

## Urban Poverty Reduction Strategies: Past, Present and Future

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### Abstract

This paper attempts to show the urgent need for a new and innovative strategy for urban poverty reduction. It reviews and analyzes the urban poverty situations of a few developing and developed countries as well as the Urban Poverty Reduction Strategies (UPRS) put forth in each country. Such an analysis of past strategies is crucial because major social change can occur only when there is a **willingness to recognize and learn** from past mistakes, so that they are not repeated.

In 2007, for the first time in history, the **world's urban population will exceed the rural population**. While urban growth can be seen as positive for the economy, it is actually a serious problem. As cities grow, their slum populations grow as well. The problem of urban slums has been faced at some point by almost all the major cities throughout the developing world.

While much work has been done regarding rural poverty, not nearly enough work has been focused on urban poverty alleviation. This has been a highly ignored area among most efforts despite the fact that slum dwellers have been contributing significantly to the economy of the city by being a source of affordable labor supply for production in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy. Efforts to improve the lives of the urban poor have not kept up with the rate of urbanization. Running the poor out of town- through evictions or discriminatory practices- has been proven to NOT be the answer.

According to Amartya Sen, poverty alleviation policies should expand people's opportunities to pursue their goals. While many initiatives towards alleviating poverty have been made, there has neither been a deep understanding of these initiatives nor a thorough evaluation of their impact on the target groups. In order to achieve such an understanding, organizers of a UPRS must **refrain from using loaded words** without defining them and make sure they **understand implications of such words** as: democracy, empowerment, participatory, pro- poor growth, etc.

So far governments have not made the significant amount of effort necessary to create solidarity between their work, the work of NGOs and other stakeholders putting forth UPRS. Northern Africa is the **only** region in the developing world where slum growth rates have declined significantly, mainly due to the efforts of individual governments to upgrade slums or prevent slum formation. According to the United Nations, until the other governments face this problem of urbanization with effective solutions, the **world slum population of 1 billion squatter dwellers will double in the next 3 decades**. In summary, the gap between the rich and poor will continue to increase until urban poverty reduction becomes a priority.

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