

## Target 11: Slums and Degraded Housing

*In the past, the governments did not want to admit the existence of slums because, as part of the socialist doctrine, housing was supposed to be a basic right provided to people by the state, with access to basic utilities at very low cost. Countries do not have an agreed term or definition for a slum, but declining multi-story apartment buildings often meet conditions of slums.*

### What Is a Slum?

Slums are generally considered to be places in cities where the poor are concentrated in substandard conditions. This definition of a slum emphasizes the multidimensional nature of slums. National governments commonly rely on certain dimensions to define slums, such as lack of basic services, substandard housing or illegal and inadequate dwellings, overcrowding and high density, unhealthy living conditions and hazardous locations, insecure tenure or irregular or informal settlements, poverty and social exclusion, or settlement size (to indicate concentration).<sup>1</sup>

Slums vary from place to place and country to country. UN-HABITAT, which is responsible for monitoring the slum dweller target, points to two kinds of slums:

- *Slums of hope*: “Progressing” settlements characterized by new, usually self-built structures and usually illegal inhabitants (i.e., squatters) and that are in, or have recently been through, a process of development, consolidation, and improvement
- *Slums of despair*: “Declining” neighborhoods, in which environmental conditions and domestic services are undergoing a process of degeneration.<sup>2</sup>

The Europe and Central Asia (ECA) countries reviewed in this study have little awareness of the concept of slums, in part as a result of their legacy as countries where housing was a right and the state provided housing and access to basic utilities to people at little cost. None of the countries studied here has either an agreed-upon term or definition for a slum. In the former Soviet Union countries (Moldova, Armenia,<sup>3</sup> Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, to some extent Georgia), the governments rely primarily on modified versions of the Soviet concept of degraded (vethoe) and unsafe (avariinoe) housing, which refer to only one aspect of slums, namely housing stock conditions. Serbia de-

<sup>1</sup>UN-HABITAT (2003), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>UN-HABITAT (2003), p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>In Armenia, the MDG working group was supposed to develop a better definition in 2004.

finer slums as “unsanitary” settlements, or places in the city where residents are concentrated in “impoverished habitats.” In Albania, a definition of “slums” is not present in the statistics or official documents, because the criteria used under the Communist regime to classify housing conditions as degraded, unsuitable, or risky were abandoned in the early 1990s and never replaced by any official instruction, regulation, or other normative.

## Official Slum Indicators

The complex nature of slums made identifying indicators both complicated and controversial. The following indicators were proposed by experts and policymakers involved in this study:

- Inadequate access to safe water
- Inadequate access to sanitation (and other infrastructure<sup>4</sup>)
- Overcrowding (more than two people per room)
- Poor structural quality of housing (housing in hazardous locations or built of impermanent materials)
- Insecurity of tenure (i.e., no documentation of tenure).

Based on these indicators, a large percentage of the urban population should be considered as living in slums (see table 8). There is no developed methodology at this moment that would define how the indicators should be used in conjunction. Also, there are currently no precise standards of how severe a community’s lack of water and sanitation must be to be categorized as a slum. Therefore, minimum and maximum ranges are provided.

## Data Availability and Quality

Slum households are considered to be those urban households deficient in one or more of the five indicators shown above. To avoid double counting households, one data source is needed. UN-HABITAT has relied largely on survey data (primarily Demographic and Household Surveys and Multiple Indicator Cluster

Surveys). In Europe and Central Asia (ECA) countries, slum estimations were based primarily on access to water and sanitation because crowding data were not available for about half the countries; data on structural quality of housing were not available for most countries; and data on tenure security were not available for any countries.

## Data quality

Poor quality of data in all the countries reflects low demand from the policymakers and results in lack of a thorough understanding of how many of each country’s people live in the conditions close to a definition of “slums.”

Administrative data, where they exist, are unreliable. Agencies that collect the information do not share a common understanding of what should be collected, and no quality control is exercised further at higher levels of government. Furthermore, data-collecting entities do not collect data about informal settlements and collective centers.

Living standard measurement surveys and household budget surveys are potential sources of information about household and living conditions, but most exclude residents in informal settlements and collective centers from the sampling framework.

Currently, the only potential source for data from within city slums is the census; however, census results are not released at a sufficient level of disaggregation (i.e., census enumeration districts). In Moldova, the last census was the 1989 Soviet census. Albania has released the 2001 census, allowing researchers to trace changes that occurred after 1989. The main issue remains lack of skills to use these data by line ministries responsible for specific sectors.

