

The Urban Penalty: The Poor Die Young

The five illnesses that cause more than half of the deaths amongst children are pneumonia, diarrhoea, malaria, measles and HIV/AIDS. Studies indicate that the prevalence of these killer diseases in urban slums is due to bad living conditions rather than income levels. For instance, municipal supplies of safe drinking water rarely penetrate slums. It is common for pit latrines to be shared by thousands of people.

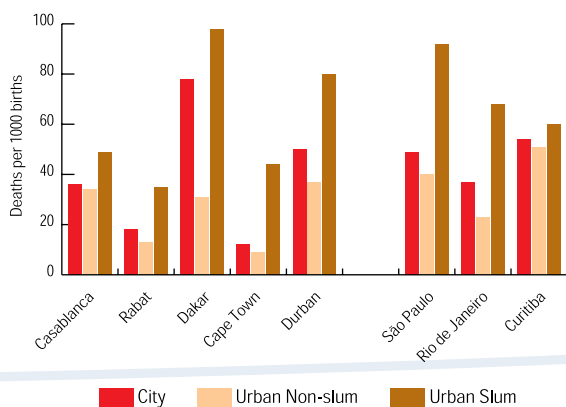
Children from the highest income groups in slums have higher rates of diarrhoea than children of the poorest rural families because they are exposed to contaminated water and food. Pneumonia and diarrhoea each kill more than 2 million children in developing countries annually.

Large cities tend to display wider inequalities between slums and other parts of the city than smaller cities or towns, even in countries with low levels of socioeconomic inequality, such as **Morocco**. In **Morocco's** capital city of **Rabat**, the under-five mortality rate is 2.7 times higher in slums than in non-slum areas. Cities that display high levels of inequality, such as **Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**, and **Cape Town, South Africa**, also show huge disparities between slum and non-slum areas. The under five mortality rate in **Rio de Janeiro's** slums is three times higher than the rate in non-slum areas of the city, while in **Cape Town**, children under the age of five living in slums are five times more likely to die than those living in high-income areas.

The higher the incidence of slums in cities, the greater the prevalence of diarrhoeal infections among the urban population.

- In the **Sudanese** capital of **Khartoum** – where the slum population comprises 80 per cent of the urban population, the highest slum incidence for a capital city – the prevalence of diarrhoea is 33 per cent, compared with 29 per cent in rural areas. In **Khartoum's** slums, the prevalence is even higher, at 40 per cent.
- In **Nairobi, Kenya**. In 1998, the prevalence of diarrhoea among slum children in **Nairobi** was 27 per cent, compared with 19 per cent in rural areas. Official figures, however, show that the average prevalence of diarrhoea among children in **Nairobi** is 12 per cent, a figure that masks the high proportion of children suffering from diarrhoea in the city's slums.

FIGURE 3.3.2 UNDER-FIVE MORTALITY (DEATHS PER 1000 BIRTHS) BY TYPE OF RESIDENCE IN SELECTED CITIES



Source: UN-HABITAT 2005, Urban Indicators Programme Phase III.

Note: Computed from Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) data 1995-2003.

