

# Nairobi Urban Social Protection Programme



*“Social Protection isn’t just about handouts. It will give those who are in incredibly difficult circumstances the chance to live with dignity. This project is innovative. It has created a mechanism to bring people back from the edge and to help them in a positive and dignified manner”*

Written by: Sumananjali Mohanty  
Edited by: Laura Phelps and Carol Brady



*The regular cash transfer enables children to access education if they are not required to work. Photo: Crispin Hughes/Oxfam*

## Summary

In January 2009, the Government of Kenya (GoK) declared the county's food crisis as a National Disaster. According to government statistics it was estimated that 9.5 million people were at risk of starvation, with 4.1 million of these living in urban informal settlements.

As part of a larger programme to respond to issues of urban governance, sustainable livelihoods, and promotion of coordinated humanitarian response in Nairobi, Oxfam GB, in collaboration with Concern GB developed a joint proposal to address the urban crisis.

## The Urban Context

As of 1999, one third of Kenya's population lived in urban settlements, with 50% of the county's population predicted to be living in cities by 2020. This rapid urbanisation is outstripping any corresponding improvement in infrastructure. More than 50% of this urban group live in unplanned informal settlements, which lack basic services, and are not included in mainstream urban planning. 50% of slum dwellers have no access to safe and affordable drinking water and 18% have no access to sanitation at all. This contributes to the high morbidity and mortality rates of urban slum dwellers.

According to the World Bank study of 2010<sup>1</sup>, although over two-thirds of adult slum dwellers are economically active, the unemployment rate is high and stands at 26%. Disaggregating by gender, women were found to be almost five times more likely to be unemployed than men<sup>2</sup>. Unemployment amongst young adults in Nairobi currently stands at around 2.5 million; and is held to be one of the key factors behind the increasing levels of insecurity and violence in the informal settlements.

In Nairobi alone, it is estimated that between 50% and 60% of the city's people are crammed into 5% or 6% of the city's total land area<sup>3</sup>. The rates of chronic malnutrition are higher in Nairobi's informal settlements compared to the national rates – almost one in two children compared to one in three nationally. High levels of chronic malnutrition are a reflection of household food insecurity, social care and public health environment.

Urban areas are typically dense and heterogeneous. Social networks can be fragmented and community cohesion may be loose or dominated by conflict. Large numbers of people are engaged in the informal sector. According to the UNHCR<sup>4</sup> (2010), Kenya is home to 374,000 refugees. Official statistics suggest that there are 46,000 refugees in Nairobi alone, although unofficial figures stand at close to 100,000. This has had implications for our projects in terms of how we target beneficiaries and the use of national identity documents in the selection process.

### Humanitarian responses in urban environments pose complex challenges.

- Livelihood options are many and varied, with informal markets playing a central role
- Coping strategies are multiple and diverse and can mask vulnerability
- Targeting is more challenging than in rural contexts and requires cross checking with multiple community, youth and government groups at the micro level to ensure accuracy

## Background to the Programme

Consecutive droughts, post 2007 election violence, low food grain production, the global economic slowdown, the global food crisis and the reduction of cross border food inputs combined to lead to a significant increase in food prices and the subsequent food crisis.

Between 2007 and 2008, while all major consumption items were available on the market the prices had rocketed.

Maize meal	Up 133%
Beans	Up 96%
Vegetables	Up 55%
Oils and fats	Up 77%
Basic needs basket of poor households	Up 63%

**Wages** **Down 21%**

Wage freezes resulted in 'very poor' households increasing from 10% of the population in 2007 to 19% by 2008.

In 2008, Oxfam commissioned a report entitled: **Oxfam Response to Urban Food Crisis: situational analysis and strategy options'**.

This report examined the livelihood strategies adopted by poor people in Korogocho and Mukuru informal settlements in response to the food price hikes.

