



UN-HABITAT

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Habitat Debate

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30+ dreams and reality

Vancouver 2006
Special Issue

A Message from the Executive Director

The United Nations convened the Habitat I conference in Vancouver in 1976 as governments began to recognise the consequences of rapid urbanisation, especially in the developing world. That pioneering conference sprung from warnings about urbanisation at the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm convened to deal with the perceived threat to the environment by human activity.

At the time of the first Habitat conference in Vancouver in 1976, urbanization and its impacts were barely on the radar screen of a United Nations created just three decades earlier when two-thirds of humanity was still rural. But the world was starting to witness the greatest and fastest migration into cities and towns in history. In 1976, one-third of the world's people lived in cities. Just 30 years later, this rose to one-half and will continue to grow to two-thirds, or 6 billion people, by 2050. Cities are now home to half of humankind.

They are the hubs of much national production and consumption – economic and social processes that generate wealth and opportunity. But they also create disease, crime, pollution, poverty and social unrest. In many cities, especially in developing countries, slum dwellers number more than 50 per cent of the population.

Large cities also have a huge impact on the environment. This is more easily visible in satellite photographs from space today than it was 30 years ago. From space, we can now see the impacts of pollution, overcrowding and slums, improper waste disposal, and the depletion of resources. On the ground, we can hear the noise, smell the pollution, and suffer the consequences of poor water and sanitation. There are few big cities today that do not have to cope with the associated social problems of poor employment prospects, and poverty.

In 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro was called as a follow-up to the Stockholm Conference. It highlighted human settlements issues as important for sustainable development. Indeed, the Rio Plan of Action adopted by world leaders, known as Agenda 21, carried an entire chapter on human settlements. And in nearly half the remaining chapters, urban problems were raised.



Much has been done since to place sustainable human settlements and the plight of the urban poor on the international agenda. The 64 recommendations adopted in Vancouver were reconfirmed by world leaders in the Habitat Agenda – the global plan of action for adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development in an urbanising world – at the Habitat II Conference in Istanbul, in 1996.

But we need to do more. With 1 billion people living in slums, and thousands joining them every day, we are indeed sitting on a social time bomb that is ticking away quietly in many overcrowded, poverty-stricken corners of a geopolitical chessboard already fraught with new problems in the wake of the Cold War.

The key figures from the agency's latest research give a measure of the urban crisis: *Asia accounts for nearly 60 percent of the world's slum population with a total of 581 million slum dwellers in 2005. Sub-Saharan Africa had 199 million slum dwellers constituting some 20 percent of the world's total. Latin America had 134 million making up 14 percent of the total. At the global level, 30 per cent of all urban dwellers lived in slums in 2005, a proportion that has not changed significantly since 1990.*

How we manage this situation is arguably the biggest problem confronting humanity in the 21st century. As more and more governments recognise this, the United Nations needs to galvanise its strength as never before in the quest for sustainable urbanisation.

Over the course of the next 30 years, people living in cities around the world

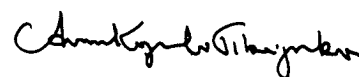
will largely outnumber those living in rural areas. If current trends continue, extreme urban poverty is also set to double in that period to 2 billion people. It must be recognised that urbanization is an integral part of the structural changes that accompany economic development. Sustainable development is contingent upon understanding the dynamics of urbanization. The future of sustainable pro-poor development will depend on how well we manage cities in the developing world.

The world thus urgently needs actions leading to innovative urban economic development, better urban governance, safer and cleaner cities – and cities without slums in which all have access to shelter, water, sanitation and other basic needs. This means that cities must understand the nature of the challenges they face and the global trends that impact on them.

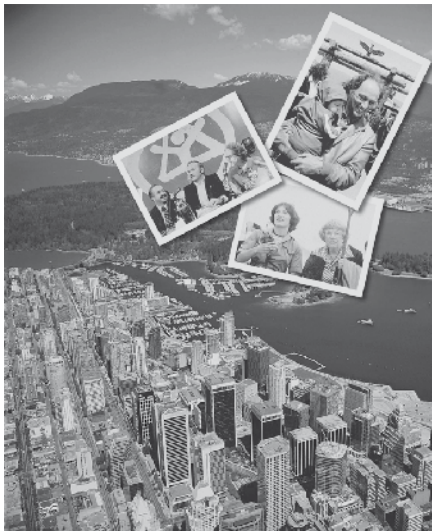
Dr. Üner Kirdar, who served as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General at HABITAT II, and as Secretary of the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in Vancouver in 1976, helped us chart the way forward here when he said:

“We must now learn to live with a global perspective. Humanity is a part of the complex planetary system and global issues must be the concern of all people and nations. The world community has the ability, the means and the chance to transform the many threats of today into opportunities for human progress tomorrow. But it needs new vision, long-term perspectives and bold leadership.”

Canada and the city of Vancouver have played a pioneering role here for which we will forever be grateful. As our birthplace, Vancouver is therefore a most appropriate choice for Third Session of the World Urban Forum to generate new ideas and actions in support of our common quest for more just, inclusive and environmentally sound cities.



Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka
Executive Director



Cover Photo

Thirty years ago, the great city of Vancouver was very much in the world headlines when the then Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, and his wife, Margaret, seen here with the renowned anthropologist, Margaret Meade, led a “walk for water” with more than 10,000 British Columbians as the United Nations met to discuss urbanisation in the nearby Queen Elizabeth Conference Centre which was converted to resemble the UN General Assembly. It was that historic meeting in Vancouver in 1976 which led to the birth of UN-HABITAT. Photos: Courtesy of the government of Canada, and Professor H. Peter Oberlander.

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Living history – a personal look at the conferences and resolutions that led to the creation of UN-HABITAT

H. PETER OBERLANDER, PROFESSOR EMERITUS, COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL PLANNING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA, IS THE SENIOR ADVISOR TO CANADA'S COMMISSIONER GENERAL FOR THE THIRD SESSION OF THE WORLD URBAN FORUM IN VANCOUVER. HE PLAYED A PIVOTAL ROLE IN HELPING ORGANIZE THE FIRST HABITAT CONFERENCE IN VANCOUVER IN 1976. OTHER LEADERS OF URBAN MOVEMENT WITH HIM IN VANCOUVER 30 YEARS AGO INCLUDED BARBARA WARD, MARGARET MEAD, MOTHER TERESA, AND PIERRE ELLIOTT TRUDEAU, CANADA'S THEN PRIME MINISTER AND HIS WIFE, MARGARET, WHO LED A "WALK FOR WATER" OF MORE THAN 10,000 BRITISH COLUMBIANS IN SUPPORT OF CLEAN DRINKING WATER FOR THE WORLD'S URBAN POOR. IN THIS ARTICLE, HE RECALLS SOME HISTORIC MOMENTS IN THE HISTORY OF UN-HABITAT.

It all started as a consequence of the World War II destruction of towns and cities across Europe and Asia. The first effective UN-led shelter programme was the distribution of blankets to those huddling in the ruins trying to survive the bleakest of winters.

It was through the imagination and initiative of Yugoslavia's Ernest Weissmann and Ben Reiner, two young UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) officials, that "blankets" became the first UN shelter programme. By the early 1950's Mr. Weissman, transferred to UN Headquarters in New York, started the UN's first housing programme at the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and ultimately became the founding Director of the UN Centre for Housing, Building and Planning (UN-HABITAT's immediate antecedent.)

I worked for Enzi, as Weissman was known, during summers in the late 1950's at UN Headquarters, and that is how my involvement began.

During the late 1960s, environmental degradation threatened the destruction of flora and fauna becoming an urgent international cause. The UN took the lead in convening its first major global Conference on the Human Environment under the leadership of Canada's Maurice Strong in Stockholm in 1972. Today a senior advisor to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Mr. Strong served as the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment from November 1970 to December 1972, and subsequently became the first Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Prior to Stockholm 1972, the UN General Assembly had expressed concern at the "deplorable world housing situation," and as early as 1969. It made human settlements a priority for the UN's 25th anni-

versary through the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and its Center for Housing, Building and Planning (CHBP). Thus, the UN was primed to accept when Canada extended the invitation to bring the UN to Vancouver in 1976.

By that year, a conceptual shift had occurred from focusing on global environmental degradation to an emphasis on causes, largely urbanization and human settlements impact.

Stockholm marked a defining moment for Canada in the assertion of its national perspectives on the international agenda.

Vancouver 1976 comprised two parallel meetings: the official conference of UN Member States, for which Vancouver's Queen Elizabeth Theatre was converted to resemble the UN General Assembly, and the non-governmental organization (NGO) Habitat Forum, which met in creatively reconstructed naval air-base hangars on Jericho Beach. Both meetings debated the cause and consequences of urbanization that was manifesting globally through squatter settlements, slums, lack of access to land, water, sanitation, infrastructure, or jobs.

Barbara Ward, the author and thinker who popularised the term, *Spaceship Earth*, and the renowned anthropologist, Margaret Mead, who died just two years later, Mr. Strong, and Prime Minister Trudeau clearly articulated urbanization's increasing threat to the natural environment. The formal and informal HABITAT debates in 1976 underscored that *no-one can solve human settlement problems alone*; that it required strong and continuing partnerships between all orders of government, all components of NGOs (especially local authorities), and the energetic commitment of the private sector, together with full engagement of all relevant UN agencies.

Canada therefore proposed the creation of the UN Commission on Human Settlements (CHS) and its Center for Human Settlements (UNCHS) to group all relevant human settlements programmes under one agency. Secondly, it helped the General Assembly bridge the time lag between the Conference conclusion and implementation of recommendations by setting up the University of British Columbia Center for Human Settlements (UBC-CHS). The Center became a substantive legacy and focal point for research and follow-up to HABITAT '76. It also helped set up the "Vision Habitat" audio visual library with its films from around the world depicting the state of human settlements at the time.

After the 1972 Stockholm conference, UNEP was established in Nairobi at Kenya's initiative. Consequently, to ensure constructive cooperation and coordination between human settlements and the natural environment within the UN, the General Assembly recommended close ties between UNCHS and UNEP, and UNCHS was also moved to Nairobi.

Twenty years after 1976, the UN Conference on Human Settlements (HABITAT II) from 3 – 14 June 1996, the so-called City Summit, convened in Istanbul. The Secretary-General of HABITAT II and UNCHS Executive Director, Wally N'Dow of Gambia, told delegates: "Urbanisation is bringing about one of the most significant transformations of the human habitat in history".

The increasing engagement of local authorities as relevant and representative participants in the conference agenda and its deliberations became an Istanbul achievement. Through persistent urging by NGO's, such as the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, locally elected representatives became effective participants.

After Istanbul, Darshan Johal of Canada, was appointed as Assistant Secretary-General and Acting Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) where he served until July 1998, bridging to the appointment of the current Executive Director.

The Istanbul conference, and the General Assembly review meeting in New York five years later, Istanbul+5, substantially strengthened the mandate, status, role and functions of UNCHS. In 2002, based on a General Assembly resolution, the status of UNCHS was elevated to a programme, now called the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT). It serves as the focal point and coordinating body for human settlements activities within the UN system under the leadership of Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka as UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director. Consequently, UN HABITAT's Governing Council met biennially and created the opportunity for a World Urban Forum (WUF) to be convened in the intervening years. The forum was expected to promote a merger of the Urban Environment Forum

and the International Forum on Urban Poverty into a new World Urban Forum, with a view to strengthening the coordination of international NGO, local authority, private sector and civil society support for the implementation of the HABITAT Agenda.

At the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg in September 2002, Canada's Prime Minister, Jean Chretien, offered to convene the third session of the World Urban Forum (WUF3) in Vancouver to celebrate the agency's 30th birthday.

With Canada's invitation in hand, it became clear to the UN General Assembly that the world did not want a new philosophical or political debate, but rather a summit of actions. The WUF 3 theme, *Our Future: Sustainable Cities - Turning Ideas into Action* draws on interdependence, recognizing natural and built environment as interactive and interdependent; a broadening of the term governance to include the participation of NGOs, local authorities, and civil society; and on

the institutional changes that have encouraged multilateral cooperation.

The forum, committed to an inclusive, open-ended and fully participatory agenda, will enable the global community to review the successes and failures of human settlements over the last thirty years. A fully transparent process of networking and dialogue sessions, together with themed round-tables was planned to provide for frank discussions and exchanges of relevant experience.

