



MAKING SLUMS HISTORY: A GLOBAL CHALLENGE FOR 2020

**International Conference
Rabat – Morocco
26 – 29 November 2012**

General background

According to UN-Habitat estimates, between the year 2000 and 2010 a total 227 million people in developing countries have experienced significant improvements in living conditions. In other words, governments have managed to beat by a multiple of 2.2 MDG Target 7-D, namely, « *Significantly improve living conditions for a least 100 million slum-dwellers by 2020.* »

The world population is increasingly urban, there is no going back and, since 2010, over half of human kind live in urban areas. By 2030, the populations of all developing countries, most notably in Asia and Africa, will be more urban than rural. Regardless of size, urban areas afford existing and future residents more opportunities for improved living standards as they find their place in dynamic economic spaces with the benefits of the services afforded by economies of scale. In this sense, cities are in a constant state of flux.

Still, cities, and particularly those in the South, are a far cry from affording equivalent conditions and opportunities to their populations. A quasi-universal steepening of social inequities is taking on a particularly serious dimension in cities where extreme affluence can be found side by side with great poverty within restricted areas, in the process generating social instability and insecurity, with huge economic and social costs not just for the underprivileged but for the whole of society, too. The majority of urban populations come under a diversity of constraints of an economic, social, cultural and environmental nature.

In many developing countries, urban growth has frequently been characterised by the informal and/or illegal nature of human settlements, a clear demonstration of the failure of urban policies. This urban growth has been strongly associated with greater poverty and slum expansion. However, a number of countries have managed to curb slum expansion and improve living standards for their populations.

In this respect, Asia stands at the forefront of these successful efforts. It is estimated that the region managed to improve living and housing conditions for 172 million slum-dwellers between the year 2000 and 2010, or 74 per cent of its total slum population. Over the same period, China and India between themselves improved conditions for a combined 125 million slum-dwellers.

In Africa, similar improvements were experienced by 24 million slum-dwellers over the same decade, or 12 per cent of the global effort to tackle this particular form of urban divide. Across the developing world, North Africa is the only sub-region where the number (8.7 million) and the proportion of slum-dwellers have been on a consistent decrease (from 20 to 13 per cent). Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia were the highest achievers. However, in Sub-

Saharan Africa, the overall proportion of slum-dwellers in the combined urban population declined by only five per cent, or 17 million people.

Latin America and the Caribbean is another region where substandard housing has been significantly reduced overall, although the pattern of success is uneven across countries. In Argentina, Colombia, the Dominican Republic and Mexico, the number of slum-dwellers was reduced by a third between the year 2000 and 2010. As for Brazil, similar efforts benefited to over 10 million slum-dwellers over the same period.

In Morocco, the nationwide “Cities without slums” programme focuses on improved shelter conditions for over 1,742,000 people in living in informal, substandard housing, contributing to better urban inclusiveness and social cohesion. Since launch in 2004, the programme has achieved over 70 per cent of its overall objective, with beneficial effects for underprivileged households by dint of strong leadership and political will, well-defined objectives, an appropriate *modus operandi* and adequate budgeting. Local democracy became more effective in the process and the scheme was awarded the UN-Habitat Scroll of Honour in October 2010 in Shanghai.

With support from the European Commission and financial assistance from the Africa-Caribbean-Pacific (ACP) Group, over 150 towns and cities in those regions take advantage of UN-Habitat technical cooperation in their efforts to improve conditions for slum-dwellers.

Rationale

In developing countries over the past 10 years, the proportion of the urban population living in slums declined from 39 per cent in the year 2000 to about 32 per cent in 2010. Still, the urban divide remains an enduring reality, because, in absolute terms, urbanisation has caused a substantial increase in the numbers of slum dwellers, and the trend is bound to continue in the near future. Between the year 2000 and 2010, the urban population in developing countries increased by an average 58 million every year, which includes an annual average addition of six million people to the overall slum population. In the meantime, UN-Habitat estimates suggest that, thanks to improvements to, or prevention of, informal settlements, developing countries managed to improve substandard living conditions for an average 22 million every year between the year 2000 and 2010.

On these trends, the world slum population should reach 889 million by 2020. By dint of political determination and appropriate policies, Morocco has made significant achievements for which the country gained recognition through the 2010 Habitat Scroll of Honour conferred by UN-Habitat in Shanghai in October 2010.

