URBANIZATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA
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Abstract
African cities have changed dramatically over the past 30 years. Rising urbanization rates can be found throughout the continent. While this shift isconcerting there are certain gains to be seen from these changing dynamics. This paper presents evidence that suggests a positive correlation between human development and these rising urbanization rates. Specifically, the changing nature of African population locations has historically translated into correlative gains in human development. Despite the multiple challenges to measure human development, rising urbanization throughout sub-Saharan Africa have positively correlated with human development. Governments should seek to understand this relationship in more depth and implement policies that leverage the benefits of increased population densities.

Keywords: Urbanization, Sub-Saharan Africa, Human Development

Biographical Sketch:
I am currently pursuing an MA in International Development. I have a BS degree in History with a minor in International Studies. I currently conduct work with the Denver Council on Foreign Relations as an administrative assistant and in various capacities as a research assistant. My personal research focuses on the broader issues of economic development and national security policy. He specifically focuses his research in sub-Saharan Africa with a particular interest East African development issues. My current research is focusing on the construction of stable societies in Uganda and the related power dynamics. Aside from my studies I enjoy spending time with his growing family, which includes his wife Liesel and two daughters Kendyl (2) and Josie (9 months).

Introduction
Urbanization rates in sub-Saharan Africa have soared over the past thirty years. These soaring rates have caused many countries to face the prospect of delivering services to millions of people living in megacities. Often these megacities contain one or more mega slums, which can contain upwards of one to two million inhabitants. These mega slums place enormous service delivery burdens on weak governments. The changing nature of African cities is certainly concerning to all observers.

What attracts of individuals and families to these megacities is varied, but often it is driven by the opportunity for a higher standard of living for themselves or their families. The prospect of modern industrial employment is an attractive force for a young person or a young family. Once they arrive in the urban center the story becomes very different. The family finds it difficult to locate a plot of land on which to live; employment is not a readily available as first desired; food is scarce due to the lack of personal income and arable land in the city. These challenges are real and can become generational and chronic for families. These challenges are among the multitude of changes taking place within African cities.

Despite these challenges there are a number of benefits for families and individuals who migrate to cities in the developing world. This paper seeks to test the thesis that higher levels of urbanization in sub-Saharan Africa are related to higher levels of human development. This paper concludes that when human development is measured in terms of the Human Development Index (HDI), human development has risen in sub-Saharan Africa over the past thirty years in correlation with higher levels of urbanization.
Table 1: Average HDI for sub-Saharan Africa, 1980-2005.

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<tr>
<td>Average HDI</td>
<td>0.299</td>
<td>0.317</td>
<td>0.345</td>
<td>0.350</td>
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This preliminary thesis concerning rates of urbanization and human development has direct relevance to policy makers in sub-Saharan Africa. Policy makers need to focus their attention on creating viable service delivery options in urban centers before focusing on their rural populations. Doing this will not only be easier than trying to reach the dispersed rural populations, but will be more cost effective. Central and municipal governments need to work together to create sensible policies that attract employment-creating industries to urban centers while institutionalizing effective service delivery methods. In order to do this policy makers must understand the benefits that urbanization has brought, or has not brought, to human development. If a positive relationship does exists between increased urbanization and increased human development, then central and municipal governments can bring about more rapid gains in human development through the leveraging of urbanization towards human development ends.

Conceptualization in measuring human development

Measuring human development is a complicated procedure mainly due to its qualitative and subjective nature. Amartya Sen’s capabilities approach has come to dominate the literature on human development. Sen argues that human development and development more broadly, should be measured in terms of capabilities and functionings.

He further argues that an individual’s capabilities and functionings are determined by the access the individual has to develop and the freedom to choose how to leverage this access. The original Human Development Report and its HDI sought to apply this approach. The HDI has been the starting point for measuring human development. Since its conception scholars recognized some of the flaws in the HDI and then will review some attempts at offering alternative measures of human development.

The human development index

The human development index is composed of three indicators – life expectancy at birth, GNI per capita, and the mean years of schooling attended. One can easily see how Sen’s capabilities approach shaped the HDI. The life expectancy indicator measures a long and healthy life, the schooling indicator measures access to education, and the GNI per capita indicator measures a decent standard of living. Mahbub ul Haq, one of the chief architects of the HDI, argues that “people are both the means and ends of economic development.” Despite its advance in measuring human development from simply income terms, the HDI contains several flaws that hinder its ability to accurately portray human development.

One current criticism regards the income component of the HDI. Farhad Norbakhsh suggests that due to technical issues in the HDI calculation “countries with income above the poverty line were reduced to the poverty line income.” Others have argued that income does not have enough weight in the index relative to others and should be weighted more heavily due to the increased capabilities an increased income provides. However, one must be skeptical of weighting income higher than other indicators. GNI per capita can easily increase without actually contributing to overall human development.

