

# UN-HABITAT *& Youth*

engaging informing advising connecting  
empowering consulting doing



# At the crossroads of history

UN-HABITAT recognizes young people as active participants in the development of human settlements, the UN parlance for towns and cities. Today's younger generation is already coming up with and implementing successful community-building projects in some of the most marginalized regions of the world. UN-HABITAT initiates and fosters inter-agency collaboration and partnerships with youth organizations.

We engage youth at an international level to ensure their voices get heard on the world stage. Working with young men and women and understanding their diverse abilities, realities and experiences is an essential element of UN-HABITAT's drive for sustainable urbanization.

Globally, children and young people under 24 account for roughly 40 percent of the global population. Indeed, young people are on the frontline of rising urban poverty, child trafficking, sexual exploitation, high unemployment, and the growing phenomenon of street children. Crime and violence, the breakdown of family life, environmental degradation, worsening health conditions and HIV/AIDS pandemic also constitute challenges facing today's urban youth.

## Partners and Youth Section- In sync with the young

Placed within the Monitoring and Research Division, the Partners and Youth section works towards mainstreaming youth concerns within UN-HABITAT as well as providing normative and operational support for youth-led programmes.

**Cover photo:** A collage showing UN-HABITAT Messengers of Truth at a peace concert at the Mathare slums of Nairobi (top) in December 2006. Photo: © UN-HABITAT / P. Wambua; and young people performing at the third session of the World Urban Forum in Vancouver, Canada in June 2006. Photos: © UN-HABITAT / N. Kihara.



Photo © International Youth Parliament, 2000

## Engaging

UN-HABITAT has devised a *Youth strategy for enhanced engagement* to present an integrated approach to urban youth development, to guide the operational activities of the agency when working with young people. It will provide a road map for the promotion of urban youth empowerment. UN-HABITAT actively promotes the implementation of youth programmes, working directly with youth-led groups.

## Informing

UN-HABITAT recognizes young people as key stakeholders and active participants in the future of human settlements. Young people need acknowledgment, guidance, resources and training in order to reach their full potential. This is especially important when it comes to the agency's urban poverty reduction strategies

sustainable urban development, adequate shelter for all, improvement in the lives of slum dwellers, access to safe water and sanitation, social inclusion, environmental protection, human and civil rights. Young people need to be informed of these strategies to which they like everyone else have an equal right.

## Advising

A *Policy dialogue on youth, children and urban governance* has been developed to support efforts in enhancing the role of cities and youth networks in addressing the particular needs of young people in the context of good governance. This policy paper forms part of UN-HABITAT'S Global Campaign on Urban Governance and stimulates and promotes dialogue and action by outlining the need for giving children and youth a role in urban governance.



## Connecting

UN-HABITAT initiates and fosters partnerships with other UN agencies and with youth organizations around the world that are working to ensure their concerns are incorporated. At the international political level the agency ensures that its focus on two of the key Millennium Development Goals falling under its mandate never loses sight of the needs and concerns of young people. Those are the drive to improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by the year 2020 (Goal 7, target 11), and to reduce by half the number of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water (Goal 7, target 10). The agency regularly invites young people to its big international gatherings, like the World Urban Forum, so that they can both meet like-minded groups from other countries and so that they can make their voices heard on the world stage.

## Empowering

UN-HABITAT is assisting Local Authorities in setting up computerised *One-Stop youth information resource centres* to help young people living in poverty equip themselves better for employment through vocational training and apprenticeships. The idea is that young people can learn to write a CV, to apply for a job, learn how to break down gender and age discrimination, find new ideas for work, and learn of job opportunities. Several Local Authorities have already started successful programmes in African cities, and the idea will soon spread beyond into Asia and Latin America.



Photo ©: EYA

### Consulting

UN-HABITAT's *Urban Youth Development Initiative* seeks to engage young people in urban poverty reduction so as to strengthen urban youth development policies by taking into account the needs and concerns of young people. UN-HABITAT solicits the views of young people at all of its international meetings so that it can bring these to the attention of the world's policy-making community. It sees consultation and listening as a key to making progress on crime and delinquency. The agency regards youth as active partners in helping make the world's growing cities decent, safe, healthy and inclusive places for all.

### Doing

Starting with the continent facing some of the greatest poverty challenges, and in the context of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, UN-HABITAT has developed the *Global Partnership Initiative on Urban Youth Development in Africa*. This initiative was devised subsequent to a Governing Council resolution and in partnership with other relevant United Nations agencies, multilateral institutions and private foundations. This resolution also seeks to ensure "the active participation of UN-HABITAT in the Secretary General's initiative on youth employment". Some of the fruits of that resolution are the *One-Stop* youth centres. Similarly, the agency has set up



special *We are the future centres* for the benefit of people living in towns and cities recovering from conflict and disaster. The focus of this rehabilitation work is on health, nutrition, arts, sports and computer technology. When it comes to spreading the word, the agency has turned to global music stars and Hip Hop artists who as UN-HABITAT *Messengers of Truth* are reaching out to young people everywhere.