The report found that to cope with their reduced purchasing power, 90% of those households surveyed in the Kenya Food Security Steering Group (KFSSG) reported having reduced meal frequency and diet diversity. Many had also started engaging in high-risk livelihood strategies such as prostitution, crime, brewing/selling illegal brews, and child labour. Up to 30% of children had been taken out of school, rates of prostitution increased to around 30%, and rates of scavenging among children were also reported to have increased to around 30%.

Residents also reported reducing expenditure on non-food items and social services (such as water, soap, sanitation, health and education). Unhygienic water and sanitation conditions of the informal settlement lead to an increased risk of water-borne diseases, compounded by the precarious nutritional situation and leading to increased malnutrition rates.

*The rooftops of the Nairobi slums, where up to 60 per cent of the city's inhabitants live. Photo: Oxfam*



## Assessments

Although the GoK has pre-existing monitoring systems to measure food insecurity in arid and semi-arid lands, urban food insecurity presented an un-chartered environment. In the wake of the national disaster declaration in January 2009, several assessments were carried out.

**The Short Rains Assessment (SRA) report by the Kenya Food Security Steering Groups (KFSSG)** KFSSG carries out two Food Security assessments every year, to analyse the food security situation in the different livelihood zones in the country.

The SRA of 2009 showed that Nairobi informal settlement residents were highly reliant on the market as the major source of all their household food (typically 90% for very poor households) and non-food needs. 80% of households reported purchasing food on credit from local vendors. Furthermore, the 2006 World Bank study found that typically very poor and poor groups spend as much as three-quarters of their income on staple food. With little disposable income left for other items of expenditure, families resorted to a range of coping strategies. The SRA established that food access rather than availability posed a significant threat to food security.

**The Nairobi Informal Settlements** report<sup>5</sup> was a study undertaken by Oxfam GB, Concern Worldwide, and Care International in Kenya. The study found that a lack of institutionalised food security monitoring systems meant that

it was difficult to obtain coherent and comprehensive data on the food security and nutritional status of residents in urban informal settlements. This made it very difficult to identify an emergency food security situation within a context of extreme chronic poverty. As a result, the rights and entitlements of the urban poor were effectively ignored.

## Livelihoods Assessments

Further food security and Livelihoods assessments found that although female-headed households are significantly less likely to have a regular salaried job, a high proportion of them operate household micro-enterprises. The most common micro-enterprises found in the informal settlements fall into the following broad categories:

- Retailing and food services including trading/hawking/kiosks and food preparation and sales
- Small manufacturing/production, construction, and repair of goods (popularly known as jua kali)
- General services such as hairdressers, laundry, transport, medicine, photo studios
- Entertainment services, including bars, brewing, and pool tables

The first two of these, trading and jua kali are of particular importance in both Nairobi's formal and informal economy. This analysis and understanding of livelihood opportunities helped to shape our intervention from the outset.

*The project improved access to food for some of the city's most vulnerable households. Photo: Oxfam*





*Aida boosted her business with cash transfer money – preparing french fries. Photo: Oxfam*

## The Project

The overall goal is to improve livelihood security of the most vulnerable urban Nairobi informal settlement dwellers in response to the cumulative shocks and stresses. The specific objectives are:

- **To improve access to food of the most vulnerable households in selected informal settlements in Nairobi**
- **To develop longer-term food and income security initiatives**

The expected outcomes include:

- **Development of a cash transfer system**
- **Establishment of a social protection programme for the urban poor and**
- **Identification of appropriate emergency indicators for use in the urban context**

The project began in October 2009 and is ongoing. From the outset, this project recognised that there are two distinct beneficiary groups involved – those that can effectively make use of the longer-term economic opportunities that this programme enables and those that cannot. As a result, long term economic and private sector linkages and business development will run alongside the development of a government backed social protection programme.

Households that no longer need cash transfers will be linked to business entrepreneurship, skill building, linkages with micro finance institutions, cash for work projects and so forth.

For the more vulnerable households who are less able to move onto livelihoods programming, and who need cash transfer or social protection for a longer term, Oxfam is engaging with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development to ensure that they will continue to be supported through the GoK Social Protection programme.