A great deal of knowledge and experience in improving human settlements has accumulated in public and private agencies, as well as the archives of the private sector and all orders of government. That knowledge and experience can be shared so that it may become replicable and lead to the WUF3 theme: IDEAS INTO ACTION.

Professor Oberlander's reflections are based on a full-scale review paper: Sustainable urbanisation – Canada/UN-HABITAT 1972-2006 to be presented at the third session of the World Urban Forum.



Historic Habitat figures, left to right, Enrique Penalosa, Michael Hayward, Darshan Johal, Peter Oberlander and Arcot Ramachandran, 1978. Photo © Habtat/Oberlander

Thirty Years of the urban agenda (1976-2006): What has been achieved?

GETTING URBAN ISSUES ONTO THE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA HAS BEEN AN UPHILL STRUGGLE OVER THE LAST 30 YEARS. DURING THIS PERIOD, THE WORLD HAS SEEN A DRAMATIC EVOLUTION IN THE WAY GOVERNMENTS, THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND CITIZENS THEMSELVES VIEW CITIES AND TOWNS, WRITE **EDUARDO LÓPEZ MORENO**, CHIEF OF UN-HABITAT'S GLOBAL URBAN OBSERVATORY, AND **RASNA WARAH** A JOURNALIST AND WRITER ON URBAN AFFAIRS WHO EDITED UN-HABITAT'S *STATE OF THE WORLD'S CITIES REPORT*.

Some vilify cities as generators of waste and pollution, or as the main threats to the natural environment. Others sing their praise as centres of economic activity, culture and innovation. These perceptions have had a major influence on the configuration and articulation of the urban agenda – an agenda shaped by different political and cultural orientations, ideological positions and technological capacities.

At the beginning of this 30-year saga when the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat I) was held in Vancouver in 1976, the urban agenda was shaped by those who believed that only a strong central government was capable of dealing with the myriad of urban problems that were emerging at that time. They argued that the problem of inequality in access to resources could only be solved by a strong, committed central government with the power to redistribute resources and redress problems of inequity, particularly between urban and rural areas. Urban issues were strongly linked to the social and economic development of countries.

The Declaration of the first Habitat Conference in Vancouver in 1976 attributed full responsibility to governments to prepare spatial strategy plans and adopt human settlements policies focusing on the shelter needs of vulnerable populations. Leadership in these areas was given to government-controlled institutions to plan and execute settlement programmes for national, regional and local development.

A decade later, there was a dramatic shift in government attitudes on providing services and housing to the urban poor. Centralised interventions were perceived to be bureaucratic planning methods that used top-down approaches. With this line of thought, public institutions were considered as inefficient structures. The idea of a "big government" started to lose favour. The new paradigm that emerged drastically shifted the role of governments from "provider" to "facilitator". A new en-

abling approach, articulated in the 1988 Global Strategy for Shelter to the year 2000, decreed that the role of central governments should concentrate in removing production and legislative bottlenecks, including the obstacles faced by inhabitants to get access to land, finance and basic services. In the late 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, new government initiatives focused on sectoral interventions, best exemplified by the popular "sites-and-services" schemes that aimed to provide low-cost housing to the poor, mainly through donor-funded projects.

Development aid concentrated on housing related issues such as land and infrastructure management, building materials and technology and the mobilization of finance for the urban poor. In these years the private sector emerged as a new actor and the concept of "sustainable development" started to receive worldwide attention.

The "green" agenda developed in the 1970s by environmentalists who blamed uncontrolled urbanisation and promoted an 'ideal' rural life was revisited through a new approach to sustainable development. It established a connection between people, human settlements and sustainable development, identifying key technical interventions in areas such as physical planning, water and sanitation management policies, energy and urban transport. Human activity was blamed for most of the environmental hazards facing the world and the emphasis was on curbing this activity to safeguard the environment for present and future generations.

The interest in sustainable development was further strengthened in the late 1980s by the 1987 Brundtland Commission Report which stated that sustainable development could not be achieved without considering the needs of the world's poor. The report acknowledged that "poverty is a major cause and effect of global environmental problems". This idea was widely shared by the international community, which believed that the poor, due to their lack of resources and capital, caused de-

forestation, water and air pollution and a whole range of environmentally-unfriendly practices.

The Brundtland Commission advocated economic growth in developing countries to improve the quality of life for the poor, a strategy in line with the thinking of the day: sustainable development was dependent on the ability of national economies to accelerate economic growth in order to generate the surplus needed to accommodate the basic needs of the poor. These views, however, were highly contested in the early 1990s, when a parallel line of thought emerged. Numerous studies – prompted by the UN Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 – clearly showed that most environmental damage was being caused not by poor people or poor countries, but by the rich industrialized countries.

And economic growth, the mantra of the international community, was not having the desired effect of both reducing poverty or saving the environment. If anything, the 1980s show the sharpest rise in urban poverty levels in the developing world, which was reeling from the impact of an economic model known as Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs).

This model was supposed to be the macroeconomic solution to the debt crisis of the 1970s and was applied in most of developing countries during the 1980s and 1990s.

Today, it is widely accepted that structural-adjustment programmes have led to sharp decreases in social expenditure, and even in those countries where financial performance improved, the social and economic impact was unsatisfactory for most of the population. This was particularly true in urban areas, mainly because indebted governments were forced to adopt regressive social policies that increased housing and basic services deficits.

Under SAPs, the urban agenda was characterized by three interrelated features: the role of governments was restricted to the efficient functioning of

commercial housing markets; the private sector played a prominent role in the development process; and the urban poor were basically treated as a target population or as recipients of aid.

Meanwhile, the largely agrarian world of the 1970s was rapidly urbanising. The world was forced to confront a rapidly urbanising world during the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in 1996, when 45 percent of the world's population already lived in urban areas. Yet, this dramatic transformation of the world was not bringing the benefits that a well-planned and managed concentration of large number of people was supposed to bring. Most local governments in the developing world did not play a significant role on the world stage and were clamouring for more representation at the United Nations and other inter-governmental bodies. And many were forced to take affirmative and constructive action in cities to cope with large and growing service delivery backlogs, worsening shelter conditions, poor infrastructure and increased vulnerability to environmental health problems and natural disasters, and deepening intra-city inequalities.

The 1996 Habitat II Conference placed the urban agenda on top of the world's development agenda by adopting the *Habitat Agenda* – a blueprint for policy and actions in the years to come. The focus of the Habitat Agenda was on the role of local governments, civil society and the private sector, particularly with regards to the provision of basic services and shelter, decentralization policies and women's empowerment. Sustainable development was being debated again, but this time within the context of sustainable human settlements development. This encompassed both the economic and social dimensions of sustainable development.

Despite considerable efforts and results, implementation of the Habitat Agenda today is rather discouraging. Only a few countries have seriously set up policies and actions as proposed by the Habitat Agenda. Even fewer have monitored and reviewed their achievements in an effort to draw instructive solutions for improvement. Yet, the Habitat Agenda is a visionary document that created awareness of urban issues and successfully raised the profile of the cities. In this sense, it paved the way for the inclusion, in the Millennium Declaration, of a specific urban target, calling for *Cities without Slums*. When the development goals contained in

the Millennium Declaration were given clear and time-bounded targets in 2002, the slum target was incorporated into the international development agenda. This was an important recognition that sustainable development is not possible in an environment of increasing urban inequalities. A clear outcome of the Millennium Development Goals is the realization that slums are not just anomalies of an urban landscape; rather, in many countries, slums house large proportions of the urban population, and therefore, cannot be wished away or ignored. Millennium Development Goal 7, Target 11 on improving the lives of slum dwellers by 2020 is a major developmental challenge that requires long-term political commitment, important reforms, well-coordinated human resources and a serious mobilisation of funds to upgrade them today and prevent them tomorrow.

Now, three decades after the urban agenda was discussed for the first time as a development issue at the UN Conference in Vancouver (1976), and more than 20 years after the United Nations used the phrase *sustainable development* for the first time (1983), the international community will meet again in Vancouver in 2006 to discuss the sustainable city.

Today, sustainability issues are radically different not only between developed and developing countries, but also among developing nations. It is not only a matter of approaches but also of cultural awareness, technical capacities and financial resources. In this sense sustainability is strongly linked to different levels of development. No country or city in the world can claim to have achieved a certain level of sustain-

able development if one-third or half of its urban population lives in poverty. How sustainable is a slum or a poor informal settlement? How sustainable is a city where the bulk of the population is deprived of an adequate shelter with basic services and tenure security? Any policy pertaining to the achievement of sustainable development has to start with agreements on all sides – rich and poor (countries and people); socially and politically included and excluded populations – of the necessity for change and a clear recognition of an unsustainable status quo. The definition of sustainable development has profound political connotations that should be considered alongside the technical solutions.

In these 30 years the perception of the role of the city has profoundly changed. Less vilified as a threat to the environment, cities are now recognized as engines of economic growth and centres of technological and cultural creativity and human development. Some have even argued that cities provide the economies of scale required to make sustainable development possible. A decade ago, the Habitat Agenda stated that "urban settlements, properly planned and managed, hold the promise for human development and the protection of the world's natural resources through their ability to support large number of people while limiting their impact on the natural environment". The World Urban Forum in Vancouver is a great opportunity to assess why this promise has not been kept in most cities of the developing world.

The 10 largest cities in the World

1975	Millions	2005	Millions
Tokyo, Japan	26.6	Tokyo, Japan	35.3
New York-Newark, USA	15.9	Mexico City, Mexico	19.0
Shanghai, China	11.4	New York-Newark, USA	18.5
Mexico City, Mexico	10.7	Mumbai, India	18.3
Osaka-Kobe, Japan	9.8	Sao Paulo, Brazil	18.3
Sao Paulo, Brazil	9.6	Delhi, India	15.3
Buenos Aires, Argentina	9.1	Calcutta, India	14.3
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, USA	8.9	Buenos Aires, Argentina	13.3
Paris, France	8.6	Jakarta, Indonesia	13.2
Beijing, China	8.5	Shanghai, China	12.7

Source: United Nations, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2003 revision*.

THE SIX SPECIAL DIALOGUE SESSIONS AT THE THIRD SESSION OF THE WORLD URBAN FORUM IN VANCOUVER IN 2006 WERE CAREFULLY CHOSEN TO HIGHLIGHT THE MOST IMPORTANT HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROBLEMS IN THE WORLD TODAY. HERE, UN-HABITAT'S LEADING EXPERTS IN THEIR FIELDS GIVE THEIR INSIGHTS.

Dialogue 1 – Achieving the Millennium Development Goals: Slum upgrading and affordable housing.

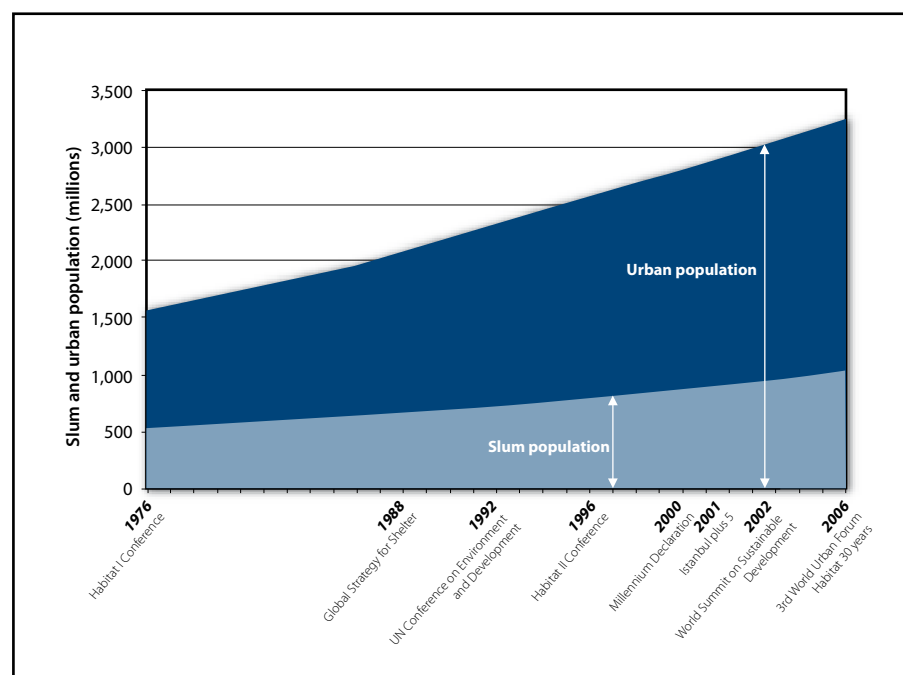
– *Inhuman settlements - the plight of the urban poor 30 years after the 1976 Vancouver conference.*

The Vancouver Action Plan made 64 recommendations, the majority of which are still valid. The recommendations projected hope for a brighter future – *the improvement of quality of life in human resources must receive higher priority in the allocation of ...resources, which ought to be carefully distributed between the various components of human settlements.* (The Vancouver Plan of Action, Recommendation A6).

