

## **FAMILY MIGRATION as a VEHICLE for URBAN POVERTY and CHILD MORBIDITY**

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Between one and two million migrants reside in cramped conditions in Nairobi's slums without proper access to sanitation or affordable clean water. Children in such areas are exposed to enormous risks, health risks in particular. For example, a large demographic and health focused survey conducted in various Nairobi slums in 2002 by the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) finds that not only are morbidity risks for all major childhood illnesses (fever, cough, diarrhea) higher for slum children compared to children elsewhere in Kenya, slum children also have less access to healthcare, including immunization, and subsequently face higher mortality rates than even their rural counterparts.

One coping strategy for slums dwellers is to adopt split migration where wife and children are secured in the home village while the head of household undertakes the migration project. However this strategy is often impaired by the important monitoring costs that the migrant incurs to ensure that spouse fulfills the ex-ante contract and does not divert the remittances into unproductive activities. The welfare implications of this information asymmetry are significant. Precious resources that could otherwise have been spent on, for example, healthcare or school fees, are spent on frequent costly traveling home. Some families for whom monitoring is simply too costly decide to move altogether to Nairobi, leaving children to be raised in precarious urban slum conditions, with obvious implications for children's health and general well-being.

It's against this backdrop that the proposed study seeks to understand the contribution of joint migration as compared to the more efficient strategy of split migration in the urbanization of poverty and poor health in the two slums (Korogocho and Viwandani) of the Nairobi Demographic Surveillance System (DSS). The present research is based on a panel study, the "2004 Nairobi Informal Settlement Survey" conducted between 04 May 2004 and 27 June 2004 in these two DSS communities. The survey was conducted on a random sample of 1817 'eligible' heads of households. Eligibility was defined as being

“ever married” and between the ages of 24 and 56 years old; i.e. (1) heads of households who were divorced or separated (153 in total), or widowed (150); heads of households who were married and lived with their spouse together in the Nairobi informal settlement (858 in total); or heads of households who were married but lived split from their spouses (who usually live in the up-country village) (656 in total).