Furthermore, one must take into account overall income inequalities when calculating human development. The HDI fails to do this and, because it fails to do this, any aggregate indicator that incorporates some form of national level income statistic should be questioned on its ability to measure human development. Furthermore, income growth has the potential to hide significant
decreases in other areas of human development. This problem and the others listed above concerning income suggest that other indicators should be used to determine overall human development. Even while this point is accepted by many, no consensus exists as to appropriate measures of human development. Given the lack of consensus this paper uses the alternative measures of under age-five mortality rates and secondary school enrollments to measure human development. Both of these statistics can be used to directly measure the affects urbanization has on the capabilities of children and adolescents. If a child dies before he/she has lost all capabilities and if a child attends secondary school, that child gains many capabilities. This set of indicators also serves as a good proxy in that combined they illustrate a progression of capabilities. If children in urban centers are living more frequently past age five than those in rural areas and if those same children enter secondary schools then the gamble to migrate to the cities has paid off. Removing income indicators as a measure of overall human development in sub-Saharan Africa allows this paper to focus on a less income skewed portrait of human development capabilities.

Methodology

The methodology for this project seeks to understand the correlational relationship between urbanization and human development. The data on urbanization rates, under age five mortality rates, and secondary school enrollment were collected from the World Development Indicators database, which is located at the World Bank’s online databank. The data on the HDI was collected from the 2010 Human Development Report online database. The first step in this project was to analyze the correlations between urbanization rates and the HDI. This step established the preliminary thesis that rising urbanization rates are positively correlated with the concept of human development. After finding that these were positively correlated the next step was to use the other measures of human development in light of the arguments made reviewed above concerning income and human development. Using these non-income based measures the relationships were tested further.

The urbanization and human development thesis would suggest that rising urbanization rates would lead to increases in the HDI and in secondary school enrollment rates. We would also expect that under age five mortality rates should go down. The findings of this preliminary analysis confirmed the expectations of the thesis. They also do suggest that further and more robust statistical testing is warranted on this issue. The following section will detail each of the findings and discuss their significance.

It should be noted that this is a preliminary analysis of the urbanization and human development thesis. As such, the reader should recognize that although correlations exist between urbanization rates and human development as defined here, more careful analysis of the relationship between these variables must be carried out prior to create effective policies to enhance human development. With that said, these preliminary findings suggest policy directions at odds with current development practice. Some of these possible policy directions will be discussed at more length in the recommendation section.

Results

Urbanization and the HDI

One might not initially expect urbanization to contribute much towards human development. Table 1 and graphs 1-6 reveals that there are significant correlations between urbanization rates as measured in the percent of the total population living in urban areas, and human development, as measured by the Human Development Index (HDI), for each five year intervals measured between 1980 and 2005. These correlations are positive in nature, meaning that an increase in urbanization translates into an increase in human development. While these positive correlations do exist, the inherent problems surrounding the HDI and its income component should be taken into account. As discussed above, this paper takes this into account by choosing two measures of human development not integrated into the HDI.

Table 1. Urbanization Rates and the Human Development Index (HDI), 1980-2005.

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<tr>
<td>Correlation Value</td>
<td>.6529</td>
<td>.6474</td>
<td>.6393</td>
<td>.6134</td>
<td>.5274</td>
<td>.5466</td>
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<td>$n$</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
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Graph 1. Urbanization and HDI, 1980.

Graph 2. Urbanization and HDI, 1985


The correlations between increased rates of urbanization and under age-five mortality rates are listed in table 5 and in graphs 7-12. Each five year interval in the table and its corresponding scatterplot graph clearly illustrate that higher rates of urbanization in sub-Saharan Africa are associated with lower mortality rates. The correlations range from a low of -0.336 in 1985 to a high of -0.375 in 1980. The latest correlation in 2005 was -0.346. When one remembers that the numbers behind these statistics represent individuals, it is easy to see why parents would want to move their children closer to urban centers. Families whose children grow up in urban centers have a greater likelihood of living past their fifth birthday. The reason for this is clear: urban centers provide families greater access to health care and health related services. For example, if a child contracts malaria in a rural area it is more difficult for parents to obtain the necessary medications that will allow the child to survive; they are simply too far away to get there in time. A drug store or clinic around the corner or within several blocks in the urban centers and while the quality can be suspect at times, these facilities nonetheless exist in urban centers and are more difficult to find in rural ones. In this way, urban centers help to foster greater future capabilities for children than do rural centers. If further analysis reveals that this relationship is more robust then it is up to states and municipalities to create policies that leverage population densities towards providing better service delivery.

**Under Age 5 Mortality Rates (U5MR)**

Table 2. Under Age 5 Mortality Rates (U5MR), 1980-2005.

