Slums

James Trewby
Bosco Volunteer Action
Session aims

• For participants to have an ‘experience’ of slums, understanding them as complex situations with both pros and cons
• For participants to consider possible solutions to the problems presented by slums, recognising the complications that may result
Definitions

• Slums are “physical manifestation of poverty, inequality and social exclusion in urban areas” (DfID)

• slum-dwellers are “a group of individuals living under the same roof that lack one or more of the following conditions: access to water; access to sanitation; secure tenure; durability of housing; and sufficient living area” (UN-HABITAT)
If you lived in a slum, do you think these definitions would appear fair to you?
The size of the problem

• Vary in size from a few hundred to “megaslums” of over two million people
• Estimated over 900 million slum-dwellers worldwide
• Not all urban poor live in slums and not all slum-dwellers are poor
• “Residents of slums, while only 6% of the city population of the developed countries, constitute a staggering 78.2% of urbanites in the least developed countries: this equals fully a third of the global urban population” (Davis 2006, p23).
• Almost half the population of African and Asian towns and cities live in slums
Causes of slums

- Poverty
- Pulls – education, work, post-independence dam burst
- Pushes – loss of land, climate change, “mechanization of agriculture…, food imports…, civil war and drought…, and everywhere the consolidation of small holdings into large ones and the competition of industrial-scale agribusiness – seem to sustain urbanization even when the “pull” of the city is drastically weakened by debt and economic depression” (Davis 2006)
Growing fast

• “Every day close to 200,000 people leave the world’s rural regions and head for the cities. That’s 130 people arriving every minute; two every second” (Neuwirth in Swift 2006)

• Self-perpetuating:
  – Families
  – Children for education
  – Home from home (religion, language etc)
  – Increase in population
Imagine you are the father of a family living in a rural area. What are the arguments for and against moving to the city/sending a child to study there?
Problems

• Sharing toilets with hundreds of people
• Overcrowded and insecure neighbourhoods
• Threat of eviction and lack of tenure
• Diseases (cholera, typhoid, HIV/AIDS)
• Social and psychological effects - broken homes and social exclusion

(UN-Habitat)
Is it all bad?

The Place I Love

By Lope Abas, aged 15

The place where I learned to understand my hopes and ambitions at hand
The place I learned to accept
With all that life could offer.

The place where people don’t want to be for once it was a dumping sea.
The Place where all evils hide,
Where the angels fear to tread.
Is it all bad?

The place that doesn’t have evenings, with people day and night working. The place that everybody thinks That’s helpless, hopeless and stinks.

But they don’t know what really lies in this place after all, A haven where all my dreams are built. For no one knows that in this place my happiness truly lives.

PASIL, the place of hope, The place of dreams, The only place of love I’ve ever known.
Development

• "Cities Without Slums" action plan
  "By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers as proposed in the "Cities Without Slums" initiative."

• Target 11 of the Millennium Development Goals

But how?
Clearance and resettlement?
Upgrading?
Can you see any issues with this?
Complications

• Not all bad – community, cheap housing
• Selling on
• Violence and human rights violation (e.g. *hot demolition*)
• “Cities Without Slums” or “Cities Recognising Slums”, acknowledging the role of informal housing and working towards raising standards within that context (Huchzermeier 2006)?
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