



# URBANIZATION & WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EXCLUSION

***PRESENTATION TO CONFERENCE ON GENDER  
AND POVERTY REDUCTION, 13-15 OCTOBER 2009***

**CATHERINE CROSS, CPEG**

Social science that makes a difference



# CONTEXT: SOUTH AFRICA'S APPROACH TO POVERTY

It is widely agreed that **women-headed households** are the most excluded constituency in South Africa –

Therefore government anti-poverty programmes work to target women's families

**Government's basic approach** to economic equality is ***asset accumulation*** (Hirsch 2006):

Government gives poor families **free housing** as a *platform for self-investment and saving*

- ✓ Then counts on the families to move up into the national economy as earners and participating citizens

# WOMEN, URBANIZATION AND SETTLEMENT

Current international research (Bertaud, 2008; Lall, van den Brink & Soni, 2008) spotlights **urban spatial location in relation to job markets –**

- Where people can settle in the city determines **how far workers need to travel to reach jobs**
  - *For the poor, the journey to work can limit their chances for economic participation*
  - *When workers have to travel too far, it may not be possible to access job markets*

**The result can be economic exclusion and marginality**

Out of this work a new paradigm for South African urbanization policy may be emerging –

- But the situation for **women** and **women-headed households** may be compromised

***Research results suggest women who urbanize may not be settling in the right spatial locations***

# A NEW CONSENSUS ON URBANIZATION?

For asset accumulation to work, families have to accumulate ***assets to lift them out of poverty*** to start with

- Then save up a larger ***asset cushion*** to make them *safe from shocks* like job losses
- To do this means obtaining **access to the job market** for a reliable source of income

South African **compact city planning** prioritizes bringing the poor inside the city

- To overcome **spatial exclusion**
- To make **housing and services** available in good locations
- To promote ***economic participation*** and work opportunities

***Does this policy approach work for women and their families?***



# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

*Research suggests the types of settlement where women concentrate are often marginalized for earning opportunities –*

This paper looks at the poverty dynamics and outcomes of **where women's households live when they move to town**

- In relation to their access to earning opportunities

*Research questions included:*

- Where are women's households **located now in the space economy?**
- Does the present location situation allow women access to earning opportunities, or **does exclusion prevail?**
- Do women benefit from greater access to economic **opportunities in the metro urban core zones?**

# LOCATION & ASSET BASE

This paper looks at **where in the major cities the poor are able to settle –**

- **What do poor families gain** from settling in the city in terms of anti-poverty outcomes?

**City location** is vital to empowering women-headed households –

- *To overcome exclusion*
- *To form an asset base*
- *And to make the climb out of poverty*

The presentation identifies **where women are living now** in the urban core zones

- And assesses the **economic outcomes of spatial location** for women and their families

*Then concludes with implications for urbanization and housing policy*

# IPDM SURVEY DATA

The **data on spatial aspects of settlement** and economic outcomes is from the Phase 1a IPDM survey –

- Ongoing project from CSIR and HSRC
- 2965 questionnaires covering Gauteng, Sekhukhune and northern Mpumalanga
- Spatially stratified random sample in 2007/8

It identifies **40+ types of settlement**, each with a distinct **demographic profile**

If we unpack these demographic profiles, we can read off **what types of household** are settled in different kinds of locality

- And what assets and needs characterize these households

*Focussing here on **women's households** – women-headed households or households run by women*

# POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

## Where are poor people located now?

- **Slum areas** of shack-type housing:
  - 23% only – not a high share compared to other countries
- **Traditional rural settlement areas:**
  - 12% now and declining
- **The old townships:**
  - 27%, the largest and best-off single settlement type
- **Rural villages** with non-traditional housing :
  - 21% now –
- **Subsidy housing** categories:
  - 11% for RDP types and PHP
- **Informal self-development** areas – RDP-quality or better:
  - 8% across urban and rural
- **Backyard accommodation:**
  - 2%
- **Urban rental accommodation:**
  - 2% but under-counted – elite rentals not included here



# WOMEN'S GEOGRAPHY?

<b><i>SETTLEMENT TYPE</i></b>	% of study area population	% women-headed households
Old traditional rural areas	10	52
Modern rural villages	9	41
Rural shack areas	3	47
<b>Urban periphery shack areas</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Metro core zone shack areas</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>27</b>
Old urban townships	27	40
Backyard accommodation	2	46
<b>Urban rentals</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>35</b>

# WOMEN'S ACCESS TO JOBS?

**Women-headed households** are located mostly in outlying areas and in older, stable residential localities

- These are often **marginal spaces relative to job markets**

**Men's households dominate** the tighter and more turbulent **spaces closer to the economic core**

- These central localities offer *better employment access*
- Temporary housing and rentals predominate in these central city spaces