## Utilities

The major problem in the region is not water and sewer connection, but provision (see chapter 3). Current survey instruments mostly do not collect information about reliability and quality. Affordability is likely to be an increasing problem.

Inadequate access to safe water and sanitation affects some urban groups more than others. For example, apartment dwellers who are not regularly supplied with water or working sewerage have fewer coping options than those living in single-family houses.

<sup>4</sup>Although infrastructure is referred to in one definition of the indicator, most commonly the indicator refers only to sanitation. See, for example, UN-HABITAT (2003), p. 9, p. 243.

**Table 8 Share of Urban Population Considered to be Living in Slums by Indicator (%)**

Indicator	Armenia	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyz Republic	Moldova	Serbia and Montenegro	Albania	Georgia	Tajikistan
Lack of water	6–18	3–21	14–29	24–35	3	30	5	28–56
Lack of sanitation	19–35	27	30–48	27–45	12	12.4	4–11	28–61
Lack of clean heating	47–58	22	41	N/A	46	9	N/A	73 <sup>j</sup>
Overcrowding	22	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	12.5–54.4	N/A	Over 50
Poor housing quality	8 <sup>a</sup>	20 <sup>b</sup>	5 <sup>c</sup>	12	30 <sup>d</sup>	12.5	34.3 <sup>h</sup>	75 <sup>i</sup>
No tenure security	N/A	N/A	10 <sup>e</sup>	10 <sup>f</sup>	20–33 <sup>g</sup>	25	N/A	N/A

*Notes and Sources:* <sup>a</sup>Based on census figure of households in temporary, institutional and other dwellings. <sup>b</sup>Sum of degraded housing plus unsafe housing as share of all housing (not just urban). <sup>c</sup>Share of urban residents living in dormitories. <sup>d</sup>Based on a survey by UNDP. <sup>e</sup>Estimates of number of residents in periurban areas of Bishkek. <sup>f</sup>Estimated rate of private rentals (which lack tenure security) in Chisinau. <sup>g</sup>Estimated number of residents in informal (undocumented) housing. <sup>h</sup>UNECE (2003). <sup>i</sup>Estimated number of housing can be considered as slum according to the UN. <sup>j</sup>Population living in dwellings without gas connection or without centralized heating services.

Households in illegal dwellings, even if not poor, are deprived of access to urban infrastructure and services. Public authorities do not provide running water to illegal neighborhoods; waste disposal systems are inferior or absent; connections to electricity, if they exist, are mostly illegal and service is intermittent at best.

In Tajikistan, as in other countries, the lowest utility coverage is in rural areas. However, because Tajikistan is the least urbanized country, with the majority of the population rural, urban housing issues are even less a concern to the authorities than elsewhere.

### Crowding

Although urban populations on average are relatively well housed, some urban households are overcrowded by national standards. Residents of dormitories and temporary shelters, including collective centers, are most likely to be overcrowded.

### Structural quality of housing

Although anecdotal evidence suggests that people live in unsafe locations in all the countries, no data have been collected. Only in Albania has there been an effort to identify environmental hotspots, where substantial health risks exist, thus making these areas not only unattractive but also hazardous to live in or near.

Data on the homeless, those living in temporary shelters or informal settlements, are weak or nonexistent.

The multifamily housing stock is of poor quality, despite being built primarily since 1960. Stock built in the 1960s is of especially poor quality because it was not intended to last more than 25 years.

The failure to resolve disputes about maintenance responsibilities means the multifamily stock continues to deteriorate.

### Security of tenure

People renting units from other individuals have little security of tenure because the transactions are not documented through a lease or contract.

People living in illegally constructed periurban settlements lack legal protections for their dwellings, and cannot use them as collateral or assets.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Countries had little understanding of the problem of slums and do not have a term for slums. They do not have systems in place for monitoring slum development. This reflects a larger problem—the lack of coherent national housing strategies in all countries except Armenia.

All countries have highly urbanized areas, where multistory apartment buildings are deteriorating due

to the failure to resolve issues of responsibility for maintaining common areas. Especially in the secondary cities of Moldova, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Kazakhstan, the deteriorating apartment buildings often meet the conditions of “slums of despair.” The multistory stock constitutes the majority of urban housing in the region.

