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Slum Conditions in Ghana's Urban Areas Concentrated in Northern, Savannah, and Oti Regions- GSS

One in three urban residents in Ghana lives in slum conditions, with regional data highlighting gaps in housing, basic services, and tenure security

The new *Slums and Informal Settlements Thematic Report* by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) offers the clearest national picture yet of slum conditions and informal settlements across Ghana's urban areas. Based on data from the 2021 Population and Housing Census the report provides evidence to support better urban planning and service delivery. It defines "urban" localities not just by population size but also by access to basic infrastructure such as electricity, water, schools, and health facilities. Yet only 10 percent of localities in Ghana meet this full definition, highlighting the mismatch between population concentration and service access.

About 30.8 percent of Ghana's urban population approximately 4.8 million people live in slums. This is higher than the global average of 24.7 percent but below the Sub-Saharan Africa average of 53.9 percent.

Speaking at the launch of the report, Government Statistician Dr. Alhassan Iddrisu emphasised the urgency of translating data into targeted responses. *"Every slum we transform and every household we uplift brings us closer to the safe, inclusive cities every Ghanaian deserves. Let's build together,"* he said.

Ghana's urban population has increased sharply over the last six decades, rising from 23.1 percent in 1960 to 56.7 percent in 2021. While this trend reflects growth and economic opportunity, it has also stretched housing systems and basic services. **In several regions, including Northern, Savannah, Oti, Greater Accra, Central, and Ashanti, the spread and intensity of slum conditions are especially high. More than 2.2 million households are affected nationwide.**

Beyond the physical conditions, the report shows clear disparities in education, health, and overall wellbeing. Non-literacy among persons aged six years and above is 30.8 percent in slum areas, compared to 14.0 percent in non-slum areas. The share of people aged four and above who have never attended school is 21.5 percent in slum communities, compared to 9.1 percent in non-slum areas. These education gaps limit future opportunities and help explain the higher levels of multidimensional poverty found in slums, recorded at 23.4 percent compared to 10.5 percent in non-slum areas. Slum households also report a higher total fertility rate of 2.9, compared to 2.5 in non-slum areas, contributing to larger household sizes and increased pressure on limited resources.

Slum households are also more exposed to poor environmental and health outcomes. Over half rely on harmful cooking fuels, and 68.4 percent of households in slum areas use uncovered waste receptacles, compared to 49.5 percent in non-slum areas. Household mortality in slums is also elevated, with 42 deaths per 10,000 population, compared to 31 in non-slum areas. These patterns point to chronic disadvantage that deepens over time and across generations.

Chairing the event, Dr. Evans Aggrey-Darko, Head of the Civil Service, echoed the call to act on the evidence. *"If we ignore this, we risk locking another generation into poverty. But if we respond with urgency and coordination, we can shift the direction."* he said.

Prof. Stephen Owusu Kwankye, the main discussant, stressed that the report not only highlights slum conditions but also dispels the notion that slums exist only in certain regions, given the definition based on access to basic services.

The report aligns with Ghana's commitment to Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 11 on inclusive and sustainable cities. GSS encourages all stakeholders, from Ministries to MMDAs and development partners to use the findings to guide planning and investment decisions. The full report is available on the GSS website.

The launch event convened representatives from government agencies, Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies, civil society organisations, academic institutions, development partners, and the media. Participants engaged with the findings and explored how the evidence could inform spatial planning, infrastructure investment, service delivery, and policy coordination at national and sub-national levels.

The full version of the *Slum and Informal Settlements Thematic Report, infographics and factsheet* can be downloaded from www.statsghana.gov.gh.

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About the Ghana Statistical Service

The Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) provides comprehensive, reliable, quality, relevant, accurate and timely statistical information to guide national development as stipulated in Section 3 of the Statistical Service Act, 2019 (Act 1003). The organisation's vision is to be a trusted provider of official statistics for good governance and its mission being the efficient collection, production, management, and dissemination of quality official statistics based on international standards, using competent and motivated staff for evidence-based decision-making, in support of national development.

The Statistical Service produces monthly and quarterly data on important economic indicators such as inflation, Consumer Price Index, Producer Price Index, and Gross Domestic Product. GSS also regularly generates periodic population, housing, demographic and economic data at the locality, district, and national levels from routine surveys and censuses. The statistics generated by GSS can be utilised by a wide cross-section of users including public sector, businesses, academia, civil society organisations and development partners. For more information visit www.statsghana.gov.gh.