Yet how many among those who drafted this Action Plan would have forecast the current situation of human settlements? How many back then could have anticipated that instead of expected progress in eradicating homelessness, the world's urban populations would today be far worse off, with almost one third of them living in inhuman settlements. Indeed, about one billion people now eke out a living in slums, in squalid conditions, far from the "improved quality of life" so vaunted in Vancouver 30 years ago.

Their health is usually at risk. Although they live in cities where piped, potable water generally flows, they rarely have easy access to clean water. Mostly they are forced to use unsafe water – the cause of so many water-borne diseases and frequent epidemic outbreaks of cholera that annually claim millions of lives especially among children, women and elderly people. When potable water is available to them, they have to pay several times the price paid by those better off in town who benefit from piped municipal water. And their children, generally the girls, have to queue for hours every day to get it, sacrificing their education.

Slum population and urban population growth in the World (1976-2006)



Source: UN-HABITAT/ United Nations, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2003 revision.*

Because of the lack of sanitation, slum dwellers resort to "flying" toilets to preserve their dignity (and their safety at night). These are plastic bags used by people who toss them into the streets creating constant health threats.

But at least it reduces the risk of attack or rape should women dare to venture from their shacks after dark to relieve themselves. The author, Robert Neuwirth (*see page 6*) in his book, *Shadow Cities*, says that in the slums, "night is feeding time for thugs". It is reported that in the slums of some Southern African countries, more than 50% of women have been raped.

Because the urban poor do not have easy access to land, they are forced to settle in hazardous areas where no one else would dare set up home – on dangerously inclined hillsides prone to floods or landslides, areas too close to railway lines or near industrial yards where pollution levels are often a threat to human life.

In 2000, after heavy rains in Manila, hundreds of poor people died when the huge garbage dump where they lived, collapsed burying many of them alive. Frequently slums are ravaged by fires. In Cape Town, in February 2006, nearly 300 residents of a shanty town called Mandela Park adjoining Hout Bay, one of the city's wealthiest neighbourhoods were rendered homeless in a matter of hours overnight when a blaze caused by a fallen candle ripped through their shacks. In the poverty stricken Romanian town of Copsa Mica, direct impacts on human health caused by pollution from two industrial plants include widespread lung disease, impotence, a life expectancy six years below the 2001 national average of 71, the highest infant mortality rate in Europe, lead poisoning, reduced lung function, and neurobehavioral problems. (Eric Udelhofen, *The People and Pollution of Copsa Mica, Romania*, 2005).

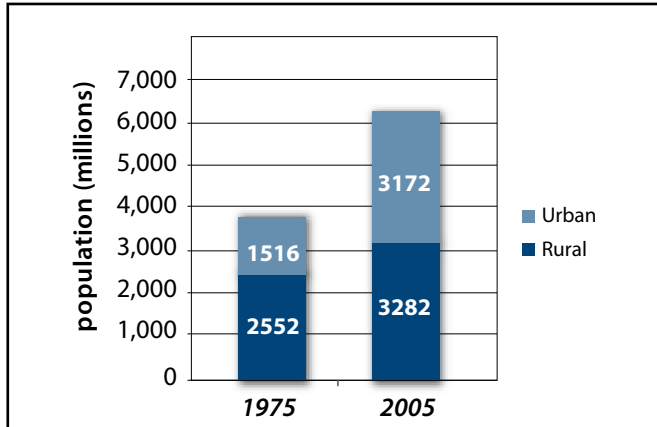
Such examples abound worldwide in urban slums and ghettos where people are deprived of water, sanitation, power, and health services.

Indeed, slum dwellers live under the permanent threat of evictions as they remain often unwanted guests, denied their right to full citizenship. The police supposed to protect them are absent at night but come at dawn to evict them. Brutally evicted, they are forced to find a still more squalid, dangerous area to settle.

Today, as we meet in Vancouver, millions are under threat of being evicted and thousands are actually being evicted in all continents.

Will Vancouver 2006 translate the dream of 1976 into action? Will Vancouver 2006 galvanize us to meet the MDG slum target? Will Vancouver 2006 send the world the message that no Millennium Development Goal will be attained if it is not met in the cities, in the slums? Will that one third of urban humanity be given the right to live in really "human" settlements? – *Farouk Tebbal, Chief of UN-HABITAT's Shelter Branch, and coordinator of the agency's Global Campaign for Secure Tenure.*

The World population urban/rural



Source: United Nations, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2003 revision*.

Dialogue 2 – Public engagement: the inclusive approach

– *Sustainability is about people*

That public engagement is vital for sustainable urban development is no longer an issue of contention. The Habitat Agenda is replete with emphatic references to the critical necessity of involving communities and other key stakeholders in achieving the goals of adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development.

Thus the notion of inclusiveness and its linkage with public engagement has gone beyond mere political rhetoric to underscore recognition of the complex diversities that exist in societies. It directs public engagement to ensure that space and capacities are provided to all social groups so that they can determine their collective destiny and harnessing available opportunities.

Recent experience in both developed and developing countries has revealed that not all participatory systems can guarantee unfettered engagement and contribute to sustainability. It has become evident that sustainable development is jeopardized when structures of engagement do not provide mechanisms that eliminate barriers which deny effective and full involvement of every member of society.

The inclusive approach to public engagement essentially brings to the fore the plight of vulnerable groups and those alienated when conventional methods of participation such as the use of market mechanisms, targeted community development interventions, or efficiency improvement and demand management are deployed in isolation.

The reason public engagement was again given prominence at the third session of the World Urban Forum is due to the very spirit of this global meeting – *turning ideas into action*.

In Vancouver, participants were expected to further reflect and exchange knowledge and experience on the policy and operational implications of public engagement through the inclusive approach. They were expected to grapple with the paradox of exuberant acknowledgements, commitments, and even initiatives in fostering engagement around the world. This is against a background of the proliferation of slums and squatter settlements, the recalcitrance of the parallel economy, a growing urban crime wave – all symptomatic of exclusion and alienation.

While the merits and virtues of public engagement and inclusion need no over-emphasis it will be also worthwhile to highlight the challenges of achieving them within the context of modern

urbanisation, both in societies of the North and the South. Such challenges include high degree of diversity, changing modes of citizen participation, and increasing levels of urban poverty which place a premium on preoccupation with survival, local authorities increasingly assuming a 'corporate' role, and the importance of determining the lowest common denominator in terms of shared norms, values and identity.

There are emerging initiatives that can enhance public engagement and foster increased inclusiveness. These include decentralization and the strengthening of local authorities, legal instruments and social pacts, and pro-poor policy interventions, as well as innovative tools for participatory practices.

Perhaps the central proposition of the reflections on public engagement in Vancouver in 2006 is that sustainability is about people and how they are positioned to contribute to the process of urban development and harness its benefits. – *Mohamed Halfani, Chief of UN-HABITAT's Urban Governance Section, and coordinator the Global Campaign on Urban Governance.*

Dialogue 3 – Municipal finance: innovation and collaboration

– *Facing a paradox*

Municipalities around the world are facing a paradox: the need for a strong fiscal base to create and maintain infrastructure and services; and the pressure of lowering taxes to attract foreign and domestic investment.

Cities with small populations and limited economic activities have a constrained tax base to improve and maintain the mix, quality and sustainability of infrastructure and social services. Cities with large low income and unemployed populations find it difficult to balance their budget in the face of growing expenditure and a desire to avoid increasing tax rates and risk their competitiveness.

The question for most cities in developing countries is even more challenging. Their tax bases are too small to even meet their operating expenses.

While most cities depend largely on incomes derived from property taxation and service charges, the central government controls the more lucrative revenue sources such as income taxes, sales taxes and business taxes. They therefore have no choice but to depend on generally inadequate and unpredictable central government allocations.

These revenue-side problems together with the serious problem of mismanagement of urban finances, greatly affect the ability of urban authorities in developing countries to sustain the provision of municipal services to their constituents. This scenario is characterised by significant challenges in terms of human resource development and organizational strengthening.

There are, however, on-going reforms and innovations that allow municipalities to better finance their increasing expenditure and manage their financial system in a more transparent and efficient manner. These approaches include, contracting out all or part of individual services, accessing domestic capital markets, forming private-public partnerships and franchises, and making individual service units in municipalities compete on a commercial basis. In many cases, the scope of privatisation of services has focused on public transport, water and solid waste disposal.

In addition to the formal private-sector firms, civil society actors such as NGOs and community-based organizations also have

become increasingly involved in the planning, budgeting, and the provision of basic infrastructure and services.

They aimed to provide a platform for sharing experiences on innovative ways and partnerships in the field of municipal finance with the discussions focussing on ways of enhancing municipal revenue and access to resources, innovative approaches to financing infrastructure and the provision of urban services, as well as reform in institutional and regulatory frameworks to enhance municipal finance. – *Raf Tuts, Chief of UN-HABITAT's Training and Capacity Building Branch.*

Dialogue 4 – Urban disasters, safety and security

– *Urban Safety and Security; taking responsibility for prevention*

Disasters and crime represent an enormous risk factor for investment and wealth creation in cities and a major hindrance to economically vibrant, socially equitable and environmentally sustainable urban development.

In the 1990s, some 800,000 people died as a result of natural disasters, and many more people have been affected, seeing their lives upturned, socially and economically. In 2003 alone, approximately 700 natural disasters were counted, killing an estimated 75,000 people.

Although the industrialized countries bear higher costs in absolute terms, developing countries bear the highest loss in terms of GDP. The impact of disasters forces them to postpone national development programmes and add to the burden of already weak livelihoods. They worsen already precarious social, economic and environmental conditions, particularly in towns and cities. A vicious circle that may not be broken if the damage is repaired but the causes underlying the devastation are critically overlooked.

On the other hand, crime is a result of failed urbanisation policies leading a sense of exclusion.

Crime, violence and lawlessness absorb considerable scarce internal resources – as much as 14 percent of GDP in Latin America and the Caribbean, for example. It has harms investment, dims the chances of poor people getting out poverty, reduces access to public services and endangers democratic processes. As violence permeates the lives of the urban poor, organized crime thrives, pushing up levels of violence and neighbourhood control. In Brazil, for instance a killer can be hired from among the poor for just 40 dollars. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the cost of human trafficking – one of the ultimate manifestations of deprivation – is today 1,000 times less per person than it was during the days of slavery in the United States

The vulnerability of cities is an even more shocking reality when disaster and crime come together. In New Orleans, after Hurricane Katrina, we were reminded of the precariousness of our urban situation, of the powerful forces of disintegration, and of how much effort has to go to build resilience and coexistence.

How can sustainable solutions be found? We know that despite the fact that natural disasters might not always be predictable, their impact can be mitigated, through sound environmental and physical planning and by preparing communities for such eventualities. Similarly, crime prevention also requires proper planning and strategies. The dialogue was thus aimed at seeking new partnerships between the public and the private sector, and to see how through collective and individual efforts, poverty – and thus crime – can be reduced for the creation of sustainable cities.

Justice systems are making headway in efforts to curb corruption, with the police listening more and collaborating with communities in many countries. At the same time, communities and local governments are looking for longer-term responses that build livable urban spaces, more solidarity and inclusion, more reciprocal responsibility. In 10 years, violent death rates have dropped enormously in many cities of the North, and also in some cities of the south, such as Bogota, Colombia. But many questions remain unanswered: How do we target the causes of crime? How can we fight organized crime better? How can we break the stereotypes that bring violence against women? How do we deal with the frustrations of urban youth poverty?

