

**URBANIZATION AND POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGIES: A CASE STUDY OF
KIANDUTU SLUM THIKA, KENYA
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Abstract

Poverty has often been seen as a purely rural problem but for many developing countries, the pervasive nature of urban poverty constitutes an enormous challenge for policy makers and in development efforts. Poverty reduction tools and approaches that had been developed for rural poverty reduction cannot be replicated in urban areas because urban poverty is different in nature from rural poverty hence, understanding the nature of urban poverty as well as having accurate data that presents its dynamics, trends and conditions is vital.

Kiandutu slum is arguably the largest slum located outside Nairobi city. It consists of poor people majority of whom are unemployed resulting from the closure of many industries in Thika town and the collapsing of coffee plantations rendering the residents to live in abject poverty.

This research therefore focused on the efforts of Kiandutu slum dwellers and other external agencies in poverty reduction assessed the poverty coping strategies, investigated the challenges facing poverty reduction interventions and made recommendations towards future poverty reduction in Kiandutu slum.

Results indicated that both the residents and external agencies were involved in poverty reduction. Poverty coping strategies revolved around financial and social capital. The challenges facing poverty reduction included: Inadequate housing and environmental services, lack of clear tenure, informality, inadequate information, high rate of insecurity and high unemployment rate.

This research paper contributes to the body of knowledge on urban poverty and recommends future poverty reduction strategies that should be taken up especially with the current and expected future urbanization challenges.

Key Words: Poverty Reduction; Poverty Reduction Strategies Urban Poverty.

1.0 Introduction

Almost half of the population of the world now lives in urban areas and this proportion is increasing with a projection of almost 5 billion in 2030 Baker (2008). Urban centres provide considerable social, economic and political opportunities for poor people. They are places where poor people can have a range of employment options, participate in local political movements, and benefit from access to a wide range of key services, education, health, electricity, solid waste collection and welfare programmes. They are also, for many, places of squalor, pollution and crime. With the rapid growth of cities, especially as seen in developing countries over the last 30 years, the urbanization process needs to be managed better to ensure that it becomes a mechanism through which poverty in the developing countries can be reduced on a sustainable basis DFID (2001).

Why should there be a concern about urban poverty alleviation in Kenya? Some of the main reasons are, first, because between a third and half of Kenya's urban population live in poverty, and given the pace of urbanization, urban poverty will represent almost half of the total poverty in Kenya by 2020 (Oxfam GB 2009) and second, as a result of the declining living conditions of the urban poor. Decreased employment opportunities, the decline in real wages, rising food and fuel prices and acute housing shortages, are all manifestations of the falling socio-economic conditions of the urban poor. For instance, Thika District where Kiandutu slum is located presents all forms of poverty including food and absolute poverty. Indeed, poverty incidence is on the increase due to factors such as unemployment, collapse of agricultural sector, collapse of industries, poor infrastructure and the rise in HIV/AIDS. The prevalence of poverty in the district currently stands at 48.4% and is manifested in various forms such as inaccessibility to education and inadequate education facilities ROK (2005).

The urban sector in Kenya remains inefficient, not well understood and coordinated. It has no clear framework for enhancing synergies of many institutions and stakeholders operating in the sector. The sector also suffers from a number of limitations including: Narrow definition of the sector which focuses on housing and municipal services only, actors not appreciating the critical role and impact of "implicit urban development policies" and weakening of the local authorities GOK (2008). Urban poverty reduction requires the collaboration of many different groups in the city: Municipality, urban poor, private sector and non-governmental organizations (Municipality of Phnom Penh 1999).

Investigating poverty alleviation strategies in Kiandutu slum is therefore very important in outlining the role each group is currently playing with regard to urban poverty reduction to deduce gaps that need to be addressed in order to come up with effective and comprehensive future poverty reduction strategies.

The objectives of the paper were:

- To assess the efforts of Kiandutu slum dwellers and other external agencies in poverty reduction.
- To assess the poverty coping strategies of Kiandutu Slum dwellers.
- To assess the challenges facing poverty reduction interventions in Kiandutu Slum.

2.0 Results

2.1 Actors Involved in Poverty Reduction in Kiandutu Slum

Actors	Role in Poverty Reduction
Government (Ministry of Housing, Ministry of Health and Municipality of Thika)	Policy, legal framework, coordination, resource supply, global communication, monitoring and evaluation and implementing projects that are within their areas of jurisdiction
World Food Programme	Providing food and nutrition supplements to needy families
Action for Children in Conflict	Providing comprehensive educational, economic, emotional and psycho-social services to street and other acutely vulnerable children and their families in the slum.
Self Help Groups	The earnings accrued by self-help groups helped women to buy basic households goods such as utensils, furniture, poultry, pieces of land, farm inputs and with time, improved their shelter.
Community Health Workers	Monitoring the health and well-being of People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA), building the capacity of household members to care for sick family members, providing psychosocial support, and making referrals for other services as needed

2.2 Coping Strategies of Kiandutu Slum Dwellers to Poverty

2.2.1 Economic activities

4.9 percent of the respondents worked in the formal employment sector, 45.4% were self employed, 44% did casual work and only 5.1% were unemployed. At the local level, communities and households developed various coping mechanisms and escape routes to evade poverty for instance, in the service sector, the bicycle taxi was a source of income for the Kiandutu men. Cyclists charged a fee to transport people to various points thus saving them time while earning a source of livelihood.

