

CHAPTER

13

**United Nations
Human Settlements
Programme**

UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

United Nations Human Settlements Programme

The UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)¹ is the coordinating agency within the UN system for human settlements, the focal point for the monitoring, evaluation and implementation of the Habitat Agenda. It is also the task manager of the human settlements chapter of Agenda 21,² and is responsible for promoting collaboration with central governments, local authorities, non-governmental organizations and the private sector; as well as with all other partners involved in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.³ It is tasked with promoting sustainable urban development and in the framework of the Millennium Development Goals, with backstopping the achievement of Target 11, which aims to improve the lives of at least 100 million slum-dwellers by the year 2020.

A key component for achieving sustainable human settlement development is the promotion of policies and strategies which address the rapid rate of urbanization, a significant part of which relates directly to migration and human mobility, from rural to urban areas, within cities, and transnationally. Such policies and strategies have to address the causal factors, including limited livelihoods and deprivation in the rural areas, natural and human-made disasters and even the attraction offered by cities in terms of improved welfare. The effects of climate change have a great impact on cities and human migration, with millions of people displaced by shoreline erosion, coastal flooding and agricultural disruption. UN-Habitat works with governments, other international organizations and communities to reduce the vulnerabilities associated with climate change and promote systemic resilience for cities to mitigate and adapt to the deleterious effects of such changes.

1. Migration and development activities since the 2006 High-level Dialogue

UN-Habitat has developed a series of programmes and activities, and contributed to global initiatives since the 2006 High-level Dialogue (HLD) on International Migration and Development to address the issues of urban migration and sustainable urban development:

- (a) Every year on the first Monday in October, UN-Habitat uses World Habitat Day to reflect on the state of the world's growing cities and the rapid and irreversible urbanization. The theme in 2006 was "Cities, Magnets of Hope." Following the

¹ The UN Human Settlements Programme (hereinafter referred to as "UN-Habitat") was established by the UN General Assembly by its Resolution 32/162 of 19 December 1977 and transformed into a programme by its Resolution 56/206 of 21 December 2001. It is a member of the UN Development Group.

² Agenda 21 is the UN sustainable development agenda resulting from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 1992. Information about Agenda 21, is available from <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf>.

³ Information about the Habitat Agenda is available from www.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/1176_6455_The_Habitat_Agenda.pdf.

2006 HLD, UN-Habitat published a special edition of its quarterly magazine *Habitat Debate* entitled *Cities – magnets of hope: A look at Global Migration Problems* in 2007.⁴

- (b) In 2005 UN-Habitat, in partnership with the University of Venice, published a seminal study entitled *International Migrants and the City*, which looked at the impact of national policies on international migration, the role of migrants in the local economy, the relationship between local and migrant communities and migrants' use of urban space.⁵
- (c) UN-Habitat established a Quick Policy Guide series on urban migration and indigenous peoples' issues through the Inter-Agency Support Group on Indigenous Peoples that is expected to contribute to the more effective realization of indigenous peoples' rights in the urban setting. The series includes a policy guide on housing for indigenous peoples in cities, a policy guide on secure land rights for indigenous peoples in cities, and a draft policy guide on urban health. A report entitled *Urban Indigenous Peoples and Migration: A Review of Policies, Programmes and Practices* was published in 2010 and launched at the fifth session of the World Urban Forum in Rio de Janeiro in the same year.⁶
- (d) In 2009 UN-Habitat actively participated in the fifth Urban Research Symposium, entitled "Cities and Climate Change: Responding to an Urgent Agenda," in Marseille. UN-Habitat also organized, with IOM and UNESCO, during the seventeenth session of the Conference of the Parties in Durban in 2011,⁷ an interactive discussion on the social dimensions of climate change entitled "Climate Change, Environment Degradation and Migrants as Actors of Adaptation."
- (e) From 2009 to 2010, UN-Habitat, in cooperation with UNESCO, organized a series of workshops, expert group meetings and seminars, resulting in the elaboration of various publications in the framework of "migrants and cities." The aim of this UNESCO and UN-Habitat joint collaboration, based on existing research, case studies and regional and local instruments, is to promote innovative and prospective strategies, and assist Member States and local authorities in the elaboration of urban policies and practices that build social cohesion and spatial integration of migrants in cities.

⁴ UN-Habitat, *Habitat Debate* Vol. 12, No. 3 (September 2006): *Cities – magnets of hope: A look at Global Migration Problems*. The issue is available from www.issuu.com/unhabitat/docs/2222_alt.

⁵ M. Balbo (ed.), *International Migrants and the City* (Venice, UN-Habitat and dP dipartimento di Pianificazione, Università IUAV di Venezia, 2005).

