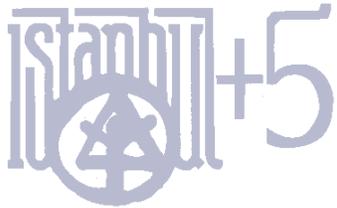


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Implementation of the Habitat Agenda

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The Habitat Agenda in the urban millennium

IMAGINE: A KNOCK ON THE DOOR COULD make you homeless. You could come home to find that your house and belongings had been reduced to rubble by a bulldozer. Or, if you are not so unlucky as to be forcibly evicted, imagine rearing your children in a crowded slum settlement, without basic services – no clean, safe water; no toilets; no garbage collection – in a place where crime is all too common. Day to day, this is the life that almost a billion poor people face in the slums and squatter settlements in the world's urban areas.

Cities and towns have long been recognized as “engines of economic and social development”. With their high concentration of human beings, cities give birth to ideas; they foster creativity and innovation; and they create jobs. However, they also generate and intensify social exclusion. Sometimes they deny the benefits of urban life to the poor, to women, to youth, and to religious or ethnic minorities and other marginalized groups.

Very soon, for the first time in human history, most of humanity will be living in urban areas, where disparities between the rich and the poor are already plainly visible: thriving business districts and affluent neighbourhoods co-exist side-by-side with slums and rundown inner-cities. These inequalities intensify when comparing cities of the North with cities of

the South. In richer countries, less than 16 per cent of all urban households live in poverty, while in urban areas in developing countries 36 per cent of all households and 41 per cent of all women-headed households live with incomes below the locally-defined poverty line. At the outset of the urban millennium, the urbanization and feminization of poverty are sad facts of life.

Habitat II and the Habitat Agenda

In 1996, recognizing the urgency of the urban explosion, the international community convened the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in Istanbul. At Habitat II – commonly known as the City Summit – 171 Governments agreed to adopt the Habitat Agenda and the Istanbul Declaration.

The acceptance of the Habitat Agenda marked a turning point in international efforts to promote socially and environmentally sustainable cities. At Habitat II, Governments rejected the notion that cities are problems for which no solutions can be found. Instead, they searched for experiences and best practices that demonstrate practical ways of meeting the challenges of urbanization.

When the international community adopted the Habitat Agenda, it set itself twin goals: to achieve adequate shelter for



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all and sustainable human settlements development. Equally important was the understanding that “Governments have the primary responsibility for implementing the Habitat Agenda. Governments as enabling partners should create and strengthen effective partnerships with women, youth, the elderly, persons with disabilities, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, indigenous people and communities, local authorities, the private sector and non-governmental organizations in each country.”

Paragraph 213 of the Habitat Agenda

The inclusive city

Since Habitat II, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) – the agency within the UN system supporting the management of human settlements – has been working with all Habitat Agenda partners to determine the best way to implement the Habitat Agenda. With considerable operational experience gained since its establishment in 1978, Habitat has radically altered the way it works in human settlements development. Habitat’s two-fold aim is to ensure that cities are inclusive and that the shelter needs of the urban poor are given priority.

Today, the method has changed. Gone is the assumption that central Governments will provide housing for the poor. The traditional welfare state model is giving way to partnership and participation. In its pledge to encourage “enablement and participation”, the Habitat Agenda further states its commitment to the objectives of “Enabling local leadership, promoting democratic rule,

exercising public authority and using public resources in all public institutions at all levels in a manner that is conducive to ensuring transparent, responsible, accountable, just, effective and efficient governance of towns, cities and metropolitan areas.” Through partnerships with civil society, Governments are encouraged to make their cities inclusive. To encourage greater participation of ordinary citizens in the day-to-day management of their cities and towns, Habitat has launched two global initiatives: the Global Campaign on Urban Governance and the Global Campaign for Secure Tenure.

The Global Campaign on Urban Governance

This Campaign envisions the “Inclusive City” as a place where everyone, including the urban poor, can contribute productively and enjoy the benefits of urban life. The Campaign's potentially radical premise is that inclusiveness is not only socially just, but is also good for growth and central to sustainable urban development. Social inclusiveness is an important goal for municipal governance: It is just, it is democratic and it is productive. And it is equally important in both northern and southern cities. As globalization continues, diversity will become more, rather than less, important. And the successful governance of diversity will distinguish the most accomplished and creative cities from all the rest.

To ensure international commitment to the goals of good urban governance, the Campaign will work on a number of levels.



At the international level, Habitat is organizing “dialogues” with Government representatives on the importance of decentralization and the role of local authorities. The long-term aim of these dialogues is to establish an international mechanism for ensuring the rights of local authorities in relation to central Governments. If accepted by the General Assembly, one such mechanism could be a World Charter for Local Self-Government. At the same time, through a “declaration of norms”, the campaign will address the responsibilities of local authorities in the exercise of their powers. These norms, including such goals as transparency and accountability, have been designed to help cities practice good governance.

The Global Campaign on Secure Tenure

Cities cannot begin to be inclusive or sustainable if the urban poor live without adequate shelter or basic services. In too many cities and towns, hundreds of millions of poor people are not considered in city plans to provide essential services, such as water, sewers and garbage collection. With no land and nowhere else to go, the urban poor are forced to squat or to live on the pavement and manage as best they can. Rather than harnessing the energy and survival skills of the poor, most Governments do not even recognize the right that the poor have to the city.