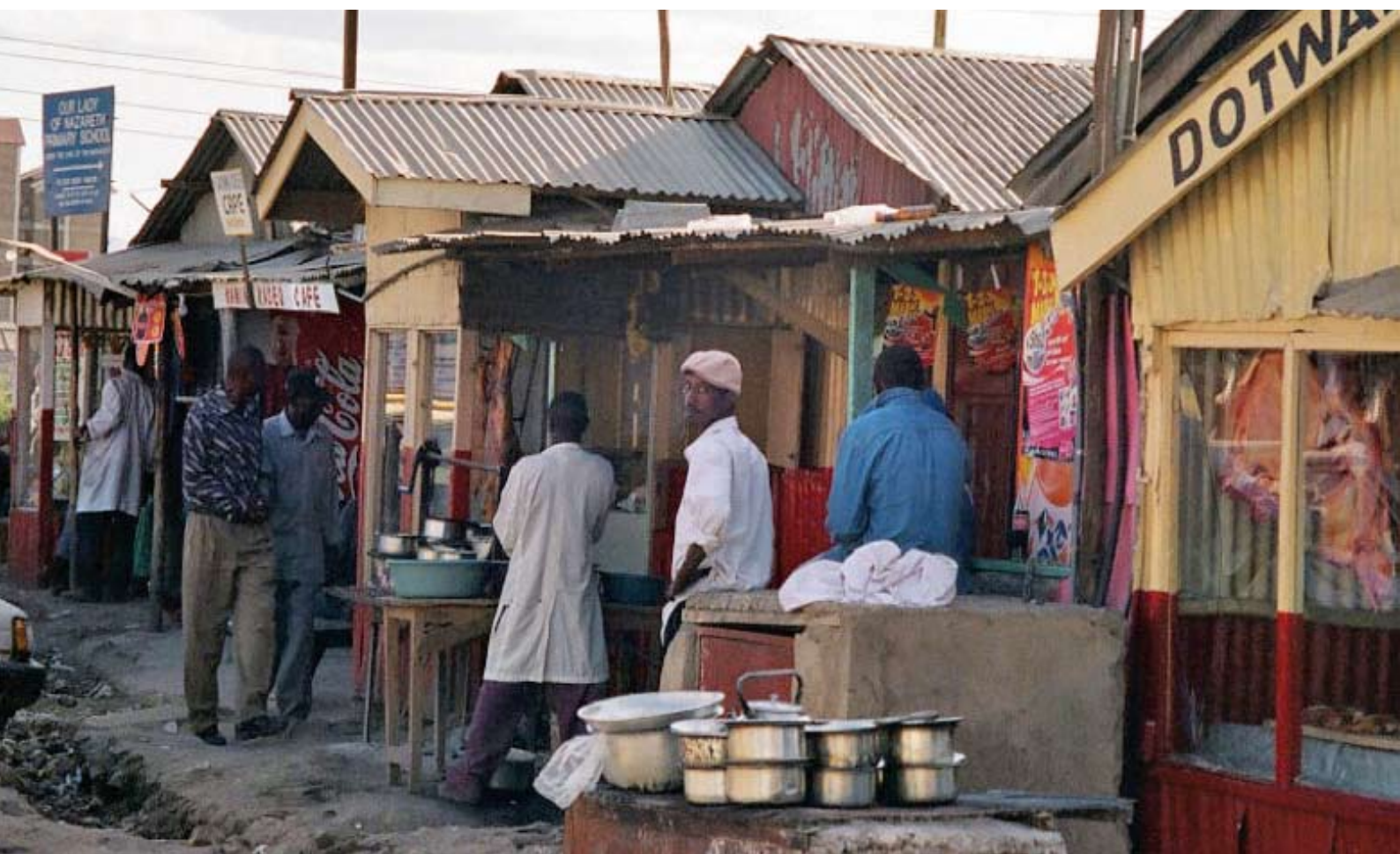
### Who was targeted?

Oxfam targeted the poor and vulnerable households in informal urban settlements, using the following criteria.