Diversification of income sources came in handy through engaging in petty trading, selling grocery, and keeping of livestock by constructing small sheds in the compounds for poultry rearing and goats keeping. In addition, illegal brewing and selling of liquor was also adopted by the residents of Thika. While women were mainly responsible for selling illicit brews, men were associated with the escalating levels of murder, carjacking and burglary which are widespread in the district.

2.2.2 Expenditure and purchasing pattern

As households adjusted their budgets, expensive food items were deleted from the family diets and nutritional intake was compromised in many ways. For instance, 65% of the respondents used pulses to replace other sources of protein such as meat and fish which were more expensive. Also, 40% of the women interviewed said they spent much time in the market in pursuit of cheap food stuffs paying little or no attention to the nutritional value of the items. In cases of dire financial stress, households were forced to make do with less than three meals a day (42%). Indeed a midday meal was a luxury that most households could not afford. Their evening meal comprised pap and kales as the most common meal (90%) as it was considered cheap.

The urban poor rarely bought new clothes from the market places (52%). Most of them got used clothes from relatives, landlords and employers. They sometimes bought cheap clothes for their family members from second-hand markets. Besides these cheap clothes, they also bought used cookeries, furniture and other household goods from second hand markets at low prices.

2.2.3 Rural-Urban ties

The urban poor migrated from different rural districts due to 'push' and 'pull' factors. Affordable rent (20.9%), Employment (37.7%), marriage (15.4%) and evictions from another informal settlement (5.1%) were major reasons for their migration to the city. Despite living in the city for a long period of time they did not generally lose their bonds with their villages.

2.2.4 Social network

About 37% of the urban poor had close relationships with their neighbours. Employment and land lordship also played important role for social networks for a considerable portion of Kiandutu residents. They mostly maintained their relationships with relatives, friends and village fellows who were living in the same community. Only about 16% had connections with the people living outside their immediate neighbourhoods. The poor households who had lived in the city for a long period of time had wider social network.

The relatives, friends and neighbours helped Kiandutu slum dwellers to mitigate their economic and social crisis with 53% of the poor providing/receiving financial help from their kin, fictive kin and neighbours and another 27% of them providing/receiving non-financial support from these relatives and friends.

2.2.5 Community participation

Grouping, factionalism and community feud solving were characteristics of the Kiandutu residents. The poor formed committees or used elders to resolve existing conflicts in the neighbourhood. More than 28% of Kiandutu residents were members of different community based political organizations, cooperatives and voluntary organizations. Most (64.6%) were registered city voters. Due to their poverty and vulnerability however, they felt that they could not exert any strong pressure upon urban government. As such, they were not interested to attend the protests against urban government.

2.3 Challenges Facing Poverty Reduction in Kiandutu Slum

2.3.1 Inadequate Housing and Environmental Services

Drainage: The drainage facilities were limited with an inadequate carrying capacity especially during rainy seasons leading to formation of ponds. The storm water drainage channels were not well maintained with many bearing debris. The scenario was even worsened by the terrain which is quite ragged and difficult.

Access to water: In Kiandutu slum, only 6 (1.7%) of households had piped water connected in the house with the majority (45%) purchasing water from water kiosks. 45% of households complained of water shortages and pipes often running dry by indicating that water flowed once in a while and not all the time in-fact, Majority of Kiandutu dwellers (63%) cited unreliability as the main challenge faced as far as water is concerned. In Kiandutu, the price of water ranged from Kshs. 3-5 per 20 litres jerrican.

Waste Management

Kiandutu slum residents lacked organized solid and liquid waste disposal methods. In-fact, 96.9% of the respondents said they dumped their solid waste on any open spaces available and preferably short distances from their houses while 88% of the households disposed their waste water by pouring outside their houses, on the roads. This situation depicts a high potential for an Integrated Solid Waste Management in the slum.

Physical Infrastructure: There was no single paved road within the settlement and most roads were inaccessible, a factor that led to difficulties in putting off a fire that occurred in July 2011 affecting over 200 households (150 homes and about 50 shacks that served as small shops). Three people were injured and the fire service was of little use due to inaccessibility of the fire trucks.

Housing: Kiandutu slum houses had the following characteristics: (52.8%) were mud walled while 30.3% had their walls constructed from timber. Majority (98.3%) of the roofs of Kiandutu houses had iron sheets while the dominant building material for floor was earthen (95.1%).

Inadequate housing directly affects the health of individuals for instance; dominant use of earthen floors combined with inadequate sanitation can lead to jigger infestation. Adequate housing is therefore an important element in the survival strategy of the poor as it provides them with socio-economic stability and can also be a major form of asset creation and savings. It provides a basis for access to the urban economy and for the poor in particular it and also a key source of employment Urban Management Programme (1994).

