

UN-HABITAT

STATE OF THE WORLD'S CITIES 2006/7



Global Scorecard: Achieving the Slum Target

The UN-HABITAT report State of the World's Cities 2006/7 states quite firmly that the struggle to achieve the Millennium Development Goals has to be waged in slums, not at the expense of rural areas, but alongside them.

Ultimately, as the world becomes more urban, the battle to achieve the Goals will be won – or lost – in the *zopadpattis* of Mumbai, the *bidonvilles* of Abidjan, the *chawls* of Ahmedabad, the *villas miseria* of Buenos Aires, the *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro, the *barrios ilegales* of Quito, the *shammasas* of Khartoum, the *iskwaters* of Manila, the *chereka betes* of Addis Ababa, the *aashwai'is* of Cairo, the *corticos* of São Paulo, the *colonias populares* of Mexico City, the *vijiji* of Nairobi, the *gecekondus* of Ankara, the *hoods* of Los Angeles, the *museques* of Luanda and the *katchi abadis* of Karachi.

The Millennium Development Goal 7, Target 11

Millennium Development Goal 7, target 11 on improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020 forces the international community to address one specific aspect of urban poverty that until now was neither captured in national statistics nor reflected in urban data. The slum target is a recognition by the international community that slums cannot be considered an unfortunate by-product of urbanization; rather, by ignoring the plight of slum dwellers, governments are inadvertently adopting urbanization models that are neither sustainable nor acceptable.

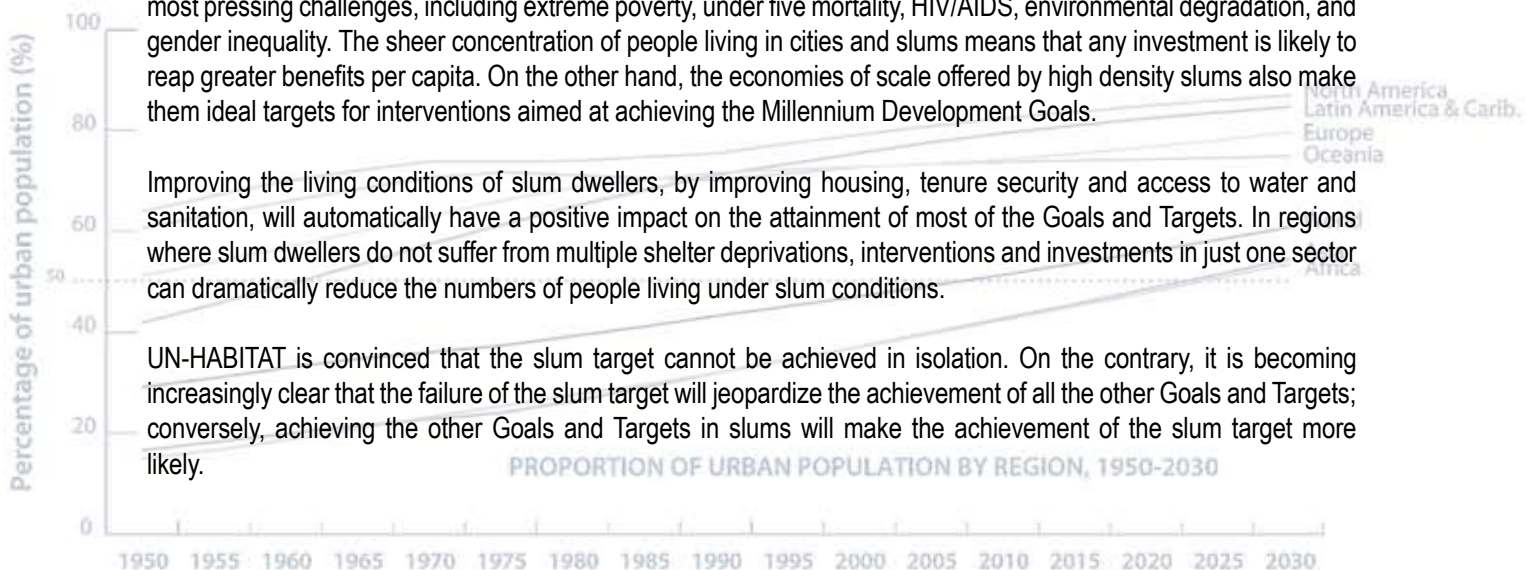
While the target of improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers may be achieved by 2020, particularly in countries that have put in place slum upgrading and slum prevention policies, the scale of the problem may worsen: UN-HABITAT estimates indicate that if governments continue with business as usual, then an additional 400 million people will be drawn into the misery of slum life as the global slum population reaches 1.4 billion in 2020.