- **Child-headed households not benefiting from any other support**
- **People living with HIV (PLWHIV) or other terminal illness with no support with special consideration for the bedridden**
- **People above 55 years taking care of 3 or more orphans and vulnerable children (OVC)**
- **Single mothers taking care of three or more OVC**
- **PLWHIV taking care of OVC on anti-retroviral (ARVs)**
- **Households taking care of OVC on ARVs**
- **Pregnant and lactating mothers with a middle upper arm circumference (MUAC) of <18.5cm (indicating acute malnutrition)**
- **Children with a MUAC of <13.5 cm**

Beneficiaries were identified using community-based selection criteria through stakeholders including village elders, youth representatives, women leaders, government bodies, faith-based organisations and community-based organisations. Oxfam/ Concern Consortium and its partners then verified the beneficiaries through random visits to beneficiaries' homes, crosschecking against statistics provided by the Area Advisory Council, Food by Prescription programme.

Cash transfer beneficiaries engage in food vending in the slums. Photo: Oxfam



The objectives of the programme are **sustainable** as they are designed to respond to both short-term and long-term needs. The cash transfer component will offer immediate relief to the households affected by the increase in food prices, while for the long term, the consortium will focus on a coordinated advocacy effort to encourage the government to invest in social protection measures for vulnerable urban populations.

The Project has three distinct phases:

- **Response:** cash transfers for targeted beneficiaries. Oxfam and Concern reached 5000 households in the Korogocho and Mukuru informal settlements of Nairobi
  - **Recovery:** activities to promote sustainable livelihood options, such as skill building and cash for work to enable beneficiaries to engage in sustainable livelihood options.
- **Exit:** the Consortium will:
    - Develop and deepen micro-finance linkages, social protection, promote ministerial cooperation, business development and private sector relationships
    - Negotiate with financial institutions like Equity Bank to improve access and engagement in the informal settlements
    - Work closely to engage with the Inter Ministry Task Force to promote this urban programme
    - Ensure that close links to the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development mean that social protection will continue for those beneficiaries who are not yet able to enter into livelihoods programmes

Gladys Wanjiku has six children and six grandchildren. She is asthmatic.

*“Life here is very hard, all these children depend on me. I have no work. I sell peanuts. I have three children who are HIV positive. The youngest one is deaf and dumb. I can’t leave her to go look for work. I used to carry her while selling peanuts but she is too heavy now and my chest isn’t strong enough.”*

With the cash transfer, Gladys bought food for her family and some chicks. She hopes to sell the chicks for profit in a few months.





*Caroline Kemunto says: I am so happy that my grandchildren will never sleep hungry again: the cash transfer came at the right time when food was not affordable. Look at my business now, it makes me so happy" Photo: Oxfam*



**Response: Cash Transfer for Vulnerable Households**

A monthly cash transfer of KSH 1,500 (USD 12.5) was given to the targeted beneficiaries to meet the basic needs of the households. The grants were provided for a period of six to eight months. Vulnerable and food poor households were provided with the cash transfer through mobile phones. Mobile phone technology was chosen for the cash transfer, as it was the most cost-effective means to deliver cash in an urban setting.

Oxfam entered into an agreement with Safaricom (service provider) and shared information and learning about the use of the beneficiary database. At the community level, households registered their phone numbers with Safaricom's MPESA (that allows money transfers). About 40% of the households involved did not have phones and so were given sim cards. These cards could then be used in 'community phones', held by the community health workers.

The grants have been provided for a period of six to eight months and are continuing for households that cannot be taken to the next level of support for alternative livelihood strategies. The cash transfer was done to meet the basic needs of the households and has clear exit points.

A number of activities have emerged through a livelihood mapping exercise that could help households to engage in more effective income-generating activities. These activities include cash for work, investigating microfinance, income generating activities especially setting up small micro businesses, skills transfer and labour market opportunities.

Oxfam has successfully influenced the government's commitment to continue with this programme and will maintain a position of advocacy until the social programme is fully incorporated into government policy.