The key message of this dialogue is that unless targeted and deliberate actions are undertaken to examine and prevent the causes of crime and disaster, and reduce poverty, sustainable urban development will remain in jeopardy. – *Laura Petrella, Acting Coordinator, Safer Cities Programme, UN-HABITAT.*

Dialogue 5 – The shape of cities: urban planning and management

– *Managing cities better*

Sustainability is the new watchword of urban development. Drawing its most recent inspiration from the World Summit on Social Development held in Johannesburg in 2002, many city managers and other stakeholders seek to maximize not only environmental, but also social and economic development. However, there are significant differences of opinion about which are the most important priorities for sustainability. Global environmental change is seen as the overarching threat to sustainability in developed countries and there is a growing demand to limit consumption as means of avoiding ecological overload. In many developing countries, the most immediate concern is with poverty. Reducing consumption is regarded as problem many of them would like to have.

So what should city managers do? In the North, a major cause of over-consumption is inefficiently planned cities. Suburban sprawl, requiring high levels of car ownership, over-extended infrastructure, massive per capita energy consumption and depletion of biodiversity and tree cover are major contributors to global warming. Urban planning approaches that emphasise “compact cities”, with better public transport, fewer motorized



Mrs. Tibaijuka in Barcelona with Mayor Joan Clos during the second session of the World Urban Forum in 2004. Photo ©: UN-HABITAT

trips, more efficient infrastructure provision and protection of the natural environment, offer the possibility of reducing the urban environmental footprint and the potential for catastrophic climate change.

So why is this approach most evident in the North? Why don't cities in developing countries adopt the same agenda? Or do they? One of the key objectives of this dialogue was to assess whether there is agreement on priorities for sustainability. Many countries and city authorities in the South seem to appear to feel that pursuit of poverty reduction actually requires an increase in energy production and consumption, and that problems of environmental pollution and energy efficiency can be addressed at a later date. Why should developing countries pay the cost of decades of pollution emanating from rich countries while they remain poor?

Is the tool of urban planning equally relevant in both developing and developed countries and to dealing with issues of social and economic as well as environmental sustainability? Or are urban planning problems due to the inherent problems with the approach being applied that make it costly to undertake and implement. – *Paul Taylor, Director, UN-HABITAT Liaison Office to the European Union and Belgium.*

Dialogue 6 – Energy: local action, global impact

– Sustainable energy for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

What has climate change, pollution, and renewable energy to do with cities? Everything. In 1950, one-third of the world's people lived in cities. Just 50 years later, this rose to one-half. UN-HABITAT projects that it will continue to grow to two-thirds, or 6 billion people, by 2050. *Cities are now home to half of humankind.* And they are arguably the greatest consumers and users of energy: in short, cities are the major contributors to deteriorating air quality and the emission of greenhouse gases at the origin of climate change.

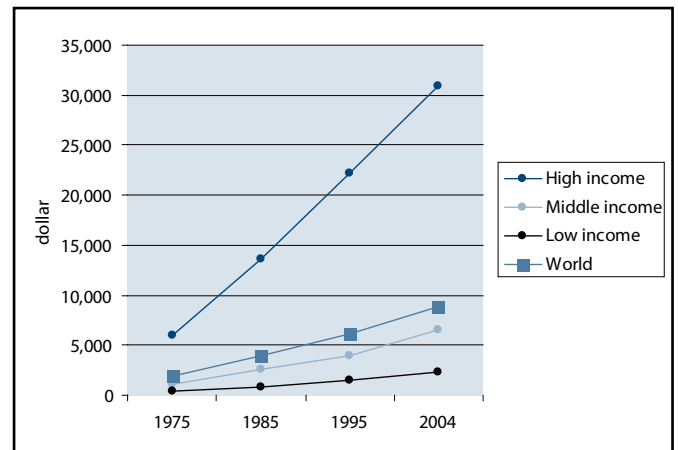
In our rapidly urbanizing world this implies increased use of fossil fuels for all our daily needs including transport, heating, cooling and industry. Indeed, urban activities generate close to 80 percent of all carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gases.

Emissions from vehicles and transport equipment are rising at a rate of 2.5 percent each year, while industry, is responsible for 43 percent of the global CO₂ emissions from fossil fuel combustion. Not to mention the energy consumption of large buildings, or city lighting. Forests in developing countries are being rapidly cut down for timber exports and use as firewood and charcoal for home fires.

Poverty is major component of this equation. Recent surveys in African cities show that fuels such as kerosene and gas are way beyond the reach of the urban poor. Access to affordable, modern energy services are thus a pre-requisite for a sustainable human development and for achieving the MDGs. Currently, one-third of the global population does not have access to power for lighting, cooking, refrigeration, etc. Most of them live in developing countries, mainly in South Asia and in Sub-Saharan Africa. They depend on traditional fuels, such as wood, crop waste, and animal dung for cooking and heating.

Under today's policies and investment trends in energy infrastructure, 1.5 billion people will still lack access to electricity in 2030. Current patterns of energy production, distribution and utilisation are unsustainable. There are also wide disparities in the

GDP per capita by income groups 1975-2004



Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators database.

level of energy consumption within and between developed and developing countries.

Look at the city of Calgary, Canada, for instance. It has made significant energy savings and considerably reduced CO₂ emissions, by replacing conventional streetlights with energy saving streetlights enabling it to cut streetlight energy consumption by half, achieving fuel savings of over 3 million US dollars a year.

City efforts on street lighting, or reducing traffic congestion and improving public transport are just some local authority actions which make a measurable difference to CO₂ emissions.

Supporting and enhancing the utilisation and implementation of renewable energy sources coupled with energy planning and conservation measures, could provide for more than half of our future energy needs without depleting primary energy resources.

Now look at poverty-stricken Cameroon. Sixty-five percent of the energy it consumes comes from wood fuel, which accounts for the loss of an estimated 10,000 hectares of forest annually. This action alone reduces the possibility of storing, through photosynthesis, approximately 50,000 tons of CO₂.

Cities like Calgary and Yaounde, Cameroun, thus have an impact on global climate change.

Yet energy conservation and air quality concerns are not high on many governments' policy agendas, especially in developing countries. This is because of poor information and awareness means that there is less political will and commitment for change. It is also because of financial constraints, a lack of qualified human resources, and specialized research institutions.

Renewable energy currently accounts for about 11 percent of the world's primary energy supply. Appropriate coordination by governments, communities, the private sector and the public at large can help us push this to a 60 percent target. Climate change is both a local and a global problem. It requires action at all levels, including the city level, if it is to be addressed effectively.

– *Sara Candiracci of UN-HABITAT's Energy and Transportation Section, and Vincent Kitio, a Best Practices Officer and renewable energy expert with the agency's Monitoring and Research Division.*

Slums no longer: towards squatter empowerment

CLEARLY, WE KNOW THE DIMENSIONS OF THE GLOBAL SQUATTER PROBLEM. WE HAVE TALKED ABOUT IT FOR THREE DECADES SINCE VANCOUVER 1976. BUT WE HAVE ONLY TALKED TO OURSELVES. HOW ABOUT TALKING TO THE SQUATTERS THEMSELVES, ASKS **ROBERT NEUWIRTH**, THE AUTHOR OF *SHADOW CITIES: A BILLION SQUATTERS, A NEW URBAN WORLD*, JUST PUBLISHED IN PAPERBACK BY ROUTLEDGE.

José Geraldo Moreira is a squatter success story. He came to Rocinha, one of Rio de Janeiro's *favelas* or slums, with nothing. Today, three decades on, this modest favela fruit vendor lives in a three-story townhouse, built of reinforced concrete and brick, with water, electricity, and a view of the ocean. And his community—on the steep incline of Two Brothers Mountain between the wealthy neighborhoods of Gavea and Sao Conrado—is proof that many of the world's squatter communities are slums no longer.

Like most squatter outposts, Rocinha started small. In the 1950s, it was just a scatter of families hiding on the hillside, more an encampment than a community. When Moreira, known simply as Zezinho, arrived in the 1970s, Rocinha was still a crude place. The forest-dwellers had an unwritten rule: no permanent structures of any kind. So, for decades, favela families lived in wood or mud shacks. They hauled water up the steep hill and, if they were lucky, pilfered electricity from far-away poles.

But, as the community grew, residents understood that they had become a fixed part of the city. That was when, like Zezinho, they started to build. Rocinha today has a population of 150,000. There are no mud or wood shacks. Every home has access to water. And the local utility has been installing legal electricity. Rocinha has even become desirable turf for businesses from outside the squatter realm—and several major Brazilian chain stores have opened branches there.

"Anyone who lives in Rocinha doesn't need any other place, because it has everything," says Antonio Ramos, who lives and works in the favela.

Halfway around the world, Elocy Kagwiria Murungi is also a squatter success story. But that's not how she sees herself. She leans toward the flickering kerosene lantern in the cramped and stuffy single-room she shares with her cousin and her son and says, "I act like lice, the way lice act. I burrow in and scratch out an existence."

We are in Kibera, the largest shantytown in Nairobi, the city that hosts the headquarters of UN-HABITAT. More



A favela in Brazil. Photo ©: UN-HABITAT

than half the people in the city—some 1.5 or 2 million souls—live like Elocy: without water, sewers, toilets, or services.

Like Zezinho before her, Elocy came to the city with nothing. She sold paper and pencils on the street. She worked as a waitress in a shantytown eatery. Now she is a teacher in an informal school for street children. Elocy has improved her life and opened new horizons for her young son Collins. Yet this spirited and intelligent woman describes herself as a parasite.

Despite the difficulties, life in Nairobi's shantytowns is energetic and vibrant.

Rocinha and Kibera have similar vitality. So why did Rocinha develop, while Kibera has remained mired in mud? There are two main reasons:

First, Rio's favelas no longer face eviction. Though nothing is enshrined in law, society accepts that the favela-dwellers have a legitimate right of possession. By contrast, the mud hut villages of Nairobi are controlled by the corrupt Provincial Administration, which takes pay-offs from rich outsiders for the right to build temporary structures which they then rent to the poor. In Kibera, I asked a local official what would happen if a resident wanted to replace a mud hut with a concrete and brick home. He replied: "I would knock it down."

Second, Rocinha has access to politics. Indeed, the city government has an administrative office, a health clinic and a public school inside the favela. Though there are four city council districts that encompass

parts of Kibera, Nairobi's shanty dwellers feel no connection to local politics. "I've been here for six years," Nicodemus Kimanzi Mutemi told me, "and I cannot say I've ever seen the area councillors for Kibera. I do not know if they exist."

Squatters around the world must band together to demand their political and legal rights. We must join with them in this struggle.

But first we have to acknowledge a sin of our own: We have been talking about this for far too long, ever since the first Habitat conference a generation ago. Here's a statistic bandied about at that time (taken from Barbara Ward's *The Home of Man*, which was published in coordination with the conference): "Various UN surveys put the number of houses that need to be built to keep up with growing numbers and repair the worst evils of the past at over 47 million units a year."

And here's how something from one of the most recent surveys, *Financing Urban Shelter*, UN-HABITAT's Global Report on Human Settlements from 2005: "In order to accommodate the increments in the number of households over the next 25 years, 35.1 million housing units per year will be required."

Squatters are the largest builders of housing in the world. They need to be part of the discussion—for they are the key actors who have the will, the stamina, and the need to build the cities of the tomorrow.

Youth at the World Urban Forum - tomorrow's leaders

WITH ALMOST HALF THE CURRENT GLOBAL POPULATION UNDER THE AGE OF 25, WE LIVE IN A VERY YOUTHFUL WORLD. THEREFORE, WRITES DOUG RAGAN, DIRECTOR OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL YOUTH ALLIANCE, IN VANCOUVER, CANADA, ANY MEANINGFUL SOLUTIONS TO URBAN PROBLEMS SIMPLY HAVE TO INCLUDE YOUNG PEOPLE.

There are 1.2 billion young people under 25 in the world today. The next generation of youth – children still under 15 – will be half again as large, numbering an estimated 1.8 billion.

Any meaningful solutions to urban problems must include youth. With very little official support or resources, young people are already conceiving, designing and implementing successful community-building projects in some of the most marginalised regions of the world. They need recognition, guidance, resources and training.