***Women's households find it difficult to locate close to employment and earning opportunities***

Men's households still hold a significant spatial advantage in economic access

# HEADLESS HOUSEHOLDS?

*But the picture for women and urban employment access may not be this simple –*

In the 2008 IPDM survey, a significant fraction of the sample households **reported having no formal head** of either gender

*These are **households organized without marriage or children** –*

There are at least two kinds of headless household:

- Either **damaged households left behind** after losing key members to migration or to sickness
- Or otherwise **migrating young people rooming together**
- *Both seem to be ad hoc, accidental households with no clear authority structure*

# YOUNG WOMEN MOVING ALONE

*Finding numbers of women living in households with no designated head was unexpected*

- This acephalous - or headless - category may represent an unreported category of household in South Africa

**Women in these households are often mobile young work-seekers**

- Many have broken from their families of origin and are moving on their own
- *They can move into some of the same settlement types as men*

***Without families, these younger women seem to gain the most from urbanization***

# POVERTY OUTCOMES?

GENDER OF HEAD	% 20-64 unemployed, urban households	% 20-64 unemployed, rural households	Per capita income, urban households	Per capita income, rural households
<b>Women-headed households</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>R 502</b>	<b>R 337</b>
Male-headed households	36	50	R 757	R 391
<b>Households with no designated head</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>R 610</b>	<b>R 254</b>
Total IPDM survey sample	41	50	R 623	R 327

Social science that makes a difference



# INCOME & UNEMPLOYMENT?

It looks as if **urban residence does give advantage** for access to the job market –

***But less for women:***

- *Rural women's households* reported per capita incomes relatively low at **R337** per month
- *Urban women's households* per capita income was higher at **R502** per month
- *Rural men's household income* was not much higher than the women's households, at **R391** per month

**But in the urban sector, the income gap opens wide –**

- Women's households reached **R502** monthly
- But men's households achieved **R757** – it nearly doubled
  - *Household unemployment follows the same trend*

# ADVANTAGE FOR WOMEN?

The most accessible types of urban settlement for poor women are the *urban shacks* and *backyards*

- **For these urban settlement types, per capita income was in the same range as for women's households in the rural sector**

*This result suggests little advantage to women for urban migration*

- Women's families did best in the *old townships* at R542 per month
- But the crowded urban townships take in few rural in-migrants

For women's households in the central and peripheral shacks and in backyards –

- *Highest estimated per capita income for women's households was **R383** per month –*
- *That's not much higher than the inner rural villages at **R370***

# ADVANTAGE FOR MEN?

*Men's households still did better in the urban sector –*

- **Men heads in the shack settlements** obtained per capita household income of **R470**
- **Men's backyard households** reached **R626** per month
- By comparison, men's households in the **rural villages** averaged just under **R391**

*Men's households leveraged more gains against poverty from urban location than women's households*

**But the biggest gainers were the headless households**

- For these, income in the rural villages was only **R185**, vs **R200** in urban backyards
- *Headless incomes shot up to **R320 in the central and peripheral urban shack settlements***

# WOMEN'S FAMILIES URBANIZING?

From the survey, **women's households earned the least well of any in the urban sector –**

For women with families, ***urban income and employment were lower*** when compared to:

- *Women-headed households in rural settlement types*
- *Men's households in the urban sector*
- *Households without designated heads in the urban sector*

**That means, women with families gained less from urban residence**

**While women in headless households did much better**

*Results here suggest we may not understand **the nature of women's exclusion** from the developed economy*

*Or even how women fit into South African processes of migration and urbanization*

**Young women in headless households may access the urban core, while women with families choose safer areas and remain excluded**

# URBAN LOCATION: WHO WINS?

## How can we make urbanization work for women's families?

- Women with families want to settle in safe and stable areas
- Which often have weak economic access -

We may need to look at expanding opportunities for women to find **secure urban rentals in the central city zones**

Or self-build **site and service opportunities on the urban periphery** with adequate transport

Otherwise, *young women moving into headless households* may remain the only women's constituency to gain advantage from rural-to-urban migration?



**THANK YOU!**

16 September 2009

Social science that makes a difference



# URBANIZATION AS ESCAPE FROM POVERTY?

It is widely agreed that women-headed households are the most excluded constituency in South Africa  
Government delivery aims to empower these households with access to the developed economy in order to promote their escape from poverty

how best to do this is not always clear

Poverty at household level relates closely to where the household is able to settle

where households settle determines access to the job market

there are policy implications for how South Africa deals with women's urbanization and housing delivery