Monica Akinyi is a single mother with three children. She works as a casual labourer, washing clothes for a few shillings a time. She carries twenty litres of water for just 1 shilling and earns a maximum of KSH 35 a day. Her youngest two children were so malnourished that they were unable to walk. She was forced to carry them while she searched for work.

*"I was compelled to go with them to work on empty stomachs. They would cry the whole time, which made it hard for me to carry out my duties. This did not amuse the clients. If someone was eating something, they would cry out...The biggest problem I had was to get foodstuffs on credit. The shop owners lied to me that they didn't have what I wanted. This was a clever way of refusing to lend to me."*

With her first payment, Monica spent the entire amount on food. For her second, she bought supplies for her business, which is now making a profit. For the first time, she was also able to buy small toys for her children. Monica's children are healthier and happier thanks to this programme.

*"Little by little this has improved my living standard."*



### Results and Impact

- To date, 3,400 of the beneficiary households are no longer receiving cash transfers and are now engaged in livelihood activities. 50% of the households involved have started, improved or revived small businesses, which will help this group build resilience to future shocks. 1000 more households are expected to be soon moving towards the livelihoods programmes
- These figures mean that 83% of the beneficiaries have moved on from the social protection element of this programme
- In the dense, heterogeneous and risky urban environment, the fact that only 17% of the original beneficiaries are still reliant on cash transfers can be read as a significant achievement
- The support has prevented households resorting to negative coping strategies such as prostitution, crime, brewing/selling illegal brews, and child labour
- Schools have seen enrolment go up due to the cash transfers as children have not been forced to resort to coping strategies such as begging.

Njoki Nyambura has four children and one grandchild that she looks after by herself. She sells chicken heads and legs, which has not always prospered.

Life was so hard, I contemplated killing myself. I would go get drunk, come home and find the children asleep. I tried borrowing money to start my business but to no avail. I contemplated being a prostitute but I was scared of sexually transmitted diseases. Now that I'm back in business, people offer to buy me alcohol, but I say "no...I'm no longer in that world".

With a grant of KSH 1,500, Njoki was able to restart her business, which is now making a profit. Her children have a more stable and secure future. Involvement in this project has been life changing.

This project should go on since it has helped a lot of people. I see so many people who have received the money really improving their lifestyles. Their lives have changed. They have started businesses, which earn them profits.

### Social Protection

- **Social Protection is a human right based approach to poverty reduction that uses provision in law, policy and programmes to protect people from the effects of chronic poverty as well as a range of risks and shocks” (Oxfam Social Protection Policy Guidelines 2010)**

Social protection needs a long term commitment to social assistance, legislation and social insurance. Governmental support is essential

- In February 2009, the Kenyan Cabinet recommended the creation of a cross-ministerial Task Force to design and pilot a food subsidy intervention for the urban food insecure. The Oxfam/Concern Consortium was critical in the discussions and decisions that ensued.
- In November, the Honourable Prime Minister announced in the media that the pilot ‘Sadia Jamii’ would be launched for the urban population with the Oxfam/ Concern Consortium and the World Food Programme acting as the implementing partners.
- In February 2010, the Government of Kenya signed an Agreement to implement the Saidia Jamii pilot in urban settlements of Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu.

**From the outset, Oxfam designed the project to provide basic food needs for the vulnerable, to promote independent and self-sustaining livelihoods and to support the development of a government backed long-term social protection programme.**

*“It is our responsibility to ensure that every Kenyan eats at least one meal a day...When you give these people this money, it means that you are giving them hope. It means that we are breaking the cycle of poverty”*