This is why the daily realities of youth in cities have to be represented at the World Urban Forum. International delegates have to be shown the amazing capacity of young people to create and run projects and programmes to reinvigorate our urban communities.

It is with this in mind that the World Urban Forum and Youth Organizing Committee arranged a series of events leading up to and during the forum.

These included a three-day World YOUTH Forum 16-18 June 2006 the weekend before the third session of the World Urban Forum in Vancouver,

Canada. A meeting of 150 international youth delegates with 150 young people from North America was organized so that they could present a joint declaration to the forum. Both groups include artists and community youth leaders from some of the world's most marginalised and crime-ridden urban environments.

Also planned was the *Global Hip-Hop Mainstage*, an event to bring artists, academics, business and community leaders together with the international delegates attending the World Urban Forum to share perspectives around city-living, network and celebrate youth-led development initiatives and successful youth leadership programmes from around the world.

The *Global Hip-Hop Mainstage* featured international, socially conscious Hip-Hop and world music artists, live-art demonstrations and interactive multimedia installations. Its programme included dynamic, socially conscious performers representing youth voices from Africa,

Canada, Europe, indigenous communities, and the hip-hop rock stars performing live as UN-HABITAT *Messengers of Truth*, graffiti art, break-dancers, and other events. They also held a World Urban Café dialogue, and presented a report on its meetings at internet cafes and youth centres around the world representing the views on modern urban life of over 25,000 young people. Many worked closely with the Judith Marcuse Projects Earth Festival, the official cultural programmer for the forum.

To date, 68 such cafes have been held in Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria, Zambia, India, China, Colombia, Brazil and across Canada, with partner organizations ranging from Canadian environmental groups like the Sierra Youth Coalition, and the Vancouver Art Gallery to African Hip-Hop collectives in Soweto, and Indian slum-dweller's rights groups in Delhi.

A World Urban Forum Messenger of Truth

Six years ago, Joseph Oyoo, popularly known as Gidi, was just a young slum dweller with no hopes for the future, let alone getting a job. His main worry as one of 10 children was where his next meal was going to come from.

Despite the financial strain on his family, Gidi avoided the temptation of joining the gangs in his slum neighbourhood of Dandora in Kenya's capital city, Nairobi. He decided instead to turn to music. He teamed up with fellow musician Julius Owino (known by his stage name, Maji) to form Gidigidi Majimaji. They soon became one of Kenya's most successful hip-hop bands. Gidigidi Majimaji stood out from the rest of the pack because they managed to make hip-hop without abandoning their African roots.

In 2002 at the height of Kenyan election, Gidigidi Majimaji had just released a chartbuster track called *Unbwogable* (slang for unbeatable). The song became the anthem of the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), a political alliance that won the elections and formed the new government.

The following year, they were appointed by UN-HABITAT as Messengers of Truth, and performed live at the second World Urban Forum in Barcelona, Spain, in 2004. The UN-HABITAT Messengers of Truth project brings together socially committed hip-hop and youth groups from around the world specially chosen for their contribution to raising awareness of the Millennium Development Goals. Other groups to have been appointed to this honourable position include K'naan, a Somali refugee who now lives in Canada, and Awadi from Senegal.

"If it wasn't for my music, I might have ended up as a gangster in Dandora," said. "Through my music, I have managed to put my brothers and sisters through school. It also paid for my own university education. My dream is to start a studio and training school for upcoming musicians from the slums of Nairobi."

Report by Rasna Warah, a Nairobi-based Kenyan journalist and writer.



In February this year, GidiGidi accompanied Tim Challen to the top of Africa's highest peak, Mount Kilimanjaro. (see events page 22). Photo ©: Joseph Oyoo (GidiGidi).

Women and Habitat – a struggle of three decades

CIVIL SOCIETY WILL CONTINUE TO REMAIN THE DRIVING FORCE FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE HUMAN HABITAT, WRITES DIANA LEE-SMITH, THE GENDER FOCAL POINT FOR UN-HABITAT 1998–2001 AND FOUNDER MEMBER OF THE HABITAT INTERNATIONAL COALITION WOMEN AND SHELTER NETWORK. HERE, DR. LEE-SMITH LOOKS AT A STRUGGLE OF MORE THAN 30 YEARS IN WHICH SHE IS VERY MUCH ACTIVE. SHE LIVES AND WORKS IN KENYA, WHERE SHE WAS A FOUNDER OF THE MAZINGIRA INSTITUTE, CARRYING OUT RESEARCH, POLICY AND ADVOCACY WORK ON URBAN POVERTY, DEVELOPMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT, INCLUDING WOMEN AND GENDER. MOST RECENTLY SHE RAN THE AFRICA REGIONAL PROGRAMME OF URBAN HARVEST, AN INITIATIVE OF THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH (CGIAR). THIS ARTICLE IS AN EXCERPT OF A LONGER PIECE PUBLISHED IN *WOMEN AND ENVIRONMENTS INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE*.

When a senior official of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) received a document in 1976 suggesting that the environmental concerns and conditions of women receive attention from his agency, he scribbled on the forwarding note, "over my dead body". I know, because I had to process the note to its next destination, being a junior functionary of UNEP at the time.

Despite this negative opening anecdote, there were other stirrings in 1976. The first United Nations Habitat Conference in Vancouver that year was famous for the vibrant civil society forum which accompanied it. At one of the forum workshops, the concerns of women were highlighted. It gave birth to the *Women and Environments* journal (later magazine). Habitat issues concerning women found a place in this magazine over the following years. In 1985 it described its scope as a "feminist perspective on women and planning, design alternatives, urban projects, technology, space, non-traditional jobs, community development, nature and ecology" (SINA 9; 1985). Thus it was thinkers and planners who were then beginning to describe the content and agenda of "women and habitat".

Indeed, the debate about whether environment and habitat issues should be treated as one complex of ideas and policies has raged ever since.

At another workshop in 1985, papers articulating the women's perspective on the themes of the 1976 Vancouver Conference structured the issues and led to the creation of an international network. Emerging themes were women's particular housing and infrastructure needs (urban and rural), their relation to women's income generation, legal constraints on women, and women's participation in policy and planning. *Women and Environments* was one of the actors involved. The Netherlands funded a series of United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) re-



Championing women's rights - Mrs. Tibaijuka with the Kenyan Nobel peace laureate, Wangari Maathai. Photo ©: N. Kihara/UN-HABITAT.

gional workshops on communication for women and habitat issues over the next few years, and these again drew in many civil society organizations.

In probably its most adroit move, UNCHS convened a meeting in 1989 ostensibly to review the outcome of communication workshops on women and habitat, but which also brought together key civil society groups. This historic meeting produced a resolution calling for a women's programme in UNCHS, and for grassroots women's concerns to be brought to policy attention by "inviting governments and UNCHS to develop closer cooperation with the Habitat International Coalition Women and Shelter Network and other similar NGOs at national, regional and international levels". In 1991, this same resolution made it to the UN General Assembly, where it was adopted as Resolution 13/13 of the GA's 8th Plenary session.

The 1990s was the decade of UN global conferences, and women and habitat issues were by now right up-front, thanks to all the preparatory organizing. Whether over anyone's dead body or not, UNEP led the Global Assembly on Women and Environment, using the energies of the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) that produced the Women's Action Agenda 21. This doc-

ument influenced the less radical UN Agenda 21 that emerged from the Rio Earth Summit of 1992, and women and habitat issues were included.

Already, the "Women's Caucus", superbly organized by WEDO, was ever-present at UN meetings and systematically got its concerns on the main meeting agenda. The caucus always insisted on having its meetings in the main conference hall, half an hour before the official meeting, and it lobbied hard (and still does) to retain that slot in every meeting.

Global organizing of grassroots women led to the numerous clauses on women and habitat that influenced the "Platform for Action" at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, including the notorious "inheritance clause" that held up negotiations for 24 hours, necessitating an extra day of the Conference and almost derailing it. Almost surprisingly, a deal was done on the meaning of equality as enshrined in the *Qur'an*, and the historic clause was passed. It reappeared in the Habitat II Conference in Istanbul in 1996, and became part of the Habitat Agenda, the guiding document of UN-HABITAT.

The right of women to own and control property, and in particular their right to inherit it from their parents, is now a widely publicised matter, and numerous campaigns at national and international levels have taken up the cry and developed methods of bringing about change. UN-HABITAT has developed a joint programme with the UN High Commission on Human Rights around the issue of housing rights, including women's inheritance rights, and carried out research on the latter which is published.

Yet ultimately, the driving force has been, and will probably remain, civil society organizations.

A Nigerian leader speaks out

By 2007, half the population of Nigeria will be living in towns and cities. **OLUSEGUN MIMIKO**, NIGERIA'S MINISTER OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, EXPLAINS HOW THE GIANT WEST AFRICAN COUNTRY PLANS TO TACKLE ONE OF THE CONTINENT'S GREATEST URBAN POVERTY CHALLENGES.

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and is home to Lagos, its largest city. One of the fastest growing cities in the world, the population of Lagos is expected to reach 25 million by 2015.

Currently, the national annual urbanisation rate is an extremely high 5.5 per cent. Projections are that Nigeria will be 50 percent urbanised by 2007. Slum dwellers now make up the majority of urban populations.

We are very mindful of the daunting challenges of rapid urbanisation and population growth. Similarly, we are very concerned about the magnitude of the population who live in poverty and poor housing conditions.

Consequently, Nigeria more than ever, is committed to the goals and targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly Targets 10 and 11 which address the challenge of housing and urban development.

In our quest for sustainable development we have embarked on fundamental economic reforms under a home-grown initiative, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS).

The focus of NEEDS is to substantially create wealth, provide full employment and totally eradicate poverty.

In other words, through a visionary, well thought out development programme, we have embarked on a reorientation of the Nigerian economy with the MDGs firmly in focus. And our national budgets in 2004 and 2005 have proved to be useful instruments in this connection. Additionally, 800 million US dollars debt relief granted Nigeria by the Paris Club in 2005 is solely devoted to the implementation of MDG-related projects.

Nigeria is pursuing an integrated approach in planning and development of its human settlements. Slum upgrading programmes, provision of infrastructure and social services, micro-credit schemes, and good urban governance underpin our human settlements programmes. Our policy measures include a new National Housing and Urban Development Policy, a modernised Land Registration and Information System, strengthened information and data bases for development and planning, an enhanced mortgage system to facili-



Minister Mimiko at the AMCHUD conference in Nairobi on the eve of the third session of the World Urban Forum. Photo ©: N. Kihara/UN-HABITAT

tate home ownership, a National Poverty Eradication Programme for skills acquisition and job creation. Nigeria has also established Strategic Regional Development Plans to correct regional disparities, including the marginalised Niger Delta region.

The government has also created an enabling environment to foster private sector participation in housing delivery, while forced evictions of slum settlements are being discouraged.

Furthermore, we have adopted a holistic approach to sound environmental sanitation by putting in place an Environmental Sanitation Policy and Plan of Implementation. The goal is to "ensure a clean and healthy environment by adopting efficient and cost effective strategies, to safeguard public health and well-being in line with national development objectives". In the water sector, reforms have been undertaken to ensure the provision of safe and affordable water services for all Nigerians. Specifically, a National Water Policy, which includes an Integrated Water Resources Management Plan, has been established. It is our desire to achieve our water target by 2011, through a vigorous implementation of the Water Policy within the framework of "Water for People, Water for Life".

These actions underscore our commitment to the goals of the African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (AMCHUD) and the Habitat Agenda.

We do, however, acknowledge that very few African countries are on track to meet the MDGs in 2015. To support realisation of the MDGs by all African countries and overcome current constraints being experienced, it is Nigeria's expectation that AMCHUD will equally develop and adopt pragmatic measures and an action-oriented programme of action that will help in attaining the regional goals we have set for ourselves.

AMCHUD should equally anticipate and prepare for growth, develop sustainable financing strategies, and attract long-term capital investments so critical for the provision of infrastructure and other services in our towns and cities. Let me also emphasise the need for exchange of expertise, research, experience, technology transfer and best practices, especially on the eradication of slums. Capacity building is essential. We must put in place effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, including peer review meetings to assess implementation. In no less measure, we must also collectively seek development assistance, debt relief – including debt cancellation and debt swaps and market access without which it will not be possible to meet the MDGs in Africa.