However, slums do not simply ensnare impoverished urban dwellers; they also act as intermediate urban spaces, situated between destitution and opportunity – key places of transition that can help or hurt individuals, depending on the actions of governments, the private sector, civil society and slum dwellers themselves. They can also provide upward mobility to urban dwellers and become sites of immense economic opportunity, culture and innovation – the hallmarks of successful cities.

Cities and the slums within them also offer governments an “opportunity” or entry point to tackle some of the world’s most pressing challenges, including extreme poverty, under five mortality, HIV/AIDS, environmental degradation, and gender inequality. The sheer concentration of people living in cities and slums means that any investment is likely to reap greater benefits per capita. On the other hand, the economies of scale offered by high density slums also make them ideal targets for interventions aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Improving the living conditions of slum dwellers, by improving housing, tenure security and access to water and sanitation, will automatically have a positive impact on the attainment of most of the Goals and Targets. In regions where slum dwellers do not suffer from multiple shelter deprivations, interventions and investments in just one sector can dramatically reduce the numbers of people living under slum conditions.

UN-HABITAT is convinced that the slum target cannot be achieved in isolation. On the contrary, it is becoming increasingly clear that the failure of the slum target will jeopardize the achievement of all the other Goals and Targets; conversely, achieving the other Goals and Targets in slums will make the achievement of the slum target more likely.



Urban Features: Cities Are the World's Lungs

With half the world's population urbanised, the future of our planet will be shaped by the relationship of cities to the environment. Urban planners have it in their power to allow cities to gobble up natural resources and generate greenhouse gases or to become green islands with healthy lungs. Nowhere is this ideal more important than in the developing world where the most rapid urbanisation is taking place.

Environmental sustainability is one of the Millennium Development Goals. This challenge is being addressed variously, according to the policies and environmental priorities of cities and nations around the world. Cities that do not integrate economic growth with good planning and environmental awareness are paving the way for ecological disaster.

UN-HABITAT surveys show that successful cities combine these key factors

- Sound infrastructure and services
- Pollution control
- Low energy consumption
- Slum upgrade programs

In the developed world, where energy consumption is a major concern, many cities are redeveloping to incorporate compact neighbourhoods, clean transportation and green technology. Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) nations are rehabilitating under-used urban areas, decaying infrastructure and deteriorating housing. Some countries in Central Europe are tackling air pollution by imposing heavy taxes on leaded fuel or phasing out its use altogether.

The rapid and often unplanned growth of developing world cities pose a greater challenge. They must accommodate burgeoning populations through the provision of essential infrastructure and services while controlling air pollution and safeguarding the living conditions of their poor. This holds especially true for the industrialising cities of Asia.

Some cities, such as Singapore and Curitiba, Brazil have implemented thoughtful urban planning and greening policies that have significantly reduced air pollution and private motorised transport. Singapore has been so successful at protecting its tropical rainforest, planting green spaces and promoting pollution-free transport that it has become the only mega-city that acts as a carbon sink, soaking up more carbon dioxide than it produces. Other countries, such as Thailand, have embarked on major slum upgrading programs to make a positive impact on the urban environment.

Urban data on sustainability underscores the importance of including the poor when planning for a healthy and prosperous future. The urban poor use fewer resources and produce much less pollution than their wealthier neighbours. Yet they bear the brunt of the consequences when city systems fail to manage basic urban issues. The pollution and contamination produced by higher-income groups put lower-income groups at risk because they live and work near the industries and garbage dumps that generate it. Cleaner cities, therefore, means designing urban systems with people in mind – particularly those who live in the slums.

This is a UN-HABITAT Feature/Backgrounder, please feel free to publish or quote from this article provided UN-HABITAT is given credit. Suitable photographs are available on our website. For further information, please contact: Mr. Sharad Shankardass, Spokesperson, or Ms. Zahra Hassan, Press & Media Liaison, Press & Media Relations Unit, Tel: (254 2) 7623153/7623151, Fax: (254 2) 7624060, E-mail: habitat.press@unhabitat.org, Website: www.unhabitat.org. SOWC/06/07/Feature2