Fertility and Household Economic Outcomes among Poor Urban Households in Nairobi informal Settlements, Kenya - *Blessing Mberu, James Ciera, Patricia Elungata & Alex Ezeh.*

Although fertility has started to decline in most parts of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), partly due to the success of family planning interventions, the estimated level of fertility is still high - about 6 children per woman. Niger, for example has total fertility rate (TFR) of 8 children per woman while medium fertility countries like Kenya are around 4.6 children per woman (Population Reference Bureau, 2007). The relationships between fertility levels and household economic welfare have long been a population theme in the demographic and development literature, as recently emphasized by the Millennium Development Goals (Melesse, 2006; UNDP, 2003; Potts & Fotso, 2007). More recent investigations in developing countries have indicated that rapid childbearing inhibits economic prosperity and that these effects tend to persist over the life course (Bloom and Canning, 2007; Aassve et al., 2005).

So far, the household context, time dynamics and short- and long-term consequences of high fertility are poorly understood in sub-Saharan Africa. Besides, analysis of the linkage between fertility and poverty is complicated by the fact that routinely-available demographic data are often cross-sectional and do not include sufficiently detailed economic measures of welfare.

Building on the premise that household economic status is not static but changes as a result of seasonality, climate variability, household-level shocks, lifecycle changes and public policies, the longitudinal data of 6,635 households from the Nairobi Urban Health and Demographic Surveillance System (NUHDSS) and a multidimensional poverty index computed from a battery of indicators (ownership of household assets, expenditure on consumables, monetary income, and housing characteristics), weighted using the Principal Component Analysis (PCA). We specifically address the effects of birth of additional children between 2006 and 2009 on the dynamics of household poverty, especially the patterns of transition into and out of poverty over the period.

Our preliminary analysis finds a worsening household poverty trend over the study period, with more households falling into than moving out of poverty over the study period. We

find that fertility event in a household over the study period as a significant predictor of household poverty dynamics. Relative to households with no births, households that experienced at least a birth over the period are more likely to remain in chronic poverty and more likely to fall into poverty by the end of 2009, if they were non-poor at the beginning of observation in 2006. Our preliminary conclusions point to how a birth can increase household vulnerability to chronic poverty, lessen their prospects of moving out of poverty and underscore the need for anti-poverty interventions around fertility reduction and smaller family size norms among the urban poor.