In all countries, many people live for years in barracks and dormitories intended for short-term housing of workers. This is found particularly in former industrial areas (Moldova, Kazakhstan) now degraded due to collapse of the main enterprise.

The worst example of slums formed by compact placement of people in buildings constructed for non-residential purposes is the collective centers in Georgia, Armenia, and Serbia and Montenegro, including former schools, hospitals, and kindergartens where internally displaced families live for years.

In all countries, except Serbia and Montenegro, transition has meant out-migration from the country. Transition has also meant out-migration from rural areas and small cities. Abandoned apartments present a special kind of housing problem, especially when people move in. This problem is more profound in Moldova and Kazakhstan.

In some countries (Serbia and Montenegro and, to some extent, Albania), slums appear in areas where ethnic minorities are concentrated. Social and housing conditions of Roma people are particularly poor but are largely neglected by the governments.

Water and sewerage are deteriorating, resulting in a growing gap between physical connections and actual provision of services. When availability of water is considered, the number of deprived urban households increases substantially (especially in Armenia, Georgia, and Serbia and Montenegro). In Tajikistan, the issue for connected households is the quality of water they receive. Even in Dushanbe, the capital city, 16 percent of water comes into the public supply system directly from the river without any treatment.

Heating is an important problem in the region, given the climate, but district heating has been especially hard hit. The collapse of district heating and replacement with individual heating arrangements that are often unsafe has adversely affected the quality of the housing stock. From 22 to 58 percent of urban households use dirty fuels for heating.

Periurban settlements that can be viewed as “slums of hope” are developing in Kyrgyz, Kazakhstan, and Serbia and Montenegro. Their future depends on the government policy towards legalization of these settlements and offering them feasible opportunities to obtain legal and sustainable connections to infrastructure. The clearest case of the slums of hope can be found in Albania, where the government has already started to deal with large illegal settlements that are well built but lack public amenities. Improvements in terms of connection and legalization are already visible near Tirana. However, many of the periurban settlements in the countries are in hazardous locations, so their future value and safety are at risk.

In all eight countries, nationally representative household surveys (LSMS/HBSs) provide information about housing conditions and access to basic infrastructure and services. Both the sampling framework and the questionnaire need improvement so they can be used as monitoring tools.

Census results should be released at lower levels of spatial disaggregation (i.e., census enumerations districts) as is done in other countries. A digital map of census enumeration districts would allow aggregation of results into larger regions using Geographical Information Survey (GIS).

The multifamily stock should be monitored, as continued deterioration due to under-maintenance results in slum conditions in this common type of housing. Administrative data associated with the multifamily stock should be improved. Such improvements are likely to require revision of housing assessment standards and techniques and large training efforts.

Based on a review of available data, the following indicators might provide better identification of slum dwellers:

- Inadequate access to water. See water supply and sanitation (WSS) indicators in chapter 3.
- Inadequate access to sanitation. See WSS indicators in chapter 3.
- Inadequate access to heating. Share of urban households using solid fuels for heating or not heating at all.
- Crowding. Share of urban households living in units with more than two people per room, or share of urban households living in units providing less than

the legally established minimum housing space per capita.<sup>5</sup>

- Structural quality of housing. Share of urban households living in hazardous locations; share of urban households living in housing units categorized as degraded (vethoe, degree 3 in Armenia) or unsafe (avariinoe, degree 4 in Armenia)<sup>6</sup>; share of urban

households living in units not built for long-term use (dormitories, barracks in Moldova, Kazakhstan, and the Kyrgyz Republic, domiks in Armenia, collective centers in Georgia and Serbia, shanty houses for Roma and other known vulnerable groups); and share of urban households living in structures that have not been accepted as dwellings.

---

<sup>5</sup>The legal minimums are: 18 m<sup>2</sup> total space per capita in Moldova, 14 m<sup>2</sup> total space in Kyrgyz, 13 m<sup>2</sup> total space per capita in Armenia (urban areas only), 15 m<sup>2</sup> in Albania, 20 m<sup>2</sup> in Georgia, 12 m<sup>2</sup> in Tajikistan, and 6 m<sup>2</sup> living space in Kazakhstan.

<sup>6</sup>Given the poor quality of this administrative data source, capacity building would be needed to improve this data source.