

## Policy Brief; Policy directions to address challenges faced by youth living in slums around Kampala City



A water logged school in Bwaise slum

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### Introduction

According to the 2012 UN Habitant report, 863 million people in developing countries live in slums of which 213 million people are from sub-Saharan Africa. The annual slum growth rate in Uganda is 5.32% with about 3,241(000's) people living in the slums (UNDP, 2008). Slums cover up 25 per cent of the total area of Kampala and each of them is heavily congested characterized by Poverty, lack of prospects, little or substandard education making youth in slums vulnerable to a host of challenges. The Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development estimates between 49% - 64% of the total urban populations living in slums. This gives a total of 1.58 million people to 2.1 million people as slum residents in Uganda. This has among other reasons been

brought about by the increasing rate at which people are leaving rural areas and coming to work and live in cities. Slum<sup>1</sup> settlement is an increasing global phenomenon resulting from increasing urbanization. In Kampala, the poorest live in slums with 57 settlements categorized as slum dwellings spread in the 5 divisions of Kampala central, Kawempe, Nakawa, Lubaga and Makindye with an estimated total population of 22,391<sup>2</sup>(*Pope Paul II Justice and peace centre 2011* - “socio economic analysis of informal settlements”) with an average of 65% of these populations being youth between the ages of 15 and 25 years(Kasirye and Lightfoot, 2000). To be able to survive, many young people are engaged in hazardous and extremely low paying work: construction workers, brick layers, hawking, motorcycle, taxis, food trading and quite Many of youth are susceptible to alcohol and drug abuse and engagement in petty crime and sex trade.A slum is often not recognized and addressed by the public authorities as an integral part of the city.

## **Dissecting the Challenges faced by youth in slums around Kampala City**

### **Slum youth participation in governance**

The right to participate and influence development and governance processes by the youth is well enshrined in several legal and policy instruments of Uganda. Largely many of the participants understand the relationship between local government planning and budgeting with extension of service delivery. They also understand that participation is key to influencing service delivery for the area. However, this awareness has not been transformed into actual active participation. A recent study (AAI, UNGF and DRT 2013Lost opportunity? Gaps in Youth Policy and Programming in Uganda) out of a random sample of 1036 youth interviewed, only 496 (48% of these) were aware of existing youth structures through which they could influence policy and other development related processes while 53% had no knowledge of or response to the same.

The participation of youth in slums in local area planning and budgeting is virtually nonexistent and budget consultations are very limited by stereo type perception of the area as a den of criminals and socially undesirable groups. The mere fact of having a meeting with young sex workers is in itself distressing in the eyes of the local leaders and many hold the view that many would not even bother to turn up as it

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<sup>1</sup>A slum is a heavily populated urban area that is characterized by substandard houses, social and economic isolation, irregular land ownership, low standards of sanitation, limited access to basic infrastructure and social services (Ministry of Land and Urban Development; 2008)

<sup>2</sup>LIVING IN KAMPALA SLUMS; A Socio-economic Analysis in ten informal settlements of Kampala. Kampala—Uganda, 2011, No. 3

encroaches on their business time. The other excuse given is the lack of a conducive environment to hold such consultations

Some of the youth interviewees living in slums intimated that their capacity to participate and later influence important decisions is curtailed by their lack of adequate education, simplified information access and active platforms for engagement that largely remain absent in slum areas.

In most slums there have been limited formal mechanism of consulting slum dwellers and most of the interventions are addressed through highlight of issues in mainstream media.

Youth in slum dwellings also admitted to a lack of personal or collective efforts in following up sufficiently the building partnerships between urban poor communities' participation and local government service delivery as provided in the policy frameworks

In most public debates, often the message and coverage of youth in slums focuses on problems or concerns related to criminal acts like drug use, sex trade, and petty theft rather than the services required by youth living in such areas. Youth living in slums constitute in the eyes of many a threat to stability and most bureaucrats have tended to avoid engaging such areas meaningfully.

## **Unemployment**

According to a 2008 World Bank Report, Uganda is among the countries with the youngest population and the highest youth unemployment rate of 83%. To further lend credibility to these findings, in the 2011/2012 budget of Uganda, the Minister of Finance recognized that because of the high levels of unemployment, the Ugandan economy can only absorb 20% of its youth.

Largely the Informal Sector work accounts for the majority of young workers in Uganda. 3.2% of youth work for waged employment, 90.9% work for informal employment, and 5.8% of the Ugandan youth are self-employed<sup>3</sup>.

In a Study by the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development (2008), it's indicated that '12 percent of slum households could not specify the means by which they sustain themselves', which can be taken as a proxy indicator of the level of unemployment in Kampala's slum areas.