We identify with the laudable initiatives of the UN-HABITAT, through its various programmes such as the Global Campaign on secure tenure and Good urban Governance, the technical cooperation programmes and initiatives such as the Slum Upgrading Facility which should be effectively utilised to support African states to achieve the MDG targets on slums, safe drinking water, basic sanitation and infrastructural development.

I appeal to the United Nations General Assembly, and the Governing Council of UNHABITAT to ensure that UNHABITAT is given the necessary resources to function as a full programme of the UN to meet its mandate. Action must be taken to broaden its financial base to ensure a predictable source of funds, and with adequate staff.

We must ensure sustainable human settlements and the development of our continent in the spirit of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

Vancouver 1976 – back to the future

AMONG THE STATES REPRESENTED AT THE FIRST HABITAT CONFERENCE WERE THE BYELORUSSIAN SSR, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, THE TWO YEMENS, THE TWO GERMANYS, THE UKRAINIAN SSR, THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS, UPPER VOLTA, YUGOSLAVIA AND ZAIRE. THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS OF SOUTH AFRICA WAS ALSO PRESENT... TIMES HAVE CHANGED. HERE, DANIEL BIAU, DIRECTOR OF UN-HABITAT'S REGIONAL AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION DIVISION, EXPLAINS HOW THE VANCOUVER REMAINS RELEVANT TODAY.

In his opening statement Mr. Kurt Waldheim, Secretary-General of the United Nations, indicated that *"one third or more of the entire urban population of the developing world lives in slums and squatter settlements"*. The Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Enrique Peñalosa, responded that, *"the paramount question was whether urban growth would continue to be a spontaneous chaotic process or be planned to meet the needs of the community"*.

Times have not changed that much.

The outcome documents of the Conference include a Declaration of Principles (the *Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements*) as well as recommendations for national action and international cooperation. When revisiting such documents one wavers between two feelings – that it seems on one hand that everything had already been said in 1976, while on the other, some recommendations look obsolete in substance or style.

The Vancouver Declaration

The Vancouver Declaration starts with a preamble stating that *"unacceptable human settlements circumstances are likely to be aggravated by inequitable economic growth and uncontrolled urbanization, unless positive and concrete action is taken at national and international levels"*. The first action is to *"adopt bold, meaningful and effective human settlement policies and spatial planning strategies (...) considering human settlements as an instrument and object of development"*. Among the general Principles, the Conference advocates improving the quality of life through more equitable distribution of development benefits, planning and regulating land use, protecting the environment, integrating women and youth, rehabilitating people displaced by natural and man-made catastrophes. Nothing outdated here.

In the Guidelines for action, various elements of a human settlements policy are defined. Focus is placed on harmonious integration, reduction of disparities between rural and urban areas, orderly urbanisation, progressive minimum standards and community participation. The Declaration states that *"adequate shelter and services are a basic human right" and that "governments should*

assist local authorities to participate to a greater extent in national development" – still very current concerns. The Declaration strongly emphasizes that *"the use and tenure of land should be subject to public control"*, an idea which lost its attractiveness in the 1990s (see the modern Habitat Agenda paras. 75-79). The Declaration concludes with a call on the international community to support national efforts.

Twenty years later, the Istanbul Declaration put more emphasis on the role of cities in social and economic development but noted the continuing deterioration of shelter conditions. It adopted the principles of partnership and participation and agreed to promote decentralization through democratic local authorities. It also insisted on the need for healthy living environments. Land use was no longer a priority, while housing and municipal finance were still buried under the agreed need to mobilise financial resources.

The Vancouver Action Plan

The substantive outcome of the first Habitat Conference is the series of 64 recommendations for National Action, a 44-page "Action Plan". These recommendations are organized in six sections (compared to the three substantive sections of the Habitat Agenda, paras. 60-193).

Sections A (Settlements policies and strategies) and E (Public Participation) have become almost self-evident. While the proposed policies devote exaggerated importance to population distribution, public participation could be seen as the cradle of the future good governance paradigm of the 1990s. Section F (Institutions and management) is certainly the weakest. It implicitly recommends the creation of Human Settlements Ministries and of specialised financial institutions. This occurred in many countries, with mixed results. It also called for enabling legislation, but not public-private partnerships.

The real substance of the Vancouver Action Plan lies in sections B (Settlement Planning), C (Shelter, infrastructure and services) and D (land).

In section B we find a mix of the old fashioned top-down spatial planning and of vi-

sionary forward-looking statements. All kinds of planning is advocated, from national to neighbourhood levels, even for rural, temporary and "mobile" settlements! But the improvement of existing settlements is not forgotten. Special attention *"should be paid to undertaking major clearance operations only when conservation and rehabilitation are not feasible and relocation measures are made"*. The word "slums" does not appear, but the idea of participatory slum upgrading is there. The next recommendation on urban expansion calls for legislation and institutions to manage land acquisition and development, for securing fiscal and financial resources, and integrated development of basic services. Reconstruction after disasters is also emphasized as both a challenge and an opportunity *"to reconcile the meeting of immediate needs with the achievement of long-term goals"*. But the question *"who are/should be the planners"* is not addressed (partnerships are not yet on the agenda) and the link to implementation and management is missing.

Section C carries 18 recommendations representing the core of the Action Plan. While some financial recommendations are clearly outdated (regulate the flow of financial resources, develop new budgetary techniques), its recommendations on the construction industry and the informal sector are still very valid. Among the identified priority areas: *"ensuring security of land tenure for unplanned settlements, and providing sites and services specifically for construction by the informal sector"*. Excellent recommendations are also made on National Housing Policies (*provide serviced land on a partial or total subsidized basis, make rental alternatives available, promote aided self-help*) and Infrastructure Policies (*use pricing policies for improving equity in access, minimize adverse environmental impact, give priority to safe water supply and hygienic waste disposal, favour mass transportation and energy efficiency*).

Section D on land may appear as the most obsolete part of the Action Plan. It starts by stating that *"private land ownership contributes to social injustice"*, and that *"public control of land use is therefore indispensable"*. It advocates a very pro-active land policy based on zoning, land reserves, compensated expropriation, redistributive property taxes, the

recapturing of excessive land profits resulting from public investment, and public ownership wherever appropriate. It also encourages the establishment of comprehensive land information systems.

Beyond Vancouver

In fact sections C and D could be positively compared with the strategies in the Habitat Agenda to provide adequate shelter for all (paras. 60-98). Governments moved

from the Keynesian consensus of 1976 to the market-driven paradigms of 1996 ("enabling markets to work"). And they have now moved from the Cold War era and the New International Economic Order to a globalising world with more opportunities and risks. It is a world in which national action is more constrained than it was in 1976. This evolution had a direct impact on human settlements policies, strategies and practices around the world.

The outcome documents of Vancouver 1976, however, remain valid in many strategic areas. Some recommendations have become irrelevant due to broader changes in the world and a number of issues were not addressed because they were not yet visible on the human settlements screen. But we should remember the historical pendulum: what seems obsolete in 2006 may come back, in a different way, as a basis for future innovations.

The Swedish Position 30 Years Ago

LARS REUTERSWARD, THE DIRECTOR OF UN-HABITAT'S GLOBAL DIVISION AND OVERALL COORDINATOR OF THE WORLD URBAN FORUM PROCESS SAYS THE TOPICS BEING DISCUSSED IN VANCOUVER TODAY ARE AS RELEVANT AS THEY WERE 30 YEARS AGO. CURRENTLY ON LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM HIS POSITION AS CHAIR, PROFESSOR OF ARCHITECTURE AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES AT LUND UNIVERSITY IN SWEDEN, HE WAS A YOUTH DELEGATE IN THE SWEDISH COMMITTEE AT THE FIRST HABITAT CONFERENCE IN 1976. HERE HE LOOKS BACK THROUGH A SWEDISH PERSPECTIVE.

A re-reading of the statements of Swedish officials in 1976 strikes me as quite interesting. Many of the issues and insights in their speeches are quite contemporary. This is not to say that nothing has changed, but that the policy discourse has meandered over the passed 30 years, and on some issues returned to the point of departure.

Sweden's Minister of Housing, at the time, Mr. Ingvar Carlsson, told delegates back in 1976 that "we must build a whole new world". His remarks highlighted the link between the rapid increase of human settlements "in the poorest countries" and the need to limit "the richest countries consumption of energy and other scarce natural resources".

A reference is made to the 1972 Stockholm UN Conference on the Environment that led to the creation of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), which is today UN-HABITAT's sister agency in Nairobi. It said in part: "Our most serious environmental problems are related to the design of human settlements". He also said that "man's modifications of his environment are necessary", but called for better technology to mitigate the effects, including "pollution, poisoning and climatic effects".

The statement focussed on the need to develop "power and tools" for national governments. And it also cited the role of non-governmental organisations. Other aspects highlighted are that housing is perceived as a human right, profit interest should be checked, redistribution policies should be encouraged, and capital formation is a prerequisite. One section describes how the Swedish housing conditions, which were "appalling (...) some decades ago" had been much improved through public action.

Mr. Carlsson said that "a more equitable distribution of the world's resources can only be achieved through the international community – through the United Nations". His statement concluded by reaffirming Sweden's commitment "to make it possible to solve the problems of the poor countries of the world", and the centrality of government responsibility.

The then Secretary of State, Mr. Gote Svensson, addressed the United Nations General Assembly later the same year on "the urgency (of) a national policy on human settlements". He also raised "the necessity of governmental planning of human settlements" with "land as a key resource". Public participation was singled out as an "indispensable element" at all levels of government.

Although Sweden abstained from voting on the Vancouver Declaration at the time, he said "that there was a broad consensus on most of the substantial parts of the document". He also stressed the importance of the regional level and the preference for "linking the global human settlements secretariat to the United Nations Environment Programme".

Mr. Svensson said the "the possibilities of establishing (...) ties with UNEP should have to be carefully looked into, as well as the future role of the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation".

Today, 30 years later, human settlement improvements in several countries and regions have gone to scale, mainly as a result of economic development, government commitments and radical housing policy changes, much in keeping with the ideas raised by Mr. Carlsson.

At the same time, human settlements conditions have further declined in some countries and regions. There is still an urgent need for political commitment to human settlement policies, and to going to scale in pro-poor human settlements development. The roles of governance, political commitment, land, capital formation, redistribution practices and public participation remain as fundamental as they were in 1976.

However, the statements differed from today's agenda in a specific area. They focused on the role of national governments, but did not mention the crucial role of local governments, or on localised governance. Today, there is more emphasis on these issues, and on the role of civil society.

A second striking difference was that the word "urban" is never used in the statements. The preferred concept is human settlements, and references to urban infrastructures are absent in the texts. Indeed one wonders why words such as urban, city and slum were taboo thirty years ago?

Both speeches dealt with human settlements in the UN system, with particular reference to UNEP's mandate.

The current UN reform process again calls for an analysis of the position of UN-HABITAT in the UN system, and in particular of the relationship between the natural environment and sustainable urbanisation. Thus the theme of the Third Session of the World Urban Forum in Vancouver this year, *Our future: Sustainable Cities – Turning Ideas Into Action*, is as relevant as ever.

In Parliament with Hilary Benn

ON 1 FEBRUARY THIS YEAR, THE HOUSE OF COMMONS IN LONDON HELD ITS FIRST DEBATE ON THE WORLD'S URBANISATION CRISIS. BRITAIN'S SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, **MR. HILARY BENN**, CALLED IT AN HISTORIC OCCASION. THIS ARTICLE IS AN EXCERPT OF HIS REMARKS.

If we do not sort these problems out, we are all in big trouble. The movement of people to cities is as old as humankind. We have all agreed, during the debate, that that is an irreversible process and it is no good wishing that it could be different, because human beings will do as they will.

Cities such as Kathmandu, Addis Ababa and Luanda have grown for many reasons. People have moved there because they might be marginally safer when the countries were going through conflict. Women have fled domestic violence. People have tried to escape the stigma and poverty of their caste. People have always come to cities to acquire a new identity.

In the past 20 years, the number of people living in Mumbai has grown by 100 per cent, but the number of squatters has increased by more than 1,000 per cent. That illustrates the scale of the problem.