⁶ The report is available from www.unhabitat.org/pmss/listItemDetails.aspx?publicationID=2916.

⁷ Information and documents pertaining to the seventeenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in November 2011, is available from: www.unfccc.int/meetings/durban_nov_2011/session/6294.php.

- (f) In 2010 UN-Habitat and UNESCO published a brochure for local authorities entitled “Creating better cities for migrants: Urban policies and practices to build more inclusive cities,” and, during the third United Cities and Local Governments Congress in Mexico in 2010, jointly organized a side event to present the publication *How to enhance inclusiveness for international migrants in our cities: various stakeholders view*. The final result of this collaboration in 2012 was the publication of the interactive guide and toolkit *Migrants’ Inclusion in Cities: Innovative urban policies and practices*, to be used by local authorities and city managers who want to improve the living conditions of migrants in their cities.⁸
- (g) UN-Habitat, in collaboration with the UNESCO–IHE Institute for Water Education, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Gender Water Alliance, the Netherlands Development Organization and Japan Habitat Association, has developed a water programme in Lake Victoria. Urbanization is placing an enormous burden on most secondary towns in the Lake Victoria region, which will increase in the countdown to the MDG target year of 2015. Urban areas are growing at rates of 4 to 5 per cent annually. These rates are projected to increase the urban population of the region by 50 per cent by 2015. The vast majority of new urban citizens are poor, newly arrived rural migrants. They pay higher prices for their water, use unsafe water and endure unsanitary conditions.

The overall objective of the Lake Victoria Region Water and Sanitation Initiative is to make a substantial and rapid contribution to achieving internationally agreed water and sanitation goals in secondary towns in the Lake Victoria region in East Africa, involving 15 urban settlements and 1 million people in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. This model-setting initiative seeks to demonstrate the balance between innovative approaches to investment in physical infrastructure and in capacity-building for sustainability. The initiative has set clear quantitative targets for the number of persons to be provided with improved access to water and sanitation services within an agreed timeframe, most of them internal migrants.

- (h) UN-Habitat’s flagship report, *State of the World’s Cities*, is raising awareness and focusing attention of all actors on mainstreaming and addressing the key challenges that cities of the twenty-first century have to face. Urban migration is one of those challenges, not only at the national but also at the international level.
- (i) For several years, UN-Habitat and IOM, together with the Government of Italy, have been convening a High-level Panel in the margins of the UN General Assembly to address progress made in responding to the challenge of cities and international migration;

⁸ Information about the toolkit is available from www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?typeid=19&catid=508&cid=10545.

- (j) UN-Habitat and IOM in 2012 signed a memorandum of understanding to deepen their cooperation in jointly enhancing human settlements and migration policies. Under the memorandum of understanding, the two agencies will jointly develop and strengthen policy and operational coherence and planning on issues relating to migration and human settlements at the national and international levels.

2. Support provided to the Global Forum on Migration and Development

While UN-Habitat's work on urbanization and climate change directly interfaces with that of the migration and development discussions of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), to date there has been little direct exchange or collaboration between the two entities.

3. Identified good practices

Several innovative urban policies and practices were identified and included in the guide and toolkit jointly produced with UNESCO, *Migrants' Inclusion in Cities: Innovative urban policies and practices*, thanks in particular to contributions from a wide range of researchers in Canada, France, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Additional good practices were identified through UN-Habitat's report, *Urban Indigenous Peoples and Migration: Review of Policies, Programmes and Practices*, as well as in the draft report, *Urban Migration, Indigenous Peoples and Green Economy: Sustainable Urban Development with Culture and Identity*. These good practices were presented and discussed at the round tables on indigenous issues and urban migration during the fourth and fifth sessions of the World Urban Forum, in Nanjing (2008) and Rio de Janeiro (2010).

UN-Habitat and FLACSO⁹ developed a draft report entitled "Housing for Indigenous Peoples in Cities of the Andean Region: Urbanisation, Urban Migration and Public Policies" for launching at the sixth session of the World Urban Forum in Naples in 2012, during the round table entitled "Urban Future and the Prosperity of Cities: Indigenous Peoples, Urban Migration and Diversity." This joint research, produced with a network of researchers in the Andean region, identifies good practices related to indigenous peoples' access to housing in the context of urban migration in Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Ecuador, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

⁹ Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales. The official website is www.flacso.org.

4. Challenges identified in carrying out UN-Habitat work

At the national level, governments increasingly turn to immigration and temporary foreign worker programmes as a strategy to boost economic growth. Yet it appears that migrant inclusion at the local level does not happen automatically. Instead, it requires the concerted efforts of local officials, long-term residents and migrants to create inclusive cities. Local authorities often have little say, if any, on national migration policies. Similarly, they have little capacity to control migratory flows into their cities. Yet it is local authorities who deal with the consequences, which often severely challenge their core mandate of providing housing, services, education and employment.