The 21st Session of the Governing Council of UN-HABITAT adopted in April, 2007, a landmark resolution entitled *Urban Youth Development* that reflects the growing commitment of governments to address the issues of urban youth. The resolution calls for the establishment of the “*Opportunities Fund for Urban Youth-led Development*”, to catalyse dialogue between youth and all spheres of government, to provide the space and strengthen the capacity of youth-owned initiatives in improving their livelihoods.

UN-HABITAT has many programmes that engage with young people. To name just some, these include the Safer Cities Programme, the Sustainable Cities Programme that deals with the environment, the Training and Capacity Building Branch and the Water and Sanitation team which is promoting water conservation in schools and local communities in many developing countries.



Photo ©: N. Kihara/UN-HABITAT

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*“Young people, lest we forget, constitute the majority of the urban population in rapidly urbanizing countries. Often, they have no jobs and no voice. Any effective response to improve the living conditions of the urban poor and slum dwellers must deal, *prima facie*, with the challenges facing youth”.*

*Dr. Anna Tibaijuka,  
UN Under-Secretary General and Executive Director, UN-HABITAT*

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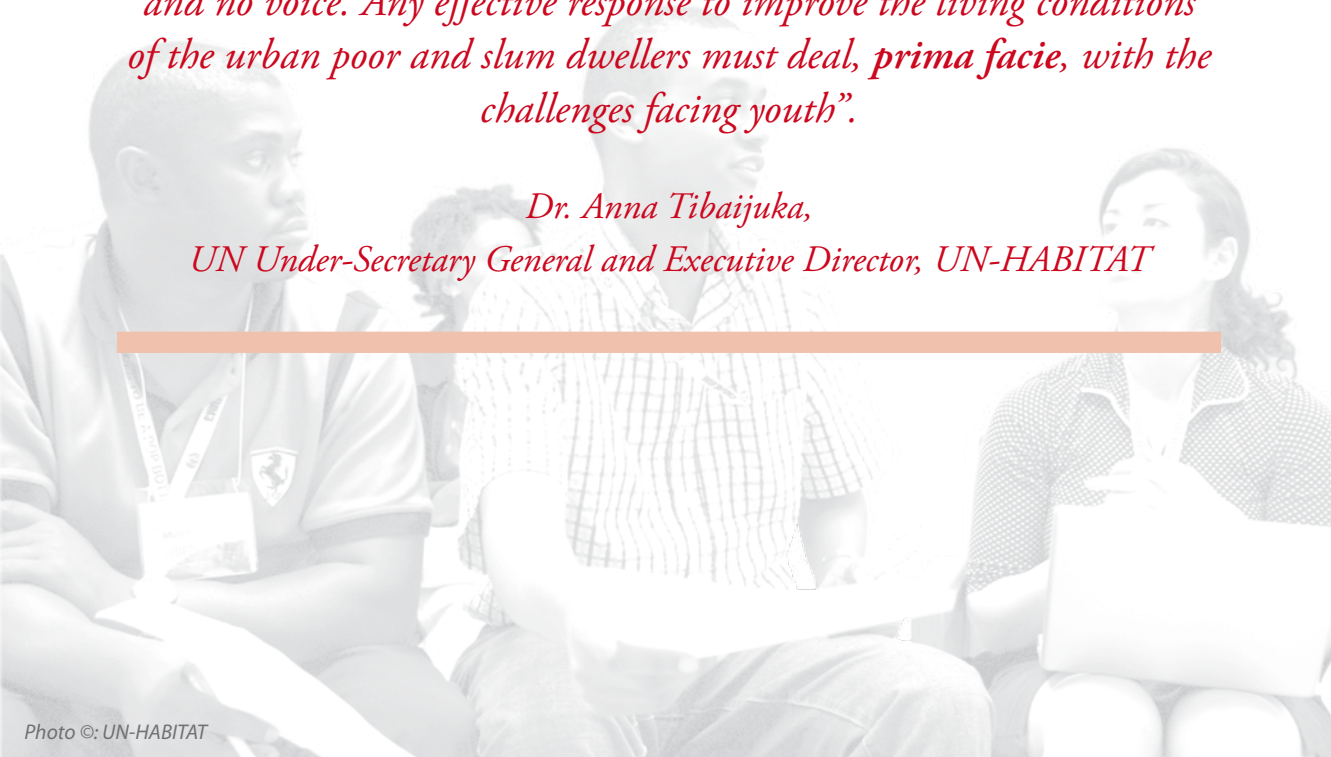
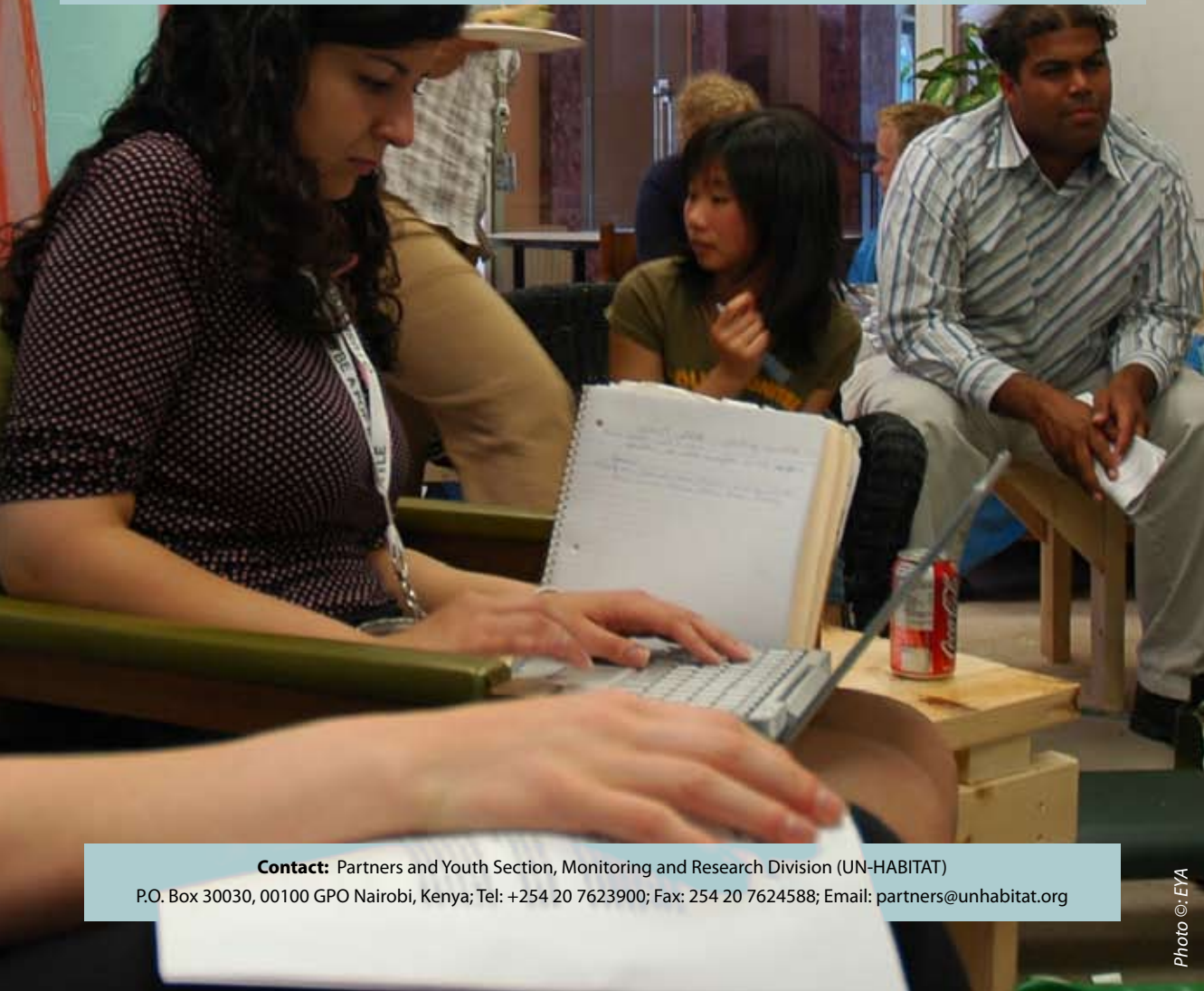


Photo ©: UN-HABITAT

# Facts

- The United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines 'youth', as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States.\*
- Globally, children and young people under 24 account for roughly 40 percent of the global population and 18 percent are aged between aged 15 and 24.
- 85 percent of these youth live in developing countries.
- High levels of unemployment of youth in urban areas is an indication of the inability of cities' to absorb labour, which in the long term has a direct impact on economic growth and poverty reduction.
- Youth make up 25 per cent of the working-age population but account for 43.7 percent of the unemployed.\*

\* *World Youth Report 2007 - Young people's Transition to Adulthood: Progress and Challenges*



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