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<sup>3</sup>Garcia, Marito. 2008. Directions in Development- Human Development. World Bank

This high unemployment among the slum population explains subsidiary challenges including poor access to education, quality health and high incidences of crime associated with drug abuse especially among the youth.

The main sources of income for Kampala slum dwellers are informal businesses, urban agriculture (Nakawa; Kyanja, Makindye and Kawempe), formal and informal employment in existing institutions and factories (Nakawa), salons and restaurants. Public works for road sweeping and drainage de-silting also contributes significantly to the survival of many youth slum dwellers.

## **Health**

The relationship between adequate sanitation and health is well documented among slum dwellers with a proportionate higher rate of child malnourishment; prevalence of diarrhea, malnutrition and hunger; prevalence of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome especially among youth and children given the booming sex trade, orphans and neglected children as a result of a lower life expectancy. Due to a high population density and overcrowding in slums, the potential for spread of diseases is usually much greater than in less crowded neighborhoods.

All slums have health facilities within reach, in their neighborhood or services accessed through outreach models. At least in all the visited slums, there is a physical presence of either clinics or drug shops that can offer medication both private and public e.g. Mulago within the reach of Katanga, Uganda -China friendship hospital within Naguru go-down and others. However the availability and proximity is not the question but the ability to access and afford the health services provided especially in nearby private health providers or those subsidized private-not-for-profit like Nsambya, Kibuli hospitals. Public health facilities that provide free services are often docked by drug stock outs while the neighboring private not for profit subsidized rates are still within no reach of the slum dwellers.

Adolescents constitute the highest demographic segment in Uganda yet sexual and reproductive information and health services to meet their needs are still limited. According to the Ministry of Health, presently, 25% of the Ugandan teenagers become pregnant by the age of 19 years. About 49% are married off before their 18th birthday and often start getting babies until their mid-40s. Research has shown that 34 per cent of young men living in slum areas head a household compared with 5 per cent of young men living in non-slum areas. Family responsibilities at a young age often compel young men to seek and obtain jobs. Young women and men residing in slums are more likely to have a child, be married or head a household than their counterparts living in non-slum areas.

To date, according to the Uganda AIDS Indicator Survey, 2011, there are about 1,500,000 Ugandans living with HIV/AIDS. Of this population, 7.2 % of them are in their reproductive age (15-49), which has a direct implication on the future children who will be born if nothing is done to save children from HIV AIDS at birth as well as contributing to the number of orphaned children in the country. HIV prevalence among youth stands at 4.8% for females and 2.3% for male ages 15-24 (UNIADS 2010) with a corresponding prevalence increase with age 20-24 year olds having higher rates of infection than 15-19 year olds. Adolescent and youth-friendly sexual reproductive health (SRH) service provision stands at 5% (UDHS, 2011) and only 10% of public health facilities in the country providing youth friendly services (YFS) even when it is well articulated in the National health policy and national adolescent health policy.

In 2011, Uganda had lost an average of 62,000 people to HIV/AIDS and the same disease has to date left about 1,100,000 orphans aged 0-17years. The situation above indisputably demonstrates that HIV infection remains a significant public health problem for Uganda and directly impedes development and this calls for action for all stakeholders in the development arena.

Youth across all groups in slums expressed a common desire for more health services to reach them, information about preventing STIs and HIV, preventing pregnancy and family planning in order to meet their life ambitions. Amidst the existing initiatives, meeting the information and service needs of young people will require increased emphasis on open counseling from various stakeholders - parents, teachers, health workers and peer-to-peer approach and greater dissemination and implementation of the good youth policies on paper

## **Education**

Since Uganda initiated Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1996 and Universal Secondary Education/Universal Post-Primary education and training (USE/UPPET) in 2007, these two policies have created opportunities for young Ugandans of all backgrounds to access primary and secondary school and vocational training without paying fees. However the success in enrolment has not been registered in equal measure within slum areas.

Most slums lack public established schools and the enforcement of the policy is equally too weak in slum areas. This has left much of the effort to charitable organizations running schools deep within the slums with enormous financial and technical challenges. MrKisirisa Muhammad, also known as the 'Slum Ambassador' runs an innovative youth Centre and Excel center offering education opportunities to orphans and abandoned slum children in Bwaise-- a densely populated slum in the

capital Kampala, which is empowering over 600-800 young Ugandans with vocational, leadership, entrepreneurship and financial literacy skills every year.

