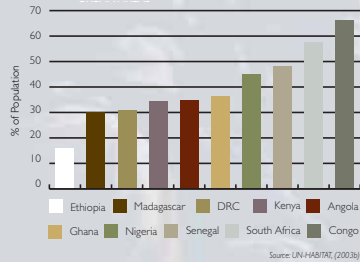


# HEALTH ASPECTS OF URBANIZATION IN AFRICA

## URBAN GROWTH IN AFRICA

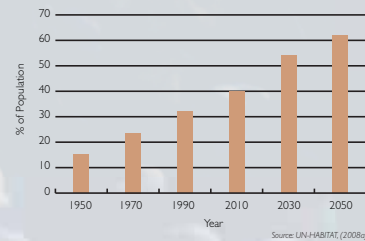
While more than 70% of the populations of Europe and North America already live in cities, in 2003 it was estimated that only 39% of the African population lived in cities (UN 2004). Africa is the least urbanized region of the world, and still at a relatively early stage of its transition from a rural to urban economy. Nevertheless, the potential for urbanization in Africa is significant (UN-HABITAT 2008). The African urbanization rate is currently higher than in any other part of the planet. By 2030 for example, it is estimated that the urban population will account for 54% of the continent's people (see Figure 1). The scale and speed of Africa's transition from rural to urban is unprecedented in the history of the world. The size of the population of Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire for example has increased twenty-fold since 1950 (UN-HABITAT 2008).

**Figure 1. PERCENTAGE OF AFRICAN POPULATION LIVING IN CITIES**



The challenge of responding to rapid and large-scale urbanization in Africa is further compounded by its occurrence in a context of declining average economic performance, poor planning and poor governance. Thus the majority of new arrivals in African cities find themselves living in conditions of poverty, in sprawling slums and informal settlements or areas of inner city degradation (Vlahov) (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2. PERCENTAGE OF AFRICAN POPULATION LIVING IN SLUMS**



The managers of African cities face an onerous and costly task in facilitating the development and creating the environmental conditions needed to support the health of large urban populations.