In our country during the 1970s, we thought that there was a bias towards urban areas and that we needed to concentrate on reducing poverty in rural areas, but we now recognise that we need to consider the problem in a much more rounded way. Indeed, there is a lively debate to be had about where urban areas stop and rural areas begin, particularly as technology makes it possible, in some countries, for people to live and work in ways that were not possible in the past.

The truth is that most—almost all—of the population growth in developing countries in the next generation will be in towns and cities. The total urban population in Africa, Asia and Latin America will double to 4 billion by 2035. Africa is the fastest-urbanising continent in the world. Nearly 40 per cent. of Africans currently live in cities.

Target 11 of the Millennium Development Goals requires us to make a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. Having reliable data on slums—the face of urban poverty—is vital. That is why we are working in partnership with UN-HABITAT. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to Anna Tibajuka and UN-HABITAT for the work that they are doing and for flying the flag of this debate. UN-HABITAT is responsible, as well as the World Bank, for global monitoring to ensure that we get decent data that will assist us.



Mr. Benn. Photo ©: DfID.

Urbanisation has been central to the sustained economic growth in Asia that has enabled a number of countries in that part of the world to lift many of their citizens out of poverty.

Shanghai has just over 1 per cent. of China's population and contributes 12.5 per cent. of its GDP. I went for the first time last year and spent most of the time with my jaw on the floor. It is an astonishing place. To see the pace of change that is occurring there tells us just how important that city's contribution is to China's economy.

That is happening not only in Asia. Nairobi comprises 12 per cent of the population of Kenya. It contributes 30 per cent. of the GDP. That tells us in part about the great wave of migration within countries. We talk much about migration between countries, but that is dwarfed by the movement within countries as people leave the places where they have lived for towns to seek work and a better life. As the debate has demonstrated clearly, such growth comes at a price. Very poor people crowd into spaces that no one else will take. They are around open sewers, perched on the side of embankments along railway lines and live in the intense squalor.

Land is the central issue. The poor rarely have tenure on the land that they occupy. It is not always clear who owns the land. We have heard about landlords who make a healthy return on renting their land, but what if there is no clarity about who holds the land? If people are unsure about their future on the land, there is less incentive to invest in improvements. Slum dwellers often have

no right to services. In Dhaka in Bangladesh, it is formal policy not to provide them with services. Slum dwelling brings stresses and strains. Mental ill health is a problem. Crime is another problem. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest proportion of urban populations living in slums.

There is spectacular wealth living alongside intense poverty, and that can bring violence. Indeed, the Commission for Africa said: "Africa's cities are becoming the powder-keg of political instability and discontent." We ignore that at our peril. Security is indeed the precondition for progress while communities try to deal with the enormous problems that such areas face.

Barriers that prevent people from migrating to towns to work must be removed. People must have the opportunity to set up their own businesses, which goes back to the title to land and property rights. Much of the economic life of cities depends on the contribution that is made by the people who live in the slums.

Many countries are thinking more about how to devolve power to local level. We should welcome that unreservedly. The truth is that people know best what they need locally. What is striking about the issue of water is how often, in many conversations that I have had in towns, villages and urban areas in developing countries, clean water has emerged as people's priority for improving their lives. Yet that priority does not seem, in many developing countries, to be reflected when national priorities are set.

Power without money at local level will not do any good. There is a lack of capacity, and building capacity is fundamental to progress.

On slum upgrading, we are supporting the UN-HABITAT slum upgrading facility. We currently give it just under \$11 million. There are pilot projects in Ghana, Tanzania and Sri Lanka. We need to see how that goes to support others.

The biggest challenge, if good governance and local government are secured, is the cash to make things happen. The way in which we finance the work, and developing countries raise the necessary resources to finance the improvements in their towns and cities that the people who live in them, above all, want, is our big challenge for the coming months and years.

Growing older and younger

IN A LOOK AT AGEING TRENDS IN CITIES AROUND THE WORLD, AN ANALYSIS OF THE LATEST RESEARCH OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENT FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS, UNAIDS AND OTHER SOURCES COMPILED BY UN-HABITAT'S **GLOBAL URBAN OBSERVATORY**, SHOWS THAT PEOPLE IN THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES ARE GROWING OLDER, WHILE THOSE IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD ARE BECOMING MORE YOUTHFUL.

For the first time ever, the elderly population in developed countries has surpassed the number of children aged 14 and younger. In 2005, 20 percent of the population in developed countries was aged 60 years or over. By 2050, that proportion is expected to be 32 per cent.

The populations of the developed regions – particularly Europe and North America – are ageing, owing to increased life expectancy and, more significantly, low fertility. Together, these phenomena are having an impact not only on the overall demographic picture of the developed world, but also on individual experiences of family life and personal relationships.

It is typical today for children to know their grandparents or even great-grandparents – an experience that was much less common just two generations ago. It is also common for adult children in many countries to care for their elderly parents, who are living much longer than in generations past.

The percentage of the population over the age of 65 is highest in Europe – 15.9 per cent – while in North America, 12.4 per cent of the population is older than 65, a trend that is consistent with the more developed regions of the world. Mortality rates in the developed world declined significantly in the 1980s and 1990s, largely because of better health care. Fertility rates have also dropped below replacement level. As these regions are all more than 70 per cent urbanised, the ageing trend is being manifested most clearly in cities.

Indeed, the economically powerful cities of the developed world may experience a shrinking labour force and increased health care and social services expenditure as their populations age.

Although in-migration has helped to offset the trend in some areas, the impact of ageing populations on national expenditures is likely to increase in the future. Analysts have predicted that if current trends continue, many countries in Europe will be forced to import labour to make up for the shortfall, but current trends towards stricter immigration policies may make this possibility more remote in the near future, and may increase social and political tensions.

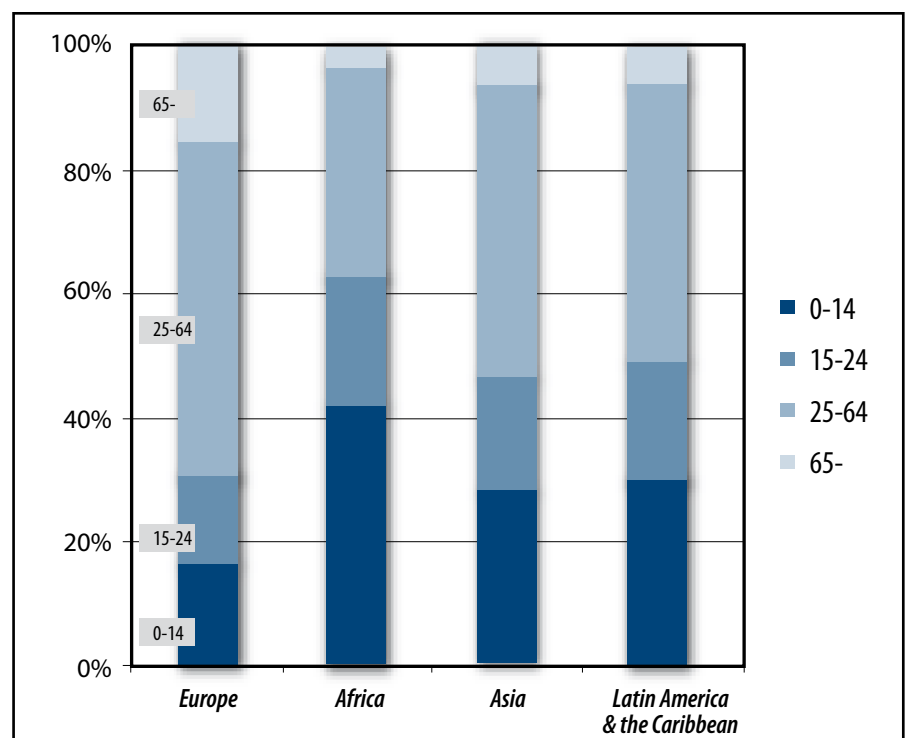
On the other hand, however, in the developing world, the global ageing trend is being manifested much more slowly. By 2050, when nearly one in three people in the developed world is elderly, half of the people in 11 of the world's least-developed countries will be younger than 23. In 2000, more than 100 countries were experiencing "youth bulges", which occur when people aged between 15 and 24 comprise at least 40 percent of the national population.

Most were concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa and western Asia. A high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and low social and economic development has increased mortality levels among all age groups in Africa, making it among the most youthful populations in the world, with over 60 per cent of its population under the age of 24. If the demographic impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic continues, up to 60 per cent of Africa's 15-year-olds will not reach their 60th birthday. This has severe implications for the ability of Africa's cities to achieve sustained economic growth.

In terms of the actual movement of people, today, the majority of urban migrants are moving from smaller towns and cities to larger ones, or moving between cities. Rural-to-urban migration is no longer a major urban growth factor, except few countries such as China, for example. Instead, natural population increases are becoming a more significant contributor to urban growth, and reclassification of rural areas into urban areas is speeding the rate of urbanization.

This is due to the high proportion of young population in developing countries, and thus their higher fertility rates. This segment of the population is putting enormous pressure on land, finance and other resources and is also challenging the capacities of local authorities and central governments to provide basic services and adequate housing. Very often, when responses are not adequate, these populations have no other option than to occupy informal settlements in a process that makes it difficult to adopt medium or long-term sustainable solution to urban growth.

Percentage of population by age group 2005



Source: United Nations World Urbanization Prospects: The 2003 Revision

A decade of documenting Best Practices

WIDELY DISCUSSED AND WITH MANY EXHIBITED AT THE THIRD SESSION OF THE WORLD URBAN FORUM IN VANCOUVER 2006, THE ORIGINAL CALL FOR BEST PRACTICES WAS LAUNCHED DURING PREPARATIONS FOR THE HABITAT II CITY SUMMIT IN ISTANBUL TEN YEARS AGO. THE IDEA: TO HIGHLIGHT THE MOST SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES IN SUSTAINABLE HUMAN SETTLEMENTS. **WANDIA SEAFORTH**, ACTING CHIEF OF UN-HABITAT'S BEST PRACTICES PROGRAMME, DESCRIBES HOW IT EVOLVED INTO ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST IMPORTANT REPOSITORIES OF URBAN INFORMATION.

An international conference on best practices was held in Dubai in November 1995 just months ahead of the City Summit. The conference adopted the Dubai Declaration and established the Dubai International Award for Best Practices to Improve the Living Environment.

The first awards were presented in Istanbul in 1996, where, like the glittering display in Vancouver, an interesting and very colorful exhibition was mounted by the winning practices from around the world.

A selection criteria and a uniform reporting format were developed with Habitat Agenda partners. The reporting format is reviewed at the end of each award cycle to see how it fits with changing realities, and subject areas are added or redefined. As a result of six successive award cycles – 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2006 – there are currently over 2,700 good and best practices from 140 countries featured in the Best Practices database. At each cycle, a Technical Advisory Committee of experts reviews well over 500 submissions, identifies Good and Best Practices and prepares a shortlist.

Thereafter, an international jury selects the ten Dubai Award winners from the shortlist. The number of winners has recently been increased to twelve, with two awards being dedicated to BP replications. All submissions are added to the BP database, as long as they meet the minimum selection criteria.

How are best practices used and by whom?

The programme covers every aspect of housing and urban development, urban governance, environmental planning and management, architecture and urban design, economic development, social inclusion, crime prevention, poverty reduction, women, youth, cultural heritage, municipal finance and management, infrastructure and social services.

It is aimed at raising the awareness of decision-makers on critical social, economic and environmental issues and to better inform them of the practical means and policy options for improving the living environment. It identifies, disseminates and applies lessons learned from best practices to ongoing training, leadership and policy development activities. In short, best practices are actions that have made a lasting contribution to improving the quality of life and the sustainability of our cities and communities.

Over the years, a cross section of development partners ranging from municipalities and civil society to the United Nations, have used the information for a wide variety of purposes. These include case studies in publications, examples for peer and city-to-city exchanges, and reference material in policy review. Researchers and data analysts have also used best practices as the qualitative information that reinforces or questions hard data findings.

Lessons learned

In 2005, an analysis of the BP database was undertaken to see how far the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were addressed.

Some interesting findings emerged. Just two examples: First, a general observation was that those initiatives that set out to address an empowerment issue such as gender equality or social inclusion, also resulted in more practical benefits like better access to livelihoods and improved living environment. Secondly, it was found that many countries represented in the database had enabling policies on decentralization and empowerment of local governments.