The organization also runs The Excel Education Center located in central Bwaise and is designed to provide descent education to orphans and other vulnerable children including those affected and infected by HIV/AIDS living within Bwaise slum. <sup>4</sup>The Center currently boasts of a total enrolment of 200 children who are provided with formal physical, health education, care and support. The school's mandate is to nurture a well-trained citizen able to struggle for the betterment of the slum communities. The 87% of the kids in school are infected and affected with HIV/AIDs. The only formerly public supported school in Bwaise slum was closed off on sanitation grounds with its location not being suitable for a school and classes occupied by green water lagoons.

Of all the slums in Kampala perhaps only Katanga has a public primary school but majority lack government aided primary and secondary schools neither do they have private schools supported by government through its universal primary and secondary education programmes. However there are a few nonprofit organizations run schools in some of the slums whose enrolments is mainly composed of orphans and vulnerable children.

It is highly noticeable from these humble efforts that youth in slums are highly adaptable and only require mobilization and organization, attitudinal transformation, together with technical and business management skills training to fit into the existing job market and create avenues for generating their own small scale enterprises and social solidarity networks.

### **Policy recommendations**

- **Building a slum youth budget advocacy voice to engage meaningfully with the local leadership;** To ensure a structured and sustained youth engagement and articulation of youth issues, there is a need by UYONET to mobilize and organize youth into formal and informal structures to articulate youth issues within their areas and helping them come up with local and national issue papers for engagement with duty bearers. This is evident within the political circles in that whenever youth take on political leaders on the question of issues affecting youth, evidently some policies and projects have come as a result of these efforts. Within the slum area, it is recommended that UYONET adopts a special focus in this category by organizing slum youth budget advocacy groups to help highlight policy gaps in addressing the education, health and employment needs of youth in such areas. These groups should be

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<sup>4</sup>(<http://www.affcad.org/Projects/Education-and-Health/Excel-Education-Center.html>)

linked with national level partners engaged in Budget advocacy to gain both experience and expertise to engage locally.

- **Government must support education centres run by charity Organizations in slum areas:** Provision of affordable education facilities and support charity schools run in slum areas; one major tenet of generational poverty in slums is the lack of good education opportunities. Government policies and programmes should be designed to specifically target disadvantaged groups like slum dwellers and the education of slum children in a more special way. Most of the slums visited lack public supported primary and secondary schools/vocational training institutions and opportunities nearby despite the popular efforts to promote UPE and USE nationally.
- Government should as a matter of public good support NGO or charity initiated slum community based schools both technically and financially to facilitate the proper functioning of these schools. The schools in slums are mainly offering study opportunities for orphans and children of very vulnerable parents. Action for Fundamental Change and Development (AFFCAD) for example runs excel school with an enrolment of over 200 pupils deep in the centre of Kimombasa slum in Bwaise while Bwaise Youth Employment Centre offers youth life skills training through the support of well-wishers. All its teachers are merely volunteers
- **Strengthening direct public health services:** especially targeting youth in slums with youth friendly services and community outreaches. Such excluded and reclusive communities require a more direct reach and community peer approach be integrated in the delivery of health services to slum youth and communities in general.
- **Slum youth economic empowerment programs by government to reduce unemployment:** Youth economic empowerment programs that are more practically orientated and targeting youth living in slums without huddles of minimum levels of education like Hairdressing & Cosmetology, Electronics Maintenance and Repair, Catering & Food Services, Tailoring & Fashion Design, Arts & Local Crafts, Computer Literacy & Graphic Design run by Action for Fundamental Change and Development (AFFCAD) at its Bwaise Youth Employment Center with support from USAID should be supported by government in every measure to scale up such interventions targeting youths in slums, The Ghetto Film Project based in Naguru uses film to rehabilitate, empower, mentor and tell stories from the slums of Kampala.
- **Tourism opportunities in slums:** There are brilliant entrepreneurial opportunities in slums never imagined before like “Slum Tours” cropping up in marginalized areas of major towns, City BodaBoda tours are areas that government needs to promote and support so as to scale up employment

opportunities for youth in slum. AFFCAD for example provides interactive slum tours to give guests a real experience of the life in the slums in Kampala at a modest fee of 20 dollars per person which in turn is ploughed back to support its other programs. The slum tours have proven to be an important part of resource mobilization to sustain its programmes, promote the spirit of volunteerism and spreading awareness of life in the slums both nationally and internationally

## **Conclusion**

Youth living in slums can play an important role in urban development if they are provided with the right tools, the knowledge and empowerment to use those tools, as well as a supportive environment in which to apply them. Understanding what “service issues” affect youth in slums is quickly needed while a conscious deliberate effort should be undertaken to empower and give voice to slum communities to effectively shape and participate in urban inclusive development.

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