Honourable Esther Murugi,  
Minister for Gender, Children and Development

## Lessons Learnt

- Community targeting was found to be effective as it reaches those who need it most and has perceived legitimacy.
- The **use of the electronic money transfer** through MPESA proved very efficient and cost effective. It is replicable in other urban settings where mobile connectivity is good and cash withdrawal points are easily accessible.
- Cash transfers have worked where food aid faced a number of challenges including commodity theft.
- The cash transfer and resulting cash injections have made the local market more vibrant.
- The initiative has been an investment rather than a handout. 50% of the households have started/ boosted/ revived small business, which will help build their resilience to future shocks. This is replicable in the urban environment due to high market reliance.
- Government support to the programme was on par with their other social protection payments. The value of this is KSH 1,500 (\$12.5 USD) per month. This amount meets 20% of the households basic food needs rather than the 33% as initially proposed. Maintaining good partnerships with government for the short and long term success of social protection programmes is vital. Oxfam needs to both align with the government standards and be innovative and flexible in the initial approach of project design, to maximise support. For example, regular payments to address immediate needs may be complimented with livelihood grants or training to supplement the initial support.
- According to the project monitoring report of 2010, lack of documentation, especially national identification cards, makes it difficult for some very needy households to qualify for inclusion into the programme. It is vital that the identification criteria be rigorous enough to ensure that no needy household falls through the cracks. Alternative identification criteria should be accepted.
- Initial project mobilisation should have clear messages so that some households don't feel discriminated against in the targeting process.
- Targeting criteria must be flexible to find the most vulnerable rather than blanket groups.
- The cash transfer needs to have a clear phase-out strategy so as not to create dependency but also must take into consideration households that might not graduate within the estimated time frame.
- There should be rigorous monitoring systems put in place to capture lessons learnt, but should ensure it is simple enough not to increase programme delivery costs

## Partners

Oxfam/Concern Consortium implemented the programme jointly through their respective partners. Oxfam's partner Mukuru Slum Development Projects (MSDP) in Mukuru is predominantly responsible for community mobilisation, facilitation and training.

Oxfam's role training and supporting partner organisations on cash transfer programming, developing monitoring frameworks; cash transfers logistics, donor contract management, fund raising for the project, lobbying and advocacy as well as facilitating linkages with partner organisations wherever necessary.

## Donors and coordination

Donors included Swedish International Development Agency, Tolkein Trust, Oxfam Appeals Fund, Global Food Fund and Safaricom.

## Potential for Replication

The Saidia Jamii is a pilot project in Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu urban settlements. It has received full government backing, although finances have yet to be committed. Government partnerships, together with multi-agency cooperation have been strong. Our community-based approach has been effective and has been seen as a legitimate operational process.

The delivery of cash through mobile phone technology has been successful and points to a world where phones are no longer a luxury. The availability of 'community phones' means that in an urban context, beneficiaries can be reached and can access their grants. Due to high market reliance, cash transfers in urban environments can strengthen livelihood options.

The broad and long-term design of the project from response to recovery and exit at the outset has meant that resources could be raised and distributed accordingly. Different donor priorities have been matched to different project components and we have had to use minimal resources – both financial and human – to meet the various demands of the project.

The GoK has stated that they are committed to urban social protection programmes and that urban livelihoods will continue to be a key issue.

## Acronyms

ARVs	Anti-retroviral
GoK	Government of Kenya
KSH	Kenyan Shilling
KFSSG	Kenya Food Security Steering Groups
MUAC	Middle Upper Arm Circumference
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable children
PLWHIV	People Living with HIV
SRA	Short Rains Assessment

## Notes

1. Policy Research Working Paper 5388, "Poverty, Living Conditions, and Infrastructure Access A Comparison of Slums in Dakar, Johannesburg, and Nairobi" by Sumila Gulyan, Debabrata Talukdar and Darby Jack. Pg 7

2. 2006, World Bank Report

3. News From Africa: "It's A Slum Life In Nairobi", By Lilian Maingi and Philip Emase

4. UNHCR. 2010. Refugee and Asylum Seekers in Kenya. Statistical Summary 28 February 2010

5. The Nairobi Informal Settlements: An emerging food security emergency within extreme chronic poverty – a compilation and synthesis of key food security, livelihood, nutrition and public health data, Oxfam GB, Concern Worldwide, Care International (Kenya)