



Slum reduction progress in Latin America 2000-2014: lessons for 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals

Summary and proposed policy actions for the first 1,000 days of the SDGs

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Introduction

Slum conditions currently affect an estimated 880 million persons (United Nations, 2015a), with 93 million in Latin America (United Nations, 2015b). These contiguous settlements, where inhabitants have inadequate housing and basic services, present a key challenge for development.

Latin America is one of the most urbanised regions in the world, with 80% or more of its population residing in urban settlements in 2014, making it the most highly urbanised region in the developing world. Projections indicate that by 2050, close to half of the countries in the region will be at least 80% urban, compared to close to 25% in 2014 (UN Population Division, 2014). In Latin America and the Caribbean, slum incidence fell to 20% in 2014 from 29% in 2000 (United Nations, 2015a). The study summarised here documents progress in ameliorating slum incidence in Latin America as a regional example where the urbanisation rate has stabilised at a high level over

the last six decades. The region has also seen a reduction in slum population, which enables researchers to identify and study the factors that result in successful slum reduction. This paper focuses on slum-dwellers as a marginalised section of society (a group which is of concern in terms of efforts to 'leave no one behind'), because this group can be bypassed by proposed national planning efforts. Slum incidence reduction is one aim of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11, which is focused on improving access to urban services to better address economic, social and environmental wellbeing.

Main research findings

The findings of the report are based on data used by the UN to monitor progress towards slum reduction. This information is complemented by a comparison of representative programmes in Latin American countries over the past 15 years where there has been a decrease in

This is a summary of a forthcoming research paper, part of the series 'Starting Strong: the first 1000 days of the SDGs', that will identify key actions toward addressing the unfinished business of the MDGs and how to reach those who are furthest behind in relation to the new SDGs.

The 'Starting Strong' series is a collaborative partnership to initiate a wider conversation around priority actions for the first three years of the SDGs – just over 1000 days – with relevant stakeholders with a regional focus.

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Rio by night - Gabriel Rocha

slum incidence, in order to identify salient characteristics of slum reduction programmes. A typology of slum incidence developed in this report identifies countries with decreasing and increasing slum populations. Countries that saw the largest decreases were Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Colombia and Peru. Countries that saw the largest increases were Ecuador, Bolivia and Guatemala. Analysis of key slum reduction programmes in the five largest countries that saw decreases in slum population between 2000 and 2014 (which represents 98% of the reduction in Latin America) reveals that the following factors lead to slum incidence reduction:

- slum upgrading
- implementation at the municipal level
- policies focused on infrastructure rather than other sectors
- use of participation and prevention strategies.

The comparative analysis suggests that slum upgrading has been the primary strategy for successful and impactful slum incidence reduction programmes, as typically it is controlled by municipalities and these are at the appropriate scale at which physical issues can be addressed. Slum upgrading ‘refers to improvements in housing and/or basic infrastructure in slum areas’ (UN Habitat, 2014).

Looking to 2030, the following actions should be taken:

- Pursue complementary slum upgrading approaches that strengthen social and titling strategies to the core slum upgrading efforts
- Increase community participation to ensure success of the slum upgrading programmes
- Initiate urban planning that anticipates housing needs and prevents slum formation.

Early actions for the first 1,000 days

Priority actions for the first 1,000 days of the SDGs are focused on accelerating a ‘leave no one behind’ agenda, as slum dwellers are a marginalised group. These actions are national in scope but local in implementation, and can be applied in multiple countries in the region. The following multi-sector strategies and selected projects should be led by municipal governments with programmatic, financial and policy support from national and international entities:

- **Improve the monitoring of slum incidence and conditions.** Current data does not cover all countries and the reported statistics vary widely. This makes goal setting and tracking difficult, as it is impossible to compare countries over time and with each other.
- **Leverage existing knowledge to promote key slum upgrading programmes** – these programmes have the highest impact and engagement of local governments.

Immediate actions

The following actions should be taken in 2016.

At a municipal level:

- Provide assessment of slum conditions to national government
- Identify slum-upgrading targets based on current information and priorities.

At a national level:

- Assess national and municipal data on slum conditions
- Select slums to be targeted nationally based on existing knowledge.

At an international level:

- Agree on the indicators for monitoring slum incidence and support countries to develop baseline data on slum conditions
- Agree on the data required to monitor slums, and promote slum upgrading as best practice, at UN Habitat III (Quito, October 2016).

Mid-term actions

The following actions should be taken in 2017.

At a municipal level:

- Suggest slum conditions data guidelines for a national programme
- Develop project plans to address slum incidence by settlement.

At a national level:

- Lead efforts to track slum incidence and provide the resources for national statistical offices to facilitate slum incidence monitoring, with a focus on urban planning data (lot, building, infrastructure) and demographic data (slum dwellers age, sex, family size)
- Develop financial and other agreements to undertake slum priorities
- Develop country-level assessments of potential upgrading projects and work with the international community to leverage resources to conduct them
- Address basic services needs in slum communities through physical upgrading efforts supported by social programmes, titling, robust participation and slum prevention programmes.

At an international level:

- Develop guidelines identifying the content of required slum data, for application in a national programme
- Provide aid and lending for national and municipal levels to address slums.

Long-term actions

The following actions should be taken in 2018.

At a municipal level:

- Support SDG slum baseline national data production by settlement
- Engage in physical slum upgrading supported by social and titling programmes at the municipal level.

At a national level:

- Develop a national slum incidence data baseline at lot and demographic level
- Support local slum reduction projects and progress monitoring at a national level.

At an international level:

- Support slum data tracking by national and local governments
- Target slum upgrading projects in areas with high slum shares and levels
- Integrate data collection into larger efforts to document national urban development levels and SDG demographic inventories
- Provide support at an international level for slum data tracking by national and local governments.

References

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