

The Plight of the Urban Poor and yet Increased Rural-Urban Migration

In February 2009, John Paul II Justice and Peace Centre (JPIIJC) conducted its second welfare survey in ten slums of Kampala. The survey was a follow up on the first Kampala Basic Needs Baskets Survey that JPIIJC carried out in February 2008. The main objective of the survey was to establish the change in the cost of living for a household of 6 members within the slums in Kampala and the reason for rural urban migration despite the appalling situation therein. The ten informal settlements where the study was conducted were: Nsambya, Katanga, Namuwongo, Bwaise, Kamwokya, Kalerwe, Wabigalo, Kivulu, Banda and Kiswa. From each of these informal settlements areas, one village was sampled and in each village 20 households were visited.

The survey established two monetary poverty lines, namely; the Food Poverty Line (FPL) and the Absolute Poverty Line (APL). The food basket used to calculate the FPL included, but not limited to: bread, milk, cassava, millet flour, matoke, maize flour, cooking oil, potatoes, and beans. On the other hand, the APL was determined by the monthly expenditures on food items and non-food items. The non-food items that constituted the APL were: medical care, clothing, foot wear, house rent, fuel (paraffin, charcoal, and firewood), etc. However, bearing in mind that poverty is both a multidimensional phenomenon and an elusive concept, further inquiries were made on monthly savings and expenditures on leisure, availability of certain social services and facilities in the aforementioned slums.

The survey established that the mean monthly expenditure on food for a household of six was Ushs 183,022 and the mean monthly expenditure on the basic needs basket was Ushs 399,291, thus establishing the FPL and APL respectively. From the analysis 61.5% of the households that were interviewed were found to be living below FPL. This is a very high level of food insecurity given the fact that the established FPL was as low as 183,022 an amount that a rich person would not hesitate to spend for a single meal in a hotel. With regard to the APL, it was established that 63.5% of the households sampled in the slums could not afford the basic needs of life. Moreover, on average a household spends more of its monthly income on non-food items than on food, namely: 54.2% and 45.8% respectively. The reason being that there are some non- food items like: education, rent, fuel, medical care and water that they must pay for.

Then turning away from prevalence to the intensity of poverty in the slums, the overall Food Poverty Gap (FPG) was 30.94%, this means an additional Ushs 56, 627 would be required on monthly basis for an average household to reach the FPL. This means to elevate the 123 families that were found to be living below the FPL, a monthly subsidies of 6, 965, 121 million shillings would be required every month. On the other hand, the general Absolute Poverty Gap (APG) was estimated at 31.63%, which means, additional Ushs 126,296 would be required on a monthly basis for an average household to overcome its abject poverty. This means again to elevate all the 127 poor households from abject poverty, monthly subsidy of 16, 039,592 million shillings would be required. Who must take the responsibility for this funding?

Having noticed the difficulties encountered by the slums dwellers, the focus then was turned to reasons why people continue to migrate and stay in the slums. Several factors were established from the respondents ranging from: easier access to social services in urban setting than rural areas, opportunities of getting better employment, lack of land or a home in the rural areas, joining the spouse who is already working in town.

The recommendations include, but are not limited to:

- addressing the root causes of rural urban migration
- investing in agriculture which employs over 75% of the population
- establishment of agro-based industries in the rural areas
- provision of adequate social services in the rural areas.

Finally, since Uganda is a mixed economy, the Government sector must work hand in hand with the private sector, otherwise Uganda will never achieve economic development. From this axiom we can deduce that the war against slum poverty must be waged by both the Government bodies and the slum dwellers. It is the duty of the slum dwellers to form associations in order to be able to participate in the development process for their area. Through development associations, slum dwellers easily access financial services, bargain for wage increments and better working conditions, fight against corruption, protest against unfair prices and organize community work. Slum dwellers have to work hard for their own development and forget about the possibility of manna falling from heaven especially during this era of a global economic meltdown.