1200

1300

1400

1500

1600

1700

1800

1900

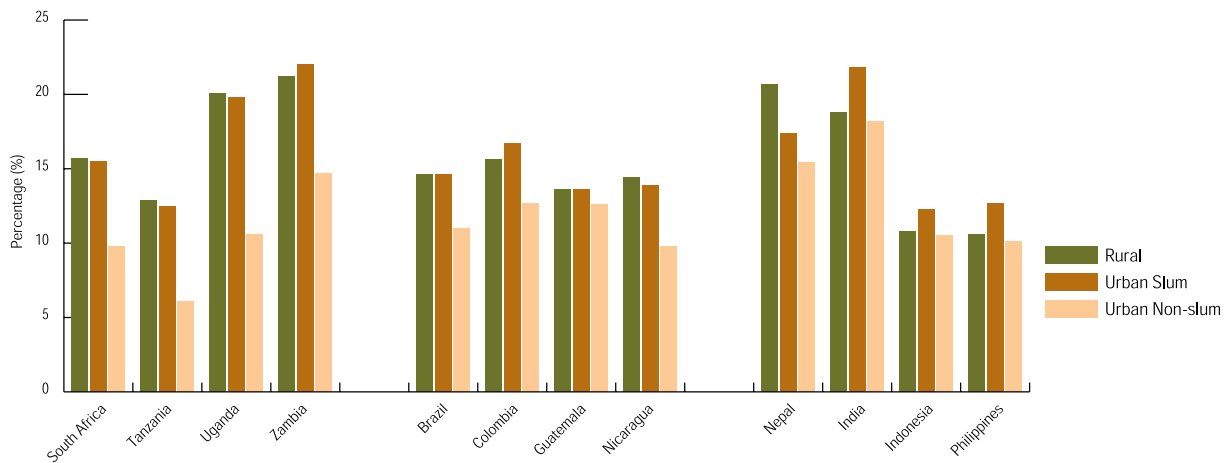
2000

TOTAL POPULATION

URBAN POPULATION

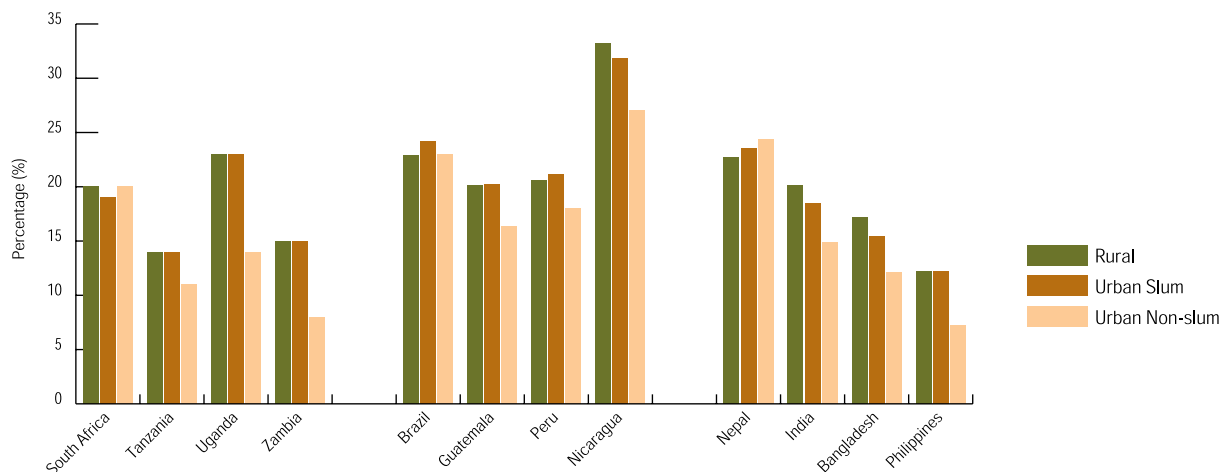
(World Population in Billions)

FIGURE 3.3.3 DIARRHOEA PREVALENCE AMONG CHILDREN UNDER FIVE YEARS IN SELECTED COUNTRIES



Source: UN-HABITAT 2005, Urban Indicators Programme, Phase III. Based on Demographic and Health Surveys 1995-2003.

FIGURE 3.3.6 PREVALENCE OF ACUTE RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES AMONG CHILDREN IN SLUMS, RURAL AREAS AND NON-SLUM URBAN AREAS, IN SELECTED COUNTRIES



Source: Demographic and Health Surveys 1995-2003.

This is a UN-HABITAT Feature/Backgrounder, please feel free to publish or quote from this article provided UN-HABITAT is given credit. Suitable photographs are available on our website. For further information, please contact: Mr. Sharad Shankardass, Spokesperson, or Ms. Zahra Hassan, Press & Media Liaison, Press & Media Relations Unit, Tel: (254 20) 7623153/7623151, Fax: (254 20) 7624060, E-mail: habitat.press@unhabitat.org, Website: www.unhabitat.org. SOWC/06/07/B/Penalty2