



# UN-HABITAT

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## Urban Governance and Ethics

There is a growing recognition that the battle to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, to eradicate poverty, to achieve gender equity and human rights for all, and to move towards environmentally sound patterns of production and consumption, will increasingly take place in the world's cities. With demographers projecting that 60 per cent of the world's population will live in cities by 2030, up from around 30 per cent in the 1950s and 50 per cent today, it is not hard to imagine the momentous challenges that have to be faced in securing clean water supplies, waste and pollution management, decent housing, employment, urban transport and so on, all within a framework of law and respect for citizens' human rights.

In response to these daunting challenges, new directions in urban governance, policymaking and action are beginning to emerge, based upon greater recognition of the legitimate claims of different stakeholders involved in urban issues and problems. This movement is bringing together central governments, local authorities and municipalities, and civil society organizations and groups in joint efforts to address the most pressing problems. This is manifest in the tremendous upsurge of different forms of international, regional, national and local alliances, coalitions and partnerships focused on city issues around the world over the past 15 years.

Cities hold tremendous potential as engines of economic and social development, creating jobs and generating ideas through economies of scale and creative and innovative civic cultures. Cities today, however, can also generate and intensify social exclusion, denying the benefits of urban life to the poor, to women, to youth, and to religious or ethnic minorities and other marginalized groups.

Good urban governance is characterized by the principles of sustainability, subsidiarity, equity, efficiency, transparency and accountability, civic engagement and citizenship, and security. These principles are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

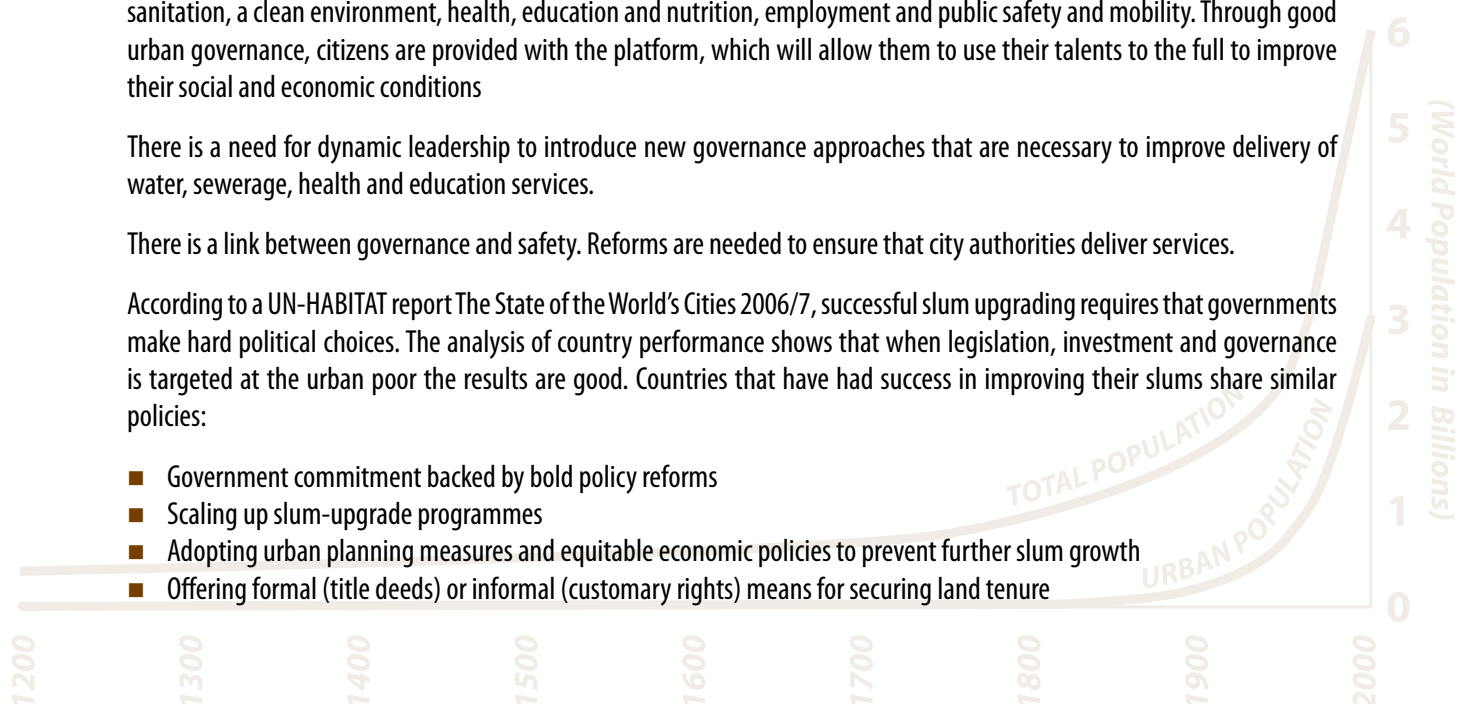
Urban governance is inextricably linked to the welfare of the citizenry. Good urban governance must therefore enable women and men to access the benefits of urban citizenship. Based on the principle of urban citizenship, it also affirms that no man, woman or child can be denied access to the necessities of urban life, including adequate shelter, security of tenure, safe water, sanitation, a clean environment, health, education and nutrition, employment and public safety and mobility. Through good urban governance, citizens are provided with the platform, which will allow them to use their talents to the full to improve their social and economic conditions

There is a need for dynamic leadership to introduce new governance approaches that are necessary to improve delivery of water, sewerage, health and education services.

There is a link between governance and safety. Reforms are needed to ensure that city authorities deliver services.

According to a UN-HABITAT report *The State of the World's Cities 2006/7*, successful slum upgrading requires that governments make hard political choices. The analysis of country performance shows that when legislation, investment and governance is targeted at the urban poor the results are good. Countries that have had success in improving their slums share similar policies:

- Government commitment backed by bold policy reforms
- Scaling up slum-upgrade programmes
- Adopting urban planning measures and equitable economic policies to prevent further slum growth
- Offering formal (title deeds) or informal (customary rights) means for securing land tenure



- The creation of zones of affordable serviced land for housing to prevent the growth of new slums
- Increasing investment in basic services such as affordable water and sanitation through innovative tariff structures and subsidies
- Instituting the devolution of finances and decision-making from central to local government

In its latest report, Transparency International said that Kenyan urban dwellers encounter graft within the local government structure when seeking essential services such as the connection of water.

“Corruption is more rampant in the licensing of small businesses, the provision of healthcare services and the connection and reconnection of water services,” the anti-corruption agency noted.

The rapid growth of inequality, poverty and of slums has not been due to vast impersonal forces inherent in urbanization, but rather to specific decisions by governments following economic policies that are guaranteed to have these results. Many national governments have abdicated their responsibilities to their citizens to promote fairness, redistribution, social justice and stability, all in favour of a fantasy of competitiveness and wealth for the few.

Governance systems that facilitate local participation and decentralized leadership have been found to be more effective, especially in the context of rapid and uncontrolled urbanization where capacities for oversight and enforcement are limited.