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<tr>
<td>Correlation Value</td>
<td>-0.375</td>
<td>-0.336</td>
<td>-0.344</td>
<td>-0.369</td>
<td>-0.361</td>
<td>-0.346</td>
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<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>37</td>
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Secondary school enrollment
The correlations between urbanization and secondary school enrollment are listed in table 3 and graphs 13-18. This set of correlations is stronger than the previous correlations between urbanization and U5MR. The correlation values range from a low of .45 in 1995 to a high of .6285 in 1990 with the correlation for 2005 being .6283. These correlations clearly demonstrate that children who live in urban centers are more likely to enroll in secondary school than those who live in rural areas. These children are closer to primary and secondary schools than their contemporaries living in rural areas and this contributes to greater
access to services. Another possible hypothesis relates to the lifestyle of urban families. Most often urban families have little access to land on which to cultivate their own food and therefore purchase their food on a daily basis. For children, this means that there is little if any field work for them to do, thus freeing them up to go to school. What these correlations reveal is that a more in depth analysis is warranted to determining the proper policy course of action.


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<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>.6068</td>
<td>.5794</td>
<td>.6285</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.5145</td>
<td>.6283</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17</td>
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Graph 15. Urbanization and SSE, 1990.  
Graph 17. Urbanization and SSE, 2000.  
Graph 18. Urbanization and SSE, 2005.
Interpretations, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The correlations suggest there is a relationship between rising urbanization rates and human development in sub-Saharan Africa. The remainder of the paper will offer some possible policy options for central and municipal governments to implement in order to leverage these changing societal dynamics. The shifting nature of societies in Sub-Saharan Africa has the potential to create considerable advances in human development, if governments can appropriately construct and implement policies that leverage the benefits of urbanization. Focusing on the individuals and families migrating to urban centers is the only way the possible human development gains can be realized.

The first set of policy options will consist of policies to sustainably attract families and individuals to urban centers. The second set of policy options consists of policies for leveraging urbanization for human development once individuals and families arrive in urban centers. Creating policies that sustainably attract individuals and families to urban centers is no easy task. However, it is doable. All sustainable urbanization policy plans must first begin with a discussion of how to further develop the agricultural sector of the economy. Without corresponding development in the agricultural sector, the country will quickly experience food security issues. Further area specific research should be conducted to determine the most appropriate policies necessary to construct an agricultural sector capable of supporting increased urban populations.

Once the agriculture sector policies are in place, how can central and municipal governments attract individuals and families to urban centers? Central and municipal governments must create policies that allow economic development and job creation to occur. Migration to urban centers in sub-Saharan Africa occurs because opportunities for work and a better standard of living are available. Governments in sub-Saharan Africa need to create predictable business environments that will allow businesses to flourish. Creating a predictable business environment is not as easy as it sounds. Municipal governments must combat corruption at the city level if progress is to be made. Corruption is a central government issue as well, but when businesses are concerned, the local corruption is the most pressing.

Furthermore, governments must establish vocational training centers for urban residents. Anyone walking down the streets of the sub-Saharan country capitals quickly notices that people are walking everywhere. They all look as if they are in a hurry to get somewhere, but rarely are they going to work. Urban centers have vast numbers of unemployed people, but have even greater numbers of underemployed people. For example, walking throughout the largest market in Kampala, Uganda one notices that there are roughly three to four people working per stall. One is usually engaged in business while the others are napping or lazily conversing with one another. These people should be trained in some vocation. Investing in this type of human capital would give
central governments an added advantage when courting foreign investment. The next set of policy options deals more directly with the findings of this paper. What should central and municipal governments do to leverage urbanization towards human development after they have attracted migrants to urban centers? According to the correlations presented in this paper, states should seek to further strengthen and expand existing urban health networks and improve secondary school settings. Urban health services in sub-Saharan Africa mainly consist of corner clinics and drugstores. While this is clearly better than in rural areas, there are still improvements that can be made. Municipal governments need to provide more oversight on clinic operations. Oftentimes clinic will not have the adequate facilities to administer to patients. Ensuring that at a minimum each clinic has sanitization equipment would go a long way to ensure a more productive health sector. Along with municipal governments efforts, central governments should do more to invest in nursing education. There are woeful numbers of trained medical staff in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in urban centers. If central governments would invest more in this type of education it could accomplish two tasks. First, central governments could greatly improve the available number of health service providers in their country; and second, governments could ensure that quality care standards were taught from the beginning. This second point would go far in combating infection rates for treated patients. While urbanization has lead to higher levels of secondary education enrollments, this does not necessarily translate into secondary education success. In order to leverage these increased enrollment rates municipal governments should enact several policies. First, municipal governments need to regulate what is being taught in schools. As it currently stands, very little oversight is given to regulating the opening of new schools. In some cities all that is required to open a school is a building, some desks, and the money for the opening fees. This does nothing to ensure the quality of what is being taught, only that something is being taught. Second, central governments should do more to train more effective teachers. Ensuring that an adequate supply of qualified teachers is available to operate in these smaller class sizes is essential to the future success of urban youth in sub-Saharan Africa.

Conclusion