The primary purpose of the Campaign for Secure Tenure is to give a voice to the people who live in the slums and the shacks. The Campaign rejects forced evictions and takes the position that all people, especially women, have a right to adequate shelter. The fundamental

premise is that security of tenure is among the most important of housing rights. The Campaign supports a range of tenure options that can be granted to every household and underwritten by the rule of law. These range from home ownership to rental arrangements; individual or collective; private, public or mixed tenure. What matters most is the security and the long-term certainty. There is compelling evidence world-wide that secure tenure is one of the most important catalysts for stabilizing communities. Such stability helps cities to attract corporate and individual investment, which in turn can improve the access to services and the living conditions of the urban poor.

Rhetoric to reality

Moving from words to reality is the hard part. For this, the Campaigns rely heavily on collaboration with Habitat Agenda partners. In countries around the world, Habitat is working with Governments, local authorities, non-governmental organizations and the local communities to integrate efforts into a focused campaign.

In Abuja, Nigeria, on 10 April 2001, His Excellency President Olusegun Obasanjo presided over the Nigerian launch of the Global Campaign on Urban Governance. After years of centralized autocratic rule under military regimes, the Nigerian Federal Government is seeking to strengthen Nigeria’s 36 state governments and 774 local authorities by giving them greater political and fiscal autonomy. The President committed his Government to the goals and norms of good urban governance, including



enacting laws to protect people from unlawful forced evictions.

In Durban, South Africa, on 1 October 2000, over 7000 slum dwellers, 70 per cent of them women, gathered at the South African launch of the Global Campaign for Secure Tenure. The event was organized by the South African Homeless People's Federation with the support of the People's Dialogue for Land and Shelter, the Durban Metropolitan Council, the Provincial Government of KwaZulu-Natal, the Ministry of Housing and UNCHS (Habitat). In her keynote address, the South African Housing Minister Sankie Mthembu-Mahanyele captured the spirit of the event when she recognized that South Africa's move towards equity in housing had been made possible by "the partnership formed between the Government and her people." The South African Homeless People's Federation, a nationwide movement of the urban poor, was established in 1990 to find solutions to problems of inadequate housing and landlessness.

In Mumbai (Bombay), India, on 17 July 2000, over 3000 members of the Indian National Slum Dwellers Federation were joined by officials from the Mumbai Municipality, the government of Maharashtra, and the Government of India at the national launch of the Campaign for Secure Tenure. At the event, the Chief Minister of the government of Maharashtra, the Honourable Shri Vilasrao Deshmukh, announced Maharashtra's plan to introduce legislation granting secure tenure to the poor of Mumbai who had been registered before 1 January 1995. All slum dwellers meeting this condition would enjoy legal recognition by all the authorities and would subsequently be protected against forced evictions or any other illegal action. The Minister of State for Urban Development and

Poverty Eradication, Shri Bandaru Dattatreya, also outlined the main points of the Indian National Housing Policy of 1998, and added that "...a national shelter fund will be set up to meet the requirement of low-cost funds for the housing needs of the poor, and fiscal concessions will be provided to the corporate sector for contributing to this fund".

The work of Habitat has been reinforced by the work of other UN agencies. For example, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights last year decided to appoint a Special Rapporteur on Housing Rights for a period of three years. The Rapporteur's mandate is to promote all aspects relating to housing rights as a component of the human right to an adequate standard of living, enshrined in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The Commission on Human Rights also reaffirmed the rights of women to an adequate standard of living, including adequate housing.

These examples of regional and national launches of Habitat's Global Campaign on Urban Governance and the Global Campaign for Secure Tenure show how workable policy options can be developed, within the framework of collaboration of national and city governments, to extend genuine citizenship to women and the urban poor.

No short cut to development

The launches are important strategic entry points for the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. Not only do they help to focus the attention of Habitat Agenda partners on best norms and strategies, they also encourage the international and donor communities to coordinate their projects in human settlements development. If conditions in the slums and squatter settlements



are to change, such projects are essential. There are no short cuts to development.

To support its advocacy work, Habitat has a number of operational projects that help local authorities improve the management and delivery of shelter and services. For example, in 1999 UNCHS (Habitat) and the World Bank launched the initiative Cities Alliance. A multi-donor alliance committed to improving the living conditions of the urban poor and the socio-economic and environmental viability of cities, Cities Alliance comprises two components: city development strategies and upgrading of low-income settlements.

The Disaster Management Programme assists national and local governments as well as communities to implement post-disaster reconstruction and rehabilitation programmes, particularly in the areas of housing, infrastructure and resettlement. The Programme also addresses disaster preparedness.

The Gender Policy Unit aims to improve women's participation and decision-making power at all levels within human settlements and urban development. The programme works on capacity-building, monitoring and policy, with particular emphasis on security of tenure for women and the role of women in leadership and governance.

Localizing Agenda 21 Programme: Habitat is the task manager in the UN system for the human settlements chapter of Agenda 21, adopted by the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. To reinforce the process of localization, the programme offers multi-layered support to selected medium-sized cities.

The Safer Cities Programme was launched in 1996 at the request of African mayors who wanted to address urban violence by developing a prevention strategy at the city level. The approach is to establish community-wide consultation processes to address the causes of crime and to develop prevention measures, methods and strategies to reduce crime.

The Sustainable Cities Programme is a joint Habitat/UNEP programme that builds capacities in urban environmental planning and management, using participatory methods. The programme works with over 40 cities and 30 partner organizations around the world.

The Urban Management Programme is a major technical cooperation programme designed to support progress made by some 80 cities in developing countries towards urban poverty reduction through participatory urban governance and urban environment improvement. UNDP provides overall monitoring for this programme, which is supported by several bilateral agencies.

Water for African Cities is a joint Habitat/UNEP initiative within the framework of the UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa. The programme supports African countries in effective water management and in protecting water resources from urban pollution.

These are but a few of the many operational projects initiated by Habitat during the last few years. They were designed to contribute to the achievement of the twin goals of the Habitat Agenda: adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development.