Since 2009 the Experts Evaluation Committee of UNESCO and UN-Habitat working on migrants' inclusion in cities has identified the following tendencies and stressed their importance for local and national policymakers:

- (a) A global drop in remittances, which has an impact on migrants and relatives in sending and receiving societies;
- (b) A slowdown of migration flows, with a slight shift from coastal megacities towards rural areas, as well as some return of migrants to their countries of origin (although most migrants are choosing to stay in their adopted societies);
- (c) A reduction in job opportunities, especially for migrants, and development of the informal labour market;
- (d) Growing shortfalls in public urban services and infrastructure;
- (e) Housing repossession and foreclosure, exacerbating homelessness and entrenching pre-existing spatial segregation;
- (f) A negative portrayal of migrants by the media that increases feelings of fear and insecurity.

5. Gaps evident within the migration and development sphere

Over the past decades, there has been a prevailing belief that access to housing and basic services is the single most important problem that international migrants face when they first arrive in their cities of destination. Even though UN-Habitat has tried to address this problem through the actions enumerated earlier in this chapter, and in spite of the increasing awareness of all aspects of this challenge, formal housing markets still tend to be out of bounds for migrants. This situation has resulted in the formation of inner city slums or “ethnic” ghettos. Guaranteeing rights for migrants is an

essential way of redressing this. Migrants' right to the city implies a realization of the right to adequate housing and access to basic urban services.

UN-Habitat's work with national governments and local authorities has brought to the fore the aspect of integration and inclusiveness of migrants in the social fabric and governance of cities. While a few cities have developed programmes which include the migration dimension as part of fostering the positive attributes of diversity, a large number of cities are still faltering in this regard.

Furthermore, following recent studies and research, there is a tendency towards the feminization of migration; yet policies are still not being adapted to this reality, both at national and local levels. There is a need to foster a gender-inclusive perspective in the actions taken to better integrate migrants in the city.

Other gaps found at the local level are:

- (a) A lack of communication and coordination of actions between central and local government regarding the inclusion of migrants in cities.
- (b) A lack of rights and responsibilities established between new citizens and the local government – all inhabitants, regardless of status or background, should be granted rights and freedoms that are key to the inclusion of migrants in urban society. Such rights include civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights, as well as the right to health care, education, employment, housing, welfare and safety and security. All migrants must be able to exercise these fundamental rights. Local governments should not only protect and promote migrants' rights, but also inform migrant communities of their rights and responsibilities, and enable and encourage them to exercise these rights and become active citizens.
- (c) Lack of migrant access to social services, which can be the result of cultural differences, language barriers, lack of information, financial restrictions, discrimination or lack of legal status. Even when accessible, services mostly reflect the needs of host populations.

Local authorities are essential for the delivery of social services and guaranteeing equity of access and treatment. Urban inclusive governance has to work towards overcoming inequalities and ensuring adequate services for all users, in housing, education, health care, employment, welfare and recreation. Local authorities should involve migrant communities in decision-making processes by establishing channels for the representation and participation of migrants and ethnic minorities, such as voting rights and their own language media.

Local authorities should foster mutual understanding and respect and manage cultural diversity as a resource for innovation and creativity. By respecting cultural differences, inclusive policies go beyond equality and acknowledge diversity in cultural, economic and social life.

6. Recommendations for the 2013 High-level Dialogue

Recommendations for the 2013 HLD include the following:

- (a) Enhance and underscore the benefits for cities of promoting multicultural societies;
- (b) Build an understanding of the issue at an inter-agency level and emphasize the need to address the challenges of migration and migrants at the urban level;
- (c) Enhance the research–policy–practice nexus by conveying the results of research–action projects to local decision makers;
- (d) Support the coordination of migration policy between different levels of government (national, regional and local), as well as action to bridge the gap between research and policymaking at the local level;
- (e) Exchange information and share living practice methodologies on urban inclusive policies and practices for migrants;
- (f) Contribute to international knowledge on social transformations underlying urban development and inclusive public policies to integrate migrants in urban settings;
- (g) Strengthen the capacities of local decision makers through empowerment and awareness-raising to foster the universal human rights of international migrants at the local level;
- (h) Promote and support the building of inclusive cities for migrants and the urban population overall;
- (i) Strengthen the rights, responsibilities and participation of more vulnerable inhabitants, such as migrants, in urban management;
- (j) Balance economic urban development with social cohesion to prevent urban conflicts linked to inter-ethnic or intercultural tensions;
- (k) Inspire other urban actors and community stakeholders to take action on these issues.

