

HUMAN SETTLEMENT COUNTRY PROFILE

THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

Decision-Making

Programmes and Projects

Status

Capacity-Building, Education, Training and Awareness-Raising

Information

Research and Technologies

Financing

Cooperation

Decision-Making: No information available.

Programmes and Projects: *Informal Settlements:* In recent years in order to lead the trend of urbanization and prevent marginal settlement development and regularizing informal settlements, the following activities were considered:

- Leading and controlling irregular development of cities (esp. large cities) via provision and implementation of urban development plans, metropolitan area plans, national, regional and area-specific physical plans.
- Leading urban population toward pre-planned and appropriate locations, via provision and implementation of land development and rehabilitation of old city quarters and the establishment of new towns.
- Formation of Islamic City Councils to mobilize public participation and effectively incorporate the interests of all citizens in decision-making.
- Rehabilitation and provision of basic infrastructures and urban services in most of the urban informal settlements.
- Provision and ratification of the national strategies for enabling and regularizing informal settlements, complying with the Habitat II and Development Millennium Goals regarding slum upgrading.
- Beginning a new low-income national housing policy in cooperation with the World Bank and experiencing the pilot projects for the feasibility of enabling and upgrading approach in informal settlements of five cities.

Important future programs:

- Implementation of the enabling and regularization policies asserted in the National Document for the informal settlement in Iran, which was prepared through wide participation of public and academic institutions as well as utilizing the experiences of the international organizations. This document will be relied upon at national level as a strategic guidance to produce coherent and integrated programs addressing the problem and on the other hand, provide inter-sectoral coordination in the long term plans and practices.
- Establishing integrated management systems at urban and local levels to supervise and coordinate the concurrent efforts of various responsible agencies for urban services and infrastructures toward a balanced growth.
- Leading and controlling urban development, prioritizing small and medium-sized cities, by emphasis on halting metropolises unplanned growth and the optimum usage of urban lands (in the framework of national and regional spatial plans to achieve an appropriate human settlement system according to environmental capacities of the country).
- Strengthening the role of Islamic City Councils as the main body for local management, in order to promote enabling approach to informal settlements complying with the local agenda 21.
- In the 4th National Development Plan documents (2005-2010), in the chapter of national spatial plan and regional balances, government is bound to execute general strategies of the distribution of population and activities, in order to direct the human settlements system toward a sustainable development pattern in both urban and rural areas, halting over-concentration.

Also in the chapter of enhancing human security and social justice, the government is bound to recognize vulnerable places and social crises producers in urban centers and peripheries, to centrally facilitate or assist health services, sanitation, social consulting and legal supports, in addition to employment-generation programs. It recommends using inter-sectoral coordination strategy and management system to cope with social pathology.

In accordance with Agenda 21, MDG and JPOI, in order to solve the informal settlement problems, actions below must be executed or complemented:

- Poverty reduction at national level (which is a basic condition to reach sustainable development and is considered as a common responsibility of all countries).
- Carrying out solutions to improve social, economical and environmental quality of settlements and work places for all, particularly urban and rural poor.
- Provisioning adequate shelter for all especially, through guided and aided self-help housing for the poor and securing their tenure ship.
- Strengthening and improving human settlement sustainable management with the assistance of international programs such as "Sustainable City Program" of Habitat, "Urban Management Program" of the World Bank and "Healthy City Program" by WHO.
- Completing and developing suitable programs to decrease the impacts of rural migration on cities, via rural development and reduction of regional disparities on one hand, and proactive measures for settling the needed unskilled labor force in the cities, on the other hand.

Natural Disasters and Human Settlements: Action Policies:

- Provision and enforcement of National Building Code for earthquake resistant structures.
- Preparation of Comprehensive Crisis Management Plan by the Ministry of Interior in coordination with the UNDP
- Provision of Comprehensive Aid and Rescue Management Plan by Red Crescent of Iran.
- Provision of National Preparedness and Control Plan for Natural Disasters by Tehran University, supported by the Ministry of Interior and UNDP
- Study of Earthquake Risks Zoning in Tehran by JAICA (Japan) and Tehran Municipality
- Comprehensive Crisis Management Plan for Tehran, provided by Tehran Municipality and the Ministry of Interior
- Provision of temporary settlements (for tens of thousands of households who became homeless because of natural disasters in the last decades)
- Complete reconstruction of tens of thousands of damaged houses in disaster-stricken areas during the last two decades
- Development of reconstruction plans for many urban dilapidated buildings

Future Programs and Constraints:

- Resettlement of high-risk urban housing sites in the safe zones
- Execution of compulsory educational programs on earthquake resistant constructions for building contractors
- Development and promotion of safety awareness in the disaster-prone regions of the country
- Proactive disaster planning as essential part of human settlement planning at any level
- Enabling the urban communities in regions at risk of disasters to mitigate the negative impacts on socio-economic and environmental aspects of human settlements
- Provision of essential financial, legal and technical facilities to strengthen the low-income housing, especially in rural areas
- Promoting sustainable land use planning and management in all human settlements
- Promoting sustainable construction activities
- Development of planning and management of communities in disaster-prone areas

Status: Informal Settlements: The number of cities in Iran has increased from 199 in 1946 to approximately 1000 in 2004, during this period the proportion of urban population has raised from 32 percent in 1946, to almost 67 percent. Increase of urban population has a growth rate of 4.3 percent annually against 1.32 percent growth rate for rural population (about 4 times).