2.3.2 Lack of clear tenure

Land tenure can be defined as the terms and conditions on which land is held, used and transacted (Adams, 1999). Kiandutu is a settlement lying on Thika municipal council land (trust land). However, during an FGD discussion with the CBOs representatives, the study deciphered that there was a land dispute involving three groups namely: The Kiandutu slum dwellers, Kiandutu farmers' co-operative society and Thika municipal council allottees whose allocations were later nullified. This evidently depicted that there was lack of clear tenure in the slum.

2.3.3 Informality

The informality hindered majority of Kiandutu residents from finding formal jobs, products or services. Hence, the city's informal sector employed most of them (casual work 44% and self-employed 45%). Given that they had limited capital to start a business, reduced access to formal and informal credit, low education and know-how and lack of information about how the formal sector could support them and the formal registration activities, they were often employed in the "lowest level work" of the sector as motorcycle taxi- and bicycle taxi drivers, construction workers, electricity and water sellers, motorcycle repairers, rubbish collectors, brick workers and house servants.

2.3.4 Inadequate information

The municipal council of Thika suffers an information crisis, which seriously undermines its capacity to develop and analyze effective urban policy. For instance, there was no sustained or systematic appraisal of urban problems and they had little appreciation of what their own remedial policies and programs were in fact achieving. The lack of such data meant that there was no firm basis on which to plan the service needs of the slums.

In addition, Kiandutu slum residents were found ignorant of some critical environmental-health relationships that could prevent health problems.

2.3.5 High Rate of Insecurity

Insecurity posed a key challenge to investments in Kiandutu slum with 53.1% indicating that there had been increased insecurity in the past year, 44% citing night time as more risky. Only 2.9% acknowledged improved surveillance.

2.3.6 High Unemployment Rate

Kiandutu residents and more so the youth face high unemployment rate closely associated with inadequate skills and professional training and poor education which leads to lack of financial resources to start small businesses. This situation exacerbates poverty in the slum.

3.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

3.1 Formulating Clear and Consistent City/Town Development Strategies

The existence of urban slums should be viewed within the broader context of the general failure of urban development policies to meet the challenges of urbanization. Clear and consistent city/town development strategies are therefore vital for poverty reduction in Kiandutu slum especially through slum upgrading.

3.2 Tenure security and property rights

The municipal council of Thika needs to establish systems to provide tenure security (for example, freehold titles or use rights) that take into account the culture and particular circumstances of the different communities residing there. The aim should be to incorporate common practices into a formal system. Should the majority of land acquisition practices and tenure systems not fit into the existing legal system, the regulatory and policy frameworks should be adjusted to incorporate those practices.

3.3 Empowering Vulnerable Households and Disadvantaged Groups

To empower them, specifically targeted income generating activities and other social measures (for example, education) should be provided for these groups, poverty reduction actors in Kiandutu slum should be encouraged to collaborate with partners in supporting widows, orphans, the elderly and the physically challenged Kiandutu community members to improve their lives and there should be formation of support groups and creation of orphanages.

3.4 Expanding Micro Finance and credit Systems

Lack of finance is one of the main impediments to dealing effectively with problems faced by Kiandutu slum dwellers in poverty reduction. Therefore, the establishment of micro-finance institutions which can offer small and short term loans and designed to suit repayment abilities of low income families should be facilitated, co-operatives, savings and credit schemes should be formed and regulations that recognize a wide range of collateral including co-signers, para-legal titles, legal titles, durable goods and pension fund contributions should be formulated.

3.5 Upgrading Social infrastructure

Upgrading social Infrastructure should involve: Forging private/public sector partnerships in the provision of facilities through appropriate incentives, engagement of other development partners including local and international NGOs, CBOs, and development agencies according to their sectoral mandates, facilitating community participation in the provision and management of facilities and promotion of community based solid waste management systems geared towards income-generation through recycling and reuse.

3.6 Improving Physical infrastructure

The municipal council of Thika should integrate the provision of services to Kiandutu slum in their development programmes in addition to enhancing capacity of existing facilities within and at the periphery of the slum to ensure that the settlements have adequate infrastructure (sewer systems, water supply and sanitation, accessibility, electricity, drainage system, security and street lighting) and should also encourage all stakeholders to forge partnerships in order to pool resources for the achievement of infrastructure provision. Such partners should include: relevant ministries and departments, municipal council of Thika, international development agencies, NGOs, CBOs, cooperative societies and professional associations.

3.7 Shelter Improvement

To effectively promote shelter improvement there should be the use of locally produced or available but appropriate and affordable building materials, enhancement of micro-finance mechanisms tailored to suit community progressive building processes, employment of self-help processes based on community activities with members offering assistance of particular skills, materials and funds to another under arrangements of insurance nature (the help must be reciprocated when need arises) and engagement of the private sector (Including urban management experts) in shelter improvement.

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