In an effort to learn as much as possible from the substandard housing reduction policies implemented by other governments and cities around the world, Morocco is inviting the 20 best performing of those to an international symposium. The event will be held at Rabat from 26 to 29 November 2012, under the authority of UN-Habitat, the United Nations’ dedicated agency, and under the high patronage of HM King Mohammed VI.

The Top Performing countries to share best practice

The top performers generally got there through a combination of proactive policies, including: (i) restructuring existing informal settlements with secure tenure and improved access to basic services ; (ii) planning urban extensions and land servicing, with an adequate match between infrastructure and urban expansion ; (iii) laying out the foundations for supplies of adequate, affordable housing supplies as an alternative to slums ; (iv) integrated local programmes for urban development and housing with support from national government mechanisms; (v) stronger local authorities and participatory local governance for the development and implementation of local integrated strategies and programmes, based on effective national legal and financial frameworks.

Some countries have, indeed, made significant progress in slum reduction and are clearly on the path of reaching MDG Target 7-D as well as prevention of further slums. Governments must recognise that the 100-million slum-dweller target only set a minimum and was surpassed by a multiple of 2.2 by 2010. Therefore governments must commit to a revision and an increase in the number, taking in both achievements so far and the potential for new slums in the future.

In this sense, countries that have performed well to date must maintain and strengthen efforts to improve slum living conditions, while affording adequate alternatives to prevent further proliferation. Poorly performing countries must bring radical changes to bear on programmes and policies with respect to slums in particular and more generally urban poverty.

Millennium Development Goal Target 7-D and performance indicator

Target 7-D calls for significant improvements in the living conditions of a minimum 100 million slum-dwellers by 2020. Performance is assessed against indicator 7.10, i.e., the proportion of slum-dwellers in the urban population. This proportion refers to the number of household members who have no access to one or more basic services, namely potable water, improved sanitation, sustainable housing and adequate surface area, and security of tenure.

The international definition of slums as characterised by household living conditions as above reflects a compromise between theoretical and methodological perspectives, with a view to facilitating data collection. However, in practice, the fifth criterion (security of tenure) is left out for lack of any specific definition and given the wide variety of tenure systems around the world. The other four serve to assess those dimensions of slums that are easily measurable, i.e., lack of access to potable water, lack of improved sanitation systems as well overcrowded and non-sustainable housing.

However, national statistical surveys will only rarely retrieve the geographic location of such poor housing conditions and generally fail to gauge the seriousness of the substandard nature of shelter where one or more of the above-mentioned deprivations can be found. Such statistical disaggregation would allow for more specific targeting of policies and programmes on both a national and a local scale.

Finally, whereas Target 7-D (significant improvement in the living conditions of at least 100 million slum-dwellers by 2020) has by now been achieved and even exceeded on a global scale, this achievement glazes over steep discrepancies at the regional national and local

levels, and it would be appropriate to set fresh targets whereby every single country would reduce by a minimum 50 per cent by 2020 the proportion of the population in substandard housing. This would allow for better targeting and coordination of national efforts and any international support that may be required.

1 – Conference objectives

1. Develop specific recommendations and guidelines for slum improvement policies and the development of well-adapted housing alternatives to prevent new slum formation (the Rabat Declaration).
2. Devise the strategy required to revise Target 7-D of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and adjust it more closely to the diversity of national conditions and circumstances.
3. Share successful experiences, methodologies and evaluation methods with regard to slum reduction.
4. Broaden the scope of experience-sharing within the Conference to bring in Least Performing Countries (and African countries in particular), to help them implement effective slum reduction policies.
5. Strengthen partnerships between Morocco and other African countries.

Participants

Some two to three hundred foreign participants are expected at Rabat, including about 40 government ministers and heads of delegations. National delegations are encouraged to feature a well-balanced mix of representatives from government departments, local authorities and civil society, including representatives of relevant communities.

Guest countries where the decrease in the slum-dwelling proportion of the urban population has been more significant :¹ Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Morocco, Nigeria, Peru, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Turkey, Uganda, Vietnam.

Other guest countries : Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Haiti, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nepal, Philippines, Tunisia, Zambia.

International groupings of cities and local authorities, international NGOs, multilateral financial institutions, United Nations agencies, bilateral development agencies, academics and international experts.

¹UN-Habitat, Global Urban Observatory, 2012.