Since this rapid growth of urbanization was not coincided with the concomitant growth of productive capacities as well as the necessary structural economic reforms, it caused many problems from this lagging in many aspects including informal settlement phenomenon.

According to surveys, about half of the increase in urban population during the last two decades, was the result of factors like migration of rural population to the cities, settling down the nomads in towns and the new classification of rural centers as towns. In other words, almost 13.5 millions of growth in urban population during 1976-1996 was emanated from these factors.

The rapid growth of urban population and its centralization in large cities caused disorders and resulted in disproportionate provision of urban services, facilities and employment opportunities for extra population. That's why marginal or informal settlements developed and expanded.

Based on National Policy Document on enabling and regularizing the informal settlements: "parallel to growth of urbanization, many unauthorized and spontaneous settlements were developed inside and adjacent to the cities specially in metropolitan areas". These settlements often have characteristics as follows:

Hastily constructed housing often built by their eventual occupants, mostly without permits to construct and outside existing formal planning leading to an irregular compound.

Concentration of lower income groups or poor people with functional linkages to the main city despite physical segregation

A habitat with low quality of life, desperately low urban services and infrastructure and high population density.

The particularities mentioned above, expose their residents to high social, environmental and natural risks leading to a breakage away from the main fabric of the city.

According to this National Document, it is estimated that about one eighth of urban population (up to five millions) live in informal settlements in Iran; a proportion which shall increase to a quarter within the next decade representing a doubling in numbers. Although the Iranian informal settlements are not as dramatic, compared to many developing countries (in terms of the access to physical and social infrastructures and their construction materials), still this problem is a major concern for urban authorities.

According to experts' estimates, up to 2021, urban population will be doubled and will almost reach 72 million. About 30 percent of new urban dwellers (more than 10 millions) are low-incomes. In case of continuation of present trends and the conventional policies, 5 to 7 millions of them, will be housed in informal settlements of large cities and metropolitan areas in Iran. Whereas at present, the urban planning and management system and relevant agencies are not able to respond adequately to the huge low incomes' urban needs (e.g., public housing, services and infrastructures), reforms in urban legal, financial and executive management are needed to mobilize new resources. This, in turn, calls for improvement of urban governance.

In summary, lack of desirable inter-sectoral coordination mechanism as well as integrated urban management (as part of an integrated spatial management system in the whole country), is one of the most basic constraints in preventing the trend of expansion of informal settlement population and the effective rehabilitation of marginal areas.

Natural Disasters and Human Settlements: One of the most important existing challenges in the scope of human settlements in Iran is the extreme vulnerability of these complexes towards natural disasters. In the past few decades, large natural disasters (namely earthquakes and floods) have happened in Iran and destroyed hundreds of thousands of residential and economical units in cities and villages. About 3500 earthquakes have occurred in Iran in the last century, 12 of which were quite destructive (with a magnitude of more than 7 in Richter Scale). In addition to lots of human casualty, these quakes caused tremendous loss in GNP.

For instance in 1990, financial loss of Manjil- Roudbar quake was about 7.2 billion dollars, consisting 8 percent of Iran's GNP in that year. In the recent earthquake of Bam (Dec.2003), based on the local authorities' report, more than 20 000 urban and rural houses were totally destroyed.

In the meanwhile, the probability of a strong earthquake occurring in large cities makes people and authorities worried, particularly in Tehran. On the basis of surveys on the earthquake risks in Iran's zone, the very high risk, high risk, and relatively high-risk zones cover almost all the populated regions of the country in the north, west and northwest of Iran, and almost all the large cities of these regions are located in the high-risk zones.

The present situation of the most of urban centers in Iran is quite vulnerable due to having: a) old and blighted central areas, b) informal settlements located on inappropriate sites, c) even new constructions without proper observation of technical criteria and d) lack of resistant infrastructures and installations in the case of earthquake.

Challenges for the field of Human Settlements:

- High rate of urban population growth particularly as a result of in-migration to the large cities
- Informal settlement phenomenon and its growth specially in large cities
- Vulnerability of rural and urban settlements to natural disasters
- Lack of integrity in decision making system and management of population and activity centers and their peripheral environment at all spatial levels
- Environmental pollutions, particularly air pollution in large cities
- Lack of hygienic disposal and impotence of rural/urban waste management
- Weakness of non-governmental activities and ineffective public participation in local management
- Intra- and inter-regional imbalances at national level
- High consumption of energy per capita and usage of environment non-friendly technologies in construction sector and urban transport
- High cost of land and housing in urban economy and inadequate provision of low-income housing
- Limitations of financial resources of urban management, particularly in small and medium-size cities
- Transformation of fertile agricultural lands into urban land-use in the urban fringes

Capacity-Building, Education, Training and Awareness-Raising: No information available.

Information: No information available.

Research and Technologies: *Natural Disasters and Human Settlements:* Unfortunately up to now, surveys on the zoning of earthquake risks and relevant studies, have been done only for Tehran region, and as was mentioned earlier, the results are alarming.

Study of rural housing in Iran also shows that earthquakes stronger than 4 Richter are considered to be high risk for many of these houses. Recent studies indicate that, on one hand, natural disasters, and on the other hand, non-durable materials and inappropriate techniques of construction are highly responsible for most of the destruction of rural houses (consisting of 36 percent of housing units) in Iran. Based on the last Census, only 29 percent of rural houses are made of durable building materials.

Financing: No information available.

Cooperation: No information available.

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