to be further investigated within a more thorough conceptual framework. In addressing the appropriateness of such a analytical framework Rakodi (1993) points to the need to understand and adapt the insights resulting from household studies, from recent advance in the analysis of rural vulnerability and well-being and from a growing body of research around urban change and the urban poor's adaptive strategies.