



## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM URBAN HEALTH COP WEBINAR 9-12-19**

### **QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY DR ROBERT NDUGWA, UN-HABITAT**

#### Urban health monitoring opportunities and challenges

##### **OVERVIEW OF THE USAID HEALTH RESEARCH PROGRAM BY DR. CUDJOE BENNETT, USAID**

We are a team of like-minded individuals that sit in the office of Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition at USAID Washington, and we are trying to advance implementation research as an approach that is complimentary to many of the other research approaches that you may be familiar with. With the distinction that, as compared to, for example, an efficacy trial or effectiveness research, we are interested in understanding how evidence-based interventions for maternal and child health work in a particular setting. For example, in our case how interventions that we know work in other contexts may or may not work, or, what are some of the drivers and facilitators or enablers of an intervention being effective in a particular setting.

##### **QUESTION: IN YOUR OPINION, SHOULD PUBLIC HEALTH PROGRAMMING SHIFT FOCUS FROM RURAL PRIMARY HEALTH CARE (PHC) TO URBAN PHC?**

Dr. Ndugwa: That's an interesting question. My thoughts are that it's not either rural or urban. The health of urban and rural populations is equally important. As a matter of fact, there is a very strong connection between rural and urban, the linkages are becoming much stronger today than ever before. But the real sign is that with a very fast urbanizing world, our world is urbanizing and therefore it is clear that if we are going to do budgetary allocations, there needs to be more awareness of where the populations will be, and that will be in urban areas. That's not to say that taking a holistic shift, that you forget about the rural areas and invest in urban, but I think there should be an incremental shift. The populations are more urban and therefore urban health needs to be paid more attention to because what we've seen is that what has worked in the rural areas sometimes is tested and tried in urban areas, and obviously that doesn't work well. That's where I think the shifts and changes need to be taken care of using the best available evidence for the urban health sector.

##### **QUESTION: IN YOUR EXPERIENCE, HAS DHS DATA BEEN ABLE TO INCLUDE THE INVISIBLE NEIGHBORHOODS TO FULLY REPRESENT THEM IN THE URBAN DATA COLLECTION?**

Dr. Ndugwa: The answer is “no”, and the reason why is because when you’re talking about the neighborhood, we’re actually talking about the spatial angle. DHS data is quite good at giving us the household level picture, but in the absence of locational identifiers it becomes a bit difficult to know exactly where the household and populations are located. So, what we’ve been working with in a very exceptional way is that the geospatial analysis is actually telling us and revealing even more shifts that we are unable to pick up from the DHS data. On the other hand, when you look at simple disaggregation in terms of wealth quintiles, DHS is quite helpful for us to understand these levels of deprivations. But in the spatial side this has not been as helpful. Of course, that also includes the census data that we’ve had for the last couple of years. The good news is that the 2020 round of census is taking care of geolocation coding and analytical data collection which means that for the first time we will be able to do GIS mapping of households in a way that has never been done before. That for us in the urban areas is quite crucial because it’s not just about the household level, but it’s about the spatial level and where people live in terms of those spaces.

**QUESTION: BASED ON YOUR EXPERIENCE, HOW WILLING ARE GOVERNMENTS TO PROVIDE BASIC SERVICES IN SLUMS, ESPECIALLY IF PEOPLE ARE SQUATTING ILLEGALLY ON PUBLIC PROPERTY? IN PLACES WHERE THERE IS GOVERNMENT HESITANCY TO DO SO, WHAT CAN WE DO TO PROMOTE GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT IN SLUM SERVICES.**

Dr. Ndugwa: It’s true that slums are often a manifestation of the failures of urban planning, but often it’s also the manifestation of the urbanization of poverty. It’s true that in some cities and some countries the slum populations tend to sit on, perhaps government land that is designed differently. So what we’ve been trying to do is work out what we’ve called slum upgrading—we have a slum upgrading program at UN Habitat, and this sometimes involved renegotiating security of tenure aspects and giving the right to own land to people who have been there but in a way that does not compromise so much of the human rights of people on such lands. That has worked in some countries, in some countries it doesn’t work. In a few exceptional cases we’ve worked with the government as a win-win, convincing them that these populations are not going to go away, so it’s in their interests to upgrade such locations, and so we’ve had some successful slum upgrading programs. But slum upgrading on its own is usually not sufficient to help people who perhaps don’t have livelihood opportunities in slum upgraded areas. So, we’ve learned that combinations of upgrading as well as providing opportunities to these people, given that they are in an urban area, is a combination that sometimes completes the equation much better if you are going to lift these populations from slums. Some governments are ready to listen and others are trying a mix of efforts to address the challenge of slum populations.