

International Day of Families: Sustainability of Families in Urban Areas

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Introduction and Background

The international year of families was first proclaimed in 1994 by the United Nations. The reason for this day was to respond to the changing social and economic structures which have and still continue to affect the structure and stability of families around the world (Time and Date, 2022). The United Nations General Assembly declared that May 15th should be observed as the International Day of Families through resolution **A/RES//47/237**.

This day is meant to celebrate the importance of families, people, societies and cultures around the world (Time and Date, 2022). This day also serves to promote awareness of issues relating to families and to increase the knowledge of the social, economic and demographic processes affecting families (United Nations (UN), 2022).

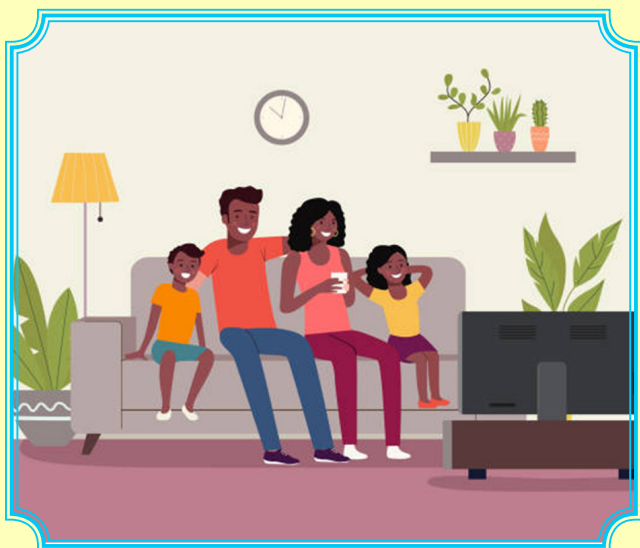


The family is the basic unit of society. This means that many of the changes that influence how society is shaped stem from the family. Over the years, we have experienced many changes that have had an impact on families through some megatrends, one of them being urbanisation.

Urbanisation is often associated with people moving to cities from the rural areas to look for greener pastures. The result of this movement is that the cities become overcrowded and their shared resources become scarce; pollution in all its forms increases, playgrounds meant

for children to play in become real estate buildings, crime rates increase significantly, quality healthcare services become expensive and inaccessible, and poverty levels rise. All of these affect the families that live in urban areas, especially the children.

In order to ensure that the issues affecting the family are addressed, there is need to consider the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The SDGs were unanimously adopted by the 193 member states of the UN in 2015 which aim to promote, among other things, the development of all people everywhere (UN, 2022).



The 2022 theme for the international day of families is Families and Urbanisation. This theme is meant to raise awareness on the importance of sustainable, family-friendly urban policies. One way of doing this is through the implementation of the SDGs and in particular,

SDG 1 on poverty eradication, SDG 3 on good health and well-being, SDG 10 on reducing inequality within and among countries, and SDG 11 on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Therefore, family-oriented policies are necessary to ensure that these SDGs are fully implemented.

Urbanisation and the SDGs

From the introduction, it is clear that urbanisation or the growth of cities has very adverse effects on the family as a unit. There is a lot of good that urbanisation offers that improves the quality of life for families. For example, families get better job opportunities, better healthcare, and accessibility to social services, among others. However, the other side of the coin is that there are other negative effects which have been pointed out above.

The sustainable development goals were established as part of the plan to improve the lives of people all over the world. In relation to urbanisation, the 4 major SDGs that directly impact families living in urban areas are SDG 1, 3, 10 and 11.

SDG 1 (Ending Poverty in all its forms)

a. and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)

Being poor has always been associated with marginalised communities in Africa; it means that these communities lack the basic needs for their families such as food, shelter and clothing. This then leaks over to being unable to access and afford good health care, education and natural resources such as water. These are the issues that SDG 1 is aiming to address.



On the other hand, one of the goals of the Agenda 2030 is to make cities and human settlement inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (UN HABITAT, 2019). This is the premise of SDG 11. Since SDG 1 is closely

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



linked to SDG 11, both humanity and poverty are increasingly becoming urban. This means that there is an increase of people living in slums in cities across developing countries, an example being the Kibera and Mathare slums in Kenya. These slum

dwellers lack access to basic services and good housing, which affects the quality of life of these families.

b. **SDG 3 (Good health and well-being)**

This goal ensures healthy lives and promotes the well-being of people at all ages through achieving universal health coverage (UN HABITAT, 2019). When talking about good health and cities, they are both connected because healthcare is often linked to a place. For families to have better health conditions in cities, there needs to be a reduction in environmental dangers such as pollution, proper urban planning, access to basic services, and access to decent and affordable housing (UN HABITAT, 2019).

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



c. **SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities)**

An inequality means not being the same, either on the basis of finances, opportunities for growth and development, etc. Regarding finances and wealth, the UN Habitat (2019) documents that income inequality is constantly rising. The rich are getting richer and the poor get poorer. One of the ways to fix this gap is to develop sound policies that empower the

poor to become income earners and promote economic inclusion for all without discrimination of any kind (UN Habitat, 2019).

In urban areas across Africa, many families living in slums are at an unfair advantage over those that live in gated communities.



Slum dwellers find it hard to compete with the rest of the population in cities because they lack the resources to make ends meet for their families. Some of the ways to deal with this include:

- Providing better opportunities for employment;
- Fixing the challenges of afford-

able housing;

- Accessible transportation, healthcare and other basic necessities; and
- Providing better spaces and opportunities for inclusion.

All these remedies are applicable to the marginalised groups such as people with disabilities, refugees and migrants, as they form a large part of the population in cities across Africa (UN Habitat, 2019).

Conclusion

As the world looks at how the growth of cities impacts the quality of life for families living there, it is important for governments, civil society organisations, community-based organisations and all relevant stakeholders to ensure that these families live in conducive environments and have access to the basic needs. It is not enough to only have policies, but to ensure that they are implemented together with the best practices shared across the globe on how to sustain families in urban areas.

References

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