

Box 6: HABITAT Agenda and Urban Planning

By 2025, 5.1 billion are expected to live in an urban environment, to account for over 60% of the total global population (<http://www.unhabitat.org/hd/hdv7n2/>). There is growing emphasis on participatory urban planning for healthy, thriving communities, which is interested in mitigating some of the pressures excessive population will have on urban infrastructure as well as on social, economic, political and cultural life.

The HABITAT agenda, which emerged out of the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) held in Istanbul, Turkey (1996). When the international community adopted the Habitat Agenda, it set itself the twin goals of achieving adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development. The agenda states 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.”* (para. 213). The first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements was held in Vancouver, Canada (1976).

The follow-up conference, Istanbul +5 (NY, USA, 2001) saw a reaffirmation of the HABITAT agenda. Emerging priorities have been identified, including urban governance, housing rights, basic services, civil conflict, urban violence and the urban environment.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: *Including the Poorest of the Poor*

Economic well-being is a fundamental pillar of human security and development. Widening disparities between rich and poor, and the presence of increased deprivation, are contributing factors to tension and violence. Enabling individuals and families to develop a basket of assets for immediate consumption and as safety nets in times of shock or disaster, provides families with the capacity to protect their livelihoods and well being¹⁰. Once livelihoods are threatened, families must make difficult sacrifices to compensate for changes in socio-economic circumstances. This may result in the eldest girl being pulled out of school to care for the family to allow both parents to sell their labour; in children being forced to work instead of attend school; prevent children from going to school if the school is too far and the parent cannot afford transportation or accompany their child(ren) to school; etc.

In order to reduce economic disparities, inclusive and enabling policies and program are needed to build, support and motivate the labour force to gain and save income and other economic resources. This will require a re-evaluation of policies that may be discriminatory hence inhibiting people from engaging in economic activity. For example, discriminatory land tenure rights which prohibit certain people from holding land titles (ie: women, people with disabilities, specific ethnic groups, etc). Governments also have a role to play in establishing inclusive labour policies that promotes and enforces non-discrimination labour policies of equal remuneration for all employees, anti-harassment

¹⁰ Baskets of assets include more than just financial assets such as income, but also include for example social networks families rely on for support and natural assets that can be drawn on from the natural assets such as wood for heat and water. These will be discussed in greater detail later in the paper.