



# UN-HABITAT

STATE OF THE WORLD'S CITIES 2006/7



## Foreword

Since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration in 2000, many Governments have made significant progress toward reducing poverty by expanding primary education, promoting gender equality and improving people's access to basic services, among other important efforts. But those gains have been unevenly distributed, not only among and within countries, but also among and within cities.

As this third edition of the *State of the World's Cities* makes clear, much more needs to be done to secure the well-being of people living in poverty in the world's cities. Governments and development agencies have traditionally emphasized the improvement of rural areas, because that is where the vast majority of the world's poor live. But as rapid urbanization continues, similar energies are needed in urban areas. The problem is not urbanization per se, but the fact that urbanization in many developing regions has not resulted in greater prosperity or a more equitable distribution of resources. Indeed, efforts to improve the lives of the urban poor have not kept up with the rate of urbanization.

Rural poverty has long been the world's most common face of destitution. But urban poverty can be just as intense, dehumanizing and life-threatening. New UN-HABITAT data on slum populations reported here for the first time reveal startling facts about life in impoverished urban settlements, where parents must choose between paying rent and buying food for their children, where decrepit school facilities and costly materials deprive young people of a basic education, and where lack of sanitation, clean water and ventilation increase the risk of disease, particularly among women and children.

