

# **Accountability and Feedback Mechanisms in an Urban vs Rural Setting: what are the questions we should be asking?**

background analysis by Jeffrey Dickinson

Although there may be times when we can identify issues which are relevant to many or all urban populations, at least some of the literature finds that there are dramatic differences between urban poor from one country to the next. – (Gulyani et al. 2010)

The obvious first step involves identifying the target population by occupation, sex, age, income, social status, religion. The main idea here may be to establish a framework to map and understand demographics and social structures to help deliver the best possible mechanisms for feedback.

## **Demographics**

How dispersed are the population? How do we measure or map the dispersion and what is the meaning of it in the context of accountability/feedback?

Are the population young or old?

*In Nairobi, estimated 15-20% of the population in 'informal settlements' are under age 5. – Nairobi Informal Settlements Report , 2009*

## **Are there distinguishable “neighborhood” boundaries where we can map social stratification, religion and other characteristics?**

What are the specifics of the actual geography of the urban/rural area and how might this play into urban issues?

*Urban areas are typically dense and heterogeneous. Social networks can be fragmented and community cohesion may be loose or dominated by conflict – Mohanty (2010)*

Is the city facing issues of sprawl due to growth? How does this affect potential structure of feedback mechanisms?

How do we identify the most vulnerable from the population in an urban context? Have people and families been marginalized, pushed out from the urban center itself? This is the case in some contexts. How can we ensure that those who have been marginalized, both literally and figuratively, are incorporated and accounted for?

*Vulnerability is location and context –specific and the degree of vulnerability varies widely between countries, cities, localities within cities and between communities/ households. Vulnerability changes over time and space. Vulnerability stems from location and social disadvantage (lack of power), often manifested as income poverty (Cutter, 1996). – Mohanty (2006)*

*Building Livelihoods to Reduce Risk Among the Most Marginalised in Urban Areas: Strategic Approaches from Dhaka – Sanderson, D*

### **Governance and social structure:**

What is the structure of the society and how does this affect the approach to feedback? Is it an environment with strong associations or loose associations between different beneficiaries? Homogenous/heterogenous? Are there existing community groups? Social structure? Is it possible to exploit existing social constructs to streamline feedback processes?

### **Gender issues:**

What are the differences in gender issues in an urban vs rural context? In a rural context, for example, women may be expected to participate in the farming routine, or they may be confined to household and supporting activities. Are there issues with childbearing or the burden of children which affect participation in feedback? Are women more likely to engage with project organizers and administrators? What does it mean, then, if [urban] feedback comes 90% from women and 10% from men? How does this skew the content of the feedback?

*Although urban women are better educated and play a more important role in decision making than rural women do<sup>3</sup>, their influence on their children may be offset by the fact that they often work far from home. (Children are cared for by others so that their mothers can work; working people's families often do not eat meals together at home.) (Bourbe 2010)*

What are the issues with age and how are young people and adolescents expected to behave in an urban context? Are they expected to have jobs? Do they have more free time or at what age are they expected to contribute to household income? At what age are they expected to be married and establish a family?

### **Security issues in an urban environment:**

If there are security concerns: is the area a full-blown conflict area, a relatively nonviolent area, or somewhere in between?

*Urban violence and humanitarian action in Medellin - Liliana Bernal Franco and Claudia Navas Caputo HASOW 2013*

Can violence be mapped (quantitatively or otherwise) to help inform work/feedback efforts in an urban context? Is there existing knowledge of violence or patterns of violence that can help us establish a process?

*Highly localized interventions or approaches may be beneficial* – Franco and Caputo (2013)

### **How do different occupations interact with feedback mechanisms?**

Depending on occupation (Farming, day labor, construction, informal sector jobs such as handicrafts and street vendors) there are different times of day when communication is feasible. Are there different modes of communication (radio, group meetings, complaints box, feedback hotline) which hit different population sub-groups? Are low-income women more likely to use a complaints box? Are fully employed men more likely to attend group meetings?

How high is the cost of communication/transportation? In other words, what is the opportunity cost of participation in feedback? How are these costs different in an urban context?

### **Are there issues that relate to an interaction between rural and urban players? For example issues around migration to urban contexts from rural that are important to accountability or feedback? (attrition etc.)**

Supporting rural-urban linkages in a post-crisis context, as it is now recognised that cities play a leading role in the development of rural areas. – (Bourbe 2010)

Are there issues that are specific to rural migrants who have come to work in urban areas? Rural-urban migration is a topic that is emphasized in literature. What are the demographics of this migration?

It seems possible that these migrants are largely young men, especially looking for work and to send remittances etc.

### **Relevant Works:**

Franco, Liliana Bernal and Caputo, Claudia Navas; *Urban violence and humanitarian action in Medellin*. HASOW Discussion Paper. June, 2013.

*The Nairobi Informal Settlements: An emerging food security emergency within extreme chronic poverty*. Oxfam GB, Concern Worldwide & CARE International, Kenya, 2009

Gulyani, Sumila et al. *Poverty, Living Conditions, and Infrastructure Access: A Comparison of Slums in Dakar, Johannesburg, and Nairobi*. Policy research working paper; World Bank, 2010

Mohanty, Sumananjali; *Nairobi Urban Social Protection Programme*. Phelps, Laura and Brady, Carol ed., Oxfam Report, 2010

Bourbé, Ludovic and Levron, Eric; *Identification of Vulnerable People in Urban Environments: Assessment of Sustainable Livelihoods and Urban Vulnerabilities*. ACF International. Paris, 2010

Mohanty, Manoranjan; *Squatters, Vulnerability and Adaptability of Urban Poor in a Small Island Developing State: The Context of Fiji Islands*. Accessed Online, University of the South Pacific. Suva, Fiji, 2006