Three key observations emerging from a decade of documenting best practices are that:

- The process is as important as the outcome – but the process has also proven the weakest area in self-documentation.
- The process, expertise and technology are transferable, but not the solution.
- The governance environment is critical. It includes advocacy, policies and mechanisms for participation along with diverse partnerships and effective decentralization.

Constraints and controversies

The term best practice remains as controversial as when it was first applied. Even though many organizations now use the term, there remain critics who see its use as subjective and unscientific.

However, there are many who see it as attention catching, and therefore useful for awareness and advocacy purposes.

The submissions for the Dubai Award, and later into the database, consist of self-documented initiatives. Thus, even though a uniform reporting format assures some uniformity and comparability, there is still a great disparity in the quality of documentation – and of course the best performers are not necessarily always the best self-documenters and vice-versa.

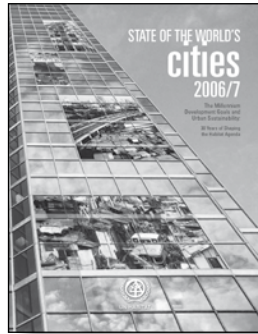
Some world regions remain grossly under-represented in the BP database. This is partly due to disadvantage in access to the internet and other information sources, as well as poor capacity.

A parting thought ...

The vast majority of practices in the database are from local authorities. One future direction is to promote more city-to-city exchanges based on best practices.

The State of the World's Cities 2006/7

ISBN:92-1-131811-4
 HS: 814/06E
 Language: English
 Price: \$35
 Publisher:
 UN-HABITAT/Earthscan

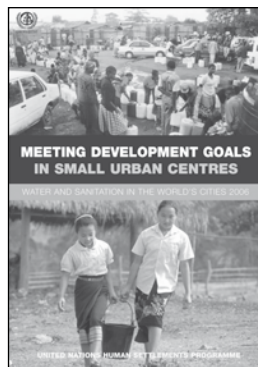


UN-HABITAT's new flagship report, the State of the World's Cities, marks two important milestones: the dawn of the urban millennium in 2007 and the 30th anniversary of the first Habitat Conference held in Vancouver in June 1976, which placed urbanisation on the global development agenda. This publication also marks a less triumphal moment in history. Thirty years after the world's governments first pledged to do more for cities, almost one-third of the world's urban population lives in slums, most of them without access to decent housing or basic services and where disease, illiteracy and crime are rampant. The report breaks new ground in the area of urban data collection, analysis and dissemination. For the first time in the history of the United Nations, urban data is reported here at slum and non-slum levels, going far beyond the traditional urban-rural dichotomy. UN-HABITAT's intra-urban data analysis – involving disaggregated data for more than 200 cities around the world – takes this work further and provides detailed evidence of urban inequality in the areas of health, education, employment and other key indicators. The implications are significant for the attainment of Millennium Development Goals as we can no longer assume that the urban poor are better off than their rural counterparts, or that all urban dwellers are able to benefit from basic services by virtue of proximity. The latest State of the World's Cities report, carries new facts and figures on the world cities, and clearly shows how shelter conditions have a direct impact on human development, including child mortality, education and employment.

Meeting Development Goals in Small Urban Cities

ISBN: 92-1-131814-9
 HS: 817/06E
 Language: English
 Price: \$46
 Publisher: UN-HABITAT

Meeting the development goals in small urban centres, was launched at the Fourth World Water Forum in Mexico City in March, 2006. This publication warns that the projected increase of urban dwell



ers will have far reaching implications on water and sanitation provision and efforts must be stepped up to meet this challenge. An interesting new fact coming out of this report is that the largest share of future urban growth will be from small urban centres of less than half a million people where service provision for both water and sanitation is already woefully inadequate. UN-HABITAT's research shows that within three decades, the urban populations in Asia, Africa and Latin America will double to nearly 4 billion people, and that by 2015, the target date for most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), well over half of the world's population will be urban.

Disposable Cities

ISBN: 0754643743
 Language: English
 Publisher: Ashgate

This work, Disposable Cities – Garbage, Governance and Sustainable Urban Development in Africa, is a critical analysis of UN-HABITAT's Sustainable Cities Programme in Africa based on in-depth fieldwork in the three cities of Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar and Lusaka. Focusing on the SCP policies for solid waste management which it identified as a top priority problem, the book examines the success of these three pilot schemes and the SCP's record in building new relationships between people and government. It argues that the SCP has operated in a political vacuum, without recognition of the long and problematic histories and cultural politics of urban environmental governance in east and southern Africa.

Managing Urban Futures

ISBN: 0754644170
 Language: English
 Publisher: Ashgate

Urbanisation is one of the most powerful forces influencing global sustainability. It is dominated by three factors: population growth, rural-urban migration and subsequent urban expansion. Perhaps nowhere are these factors more dominant than in developing countries. This volume brings together leading experts including Alan Gilbert, John Friedmann, Saskia Sassen and Janice Perlman to explore the conflicting challenges of rapid urbanization in developing countries. While all have to contend with key issues such as social segregation, poverty, and loss of governability, the ongoing forces of urban growth vary from country to country. By comparing the challenges of urbanization in Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific, this book puts forward a new way of thinking about mega- and million-cities in developing countries – one that promotes their vital function in society as engines of ideas, technologies, societal change, democratic transformation and loci of political will to build a new regime of global sustainability.

Remembering Jane Jacobs, 1916–2006

Jane Jacobs, the urban writer and activist who championed new, community-based approaches to planning for over 40 years died in Toronto aged 89 on 25 April. Her 1961 treatise, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, became perhaps the most influential American text about the inner workings and fail-



Photo © UN-HABITAT

ings of cities, inspiring generations of urban planners and activists. A brave, singular voice challenging the dominant theories of the entire planning establishment, she gave the world a fresh look at what makes cities work and what makes them fail, never blinded by the assumptions and orthodoxy of a particular profession.

New Russian funding for UN-HABITAT

The Russian Federation will provide UN-HABITAT at least 400,000 US dollars annually, part of it in non-earmarked funds, under a new agreement signed with the agency in April. Part of the long-term objective of the agreement is to establish in 2008 a UN-HABITAT regional office in Russia to coordinate cooperation projects in Russia and possibly other members of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) subject to an agreement with interested CIS countries.

New African framework to tackle urban poverty

Resolving to place their urban poverty crisis at the top of the national and international policy making agenda, African ministers responsible for housing and urban development agreed on a 10-point game plan designed to reduce urban poverty, defuse potential social unrest, and reverse the perception that governments are not doing enough, quickly enough. The ministers from more than 30 African countries were met 3-4 April at the Special African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (AMCHUD) in Nairobi, Kenya.

UN-HABITAT honours King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden

Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka, Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, presented King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden with a Special Citation in this year's UN-HABITAT Scroll of Honour Award for "his tireless campaigning to promote an environmentally sustainable human habitat". At a ceremony in Stockholm in March, she cited his longstanding commitment to the natural environment and climatic change.

New housing programme launched in Chad

The government of Chad, with the support of UNDP and UN-HABITAT, officially launched a housing programme aimed at improving the shelter and living conditions of urban poor. Chadian President Idriss Deby officially launched the programme on 7 March. The project is co-funded by the government of Chad at a cost of 11,828,351 dollars and with 2,045,000 from UNDP, and executed by UN-HABITAT.

The UN-HABITAT Lecture Award

John Friedmann, Honorary Professor at the School of Community and Regional Planning of the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada, has won the inaugural United Nations Human Settlements Lecture Award. The recently launched UN-HABITAT Lecture series is organized through the Global Research Network on Human Settlements (HS-Net), an international board that advises UN-HABITAT on its Global Report on Human Settlements. A stimulus to the global debate on human settlements, the lecture by Prof. Friedmann, who is also Professor Emeritus of Urban Planning at UCLA, was scheduled for delivery at the third session of the World Urban Forum in Vancouver on 20 June, 2006.

Climbing Africa's highest peak to promote safer cities

A young Briton wounded in shooting in an armed robbery in Nairobi two years ago, climbed Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest peak, in February to publicise the need to engage young people in crime prevention. Mr. Tim Challen, 33, said he hoped to raise at least 50,000 US dollars from the climb. The initiative grew substantially with support from UN-HABITAT's Safer Cities Programme that is working with cities to create a culture of prevention and safe environments. The initiative is also geared in support of "Sports for Vulnerable Youth" as part of the UN Decade Campaign on Sports for Peace and Development.

UNACLA celebrates 5th birthday

Mayors and senior city officials from around the world celebrated the 5th anniversary of the United Nations Advisory Committee of Local Authorities (UNACLA) 8 February with renewed calls for decentralisation of powers to ensure better service delivery at the community level. The meeting in Washington 8 February was co-chaired by Mayor Joan Clos of Barcelona, and Ms. Bjork-Klevby.

Upcoming Events

Metropolis Board of Directors

Toronto, 14-16 June

Third Session of the World Urban Forum,

Vancouver, Canada, 19-23 June, 2006

United Nations Advisory Committee of Local Authorities (UNACLA)

Advisory Committee strategy meeting, Vancouver, 20 June

14th Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women,

New York, 23 June, New York.

United Nations General Assembly,

Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the decade 2001-2010.

New York, 19-20 September

World Habitat Day

Theme: *Cities - magnets of hope*

Naples, 2 October

Upcoming issues of Habitat Debate

Subject to changes by the Editorial Board, the remaining two issues of Habitat Debate for the year 2006 will cover migration - *Cities, magnets of hope* (Vol. 12 No. 3), and disaster management (Vol. 12, No.4)

In Memoriam

Tanzib Chowdhury, 1968-2006

It is with great sadness and a heartfelt sense of loss that UN-HABITAT announces the passing of our beloved friend and colleague, Tanzib. He died tragically in a road accident near Mombasa, Kenya, with one of his three sons on Wednesday, 11 April. A British national, he initially joined UN-HABITAT in 1995 to help implement the Urban Indicators Programme, as part of a DfID-funded programme to assist the organization in improving urban data collection. Upon completion of his assignment in 1997, he returned to DfID as physical planning adviser for the Africa region, after which he joined the World Bank where he was responsible for promoting and developing urban indicators within the Cities Alliance. In 2002, he returned to UN-HABITAT where he has been in-charge of developing local urban observatories. More recently, he made substantial inputs to the forthcoming *State of the World's Cities* report 2006/7. Mr. Chowdhury obtained a Bachelor of Sciences degree in geography from the University of Oxford, and a Master of Sciences degree in civic design from the University of Liverpool. He is credited with conceptualizing an innovative global scorecard on slums and in analysing slum prevention and upgrading policies around the world. Tanzib is survived by his wife, Rumana, and two sons. "He was a loving father ever passionate for his work. He will always be remembered fondly by his colleagues as a soft-spoken, dedicated, and friendly member of staff. May the Lord grant his soul eternal peace," said Mrs. Tibajjuka.



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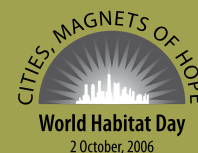
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World Habitat Day

Cities - Magnets of Hope

2 O C T O B E R 2 0 0 6



The Habitat Scroll of Honour

The Habitat Scroll of Honour award was launched by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme in 1989. It is currently the most prestigious human settlements award in the world. Its aim is to acknowledge initiatives which have made outstanding contributions in various fields such as shelter provision, highlighting the plight of the homeless, leadership in post conflict reconstruction, and developing and improving the human settlements and the quality of urban life.

The award, a plaque engraved with the name of the winner and their achievements will be presented to the winners during the global observances of World Habitat Day on 2 October 2006.

In 2005, we received a record number of submissions describing an array of impressive initiatives to improve shelter and urban services. We look forward to receiving your nominations and submissions for the 2006 award.

Eligibility

Individuals, organizations, projects and any Habitat Agenda partner can be nominated for the Habitat Scroll of Honour. These include:

- Government and inter-governmental organizations or agencies, including bilateral aid agencies
- Cities, local authorities or their associations
- Civil society organizations
- The private sector
- National Habitat committees or focal points
- Research and academic institutions
- Public or private foundations
- Multilateral agencies (United Nations Agencies, World Bank, etc.)
- The media
- Individuals



Nominate your candidate at

www.unhabitat.org/whd/2006/form/register.asp