



UN-HABITAT

2nd African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development

28 – 30 July 2008, Abuja, Nigeria



Energy and transport

As cities in developing countries grow rapidly, their energy needs are also increasing. Cities are now home to half of humankind and are arguably the greatest consumers and users of energy. In fact, cities are the major contributors to deteriorating air quality and the emission of greenhouse gases that lead to climate change with urban activities generating close to 80 percent of all greenhouse gases.

In order to successfully answer this challenge of cities and global climate change, we need to encourage a number of measures to be taken, including stricter energy efficiency standards in fuel consumption from transport; energy efficiency in building construction and use; as well as improving global standards for appliance manufacturing and importation applied across the board in developed and developing country cities alike. After all, the majority of energy is consumed in cities. Therefore, it is an urban issue. Best practices on climate-friendly can be shared between cities of both north and south.

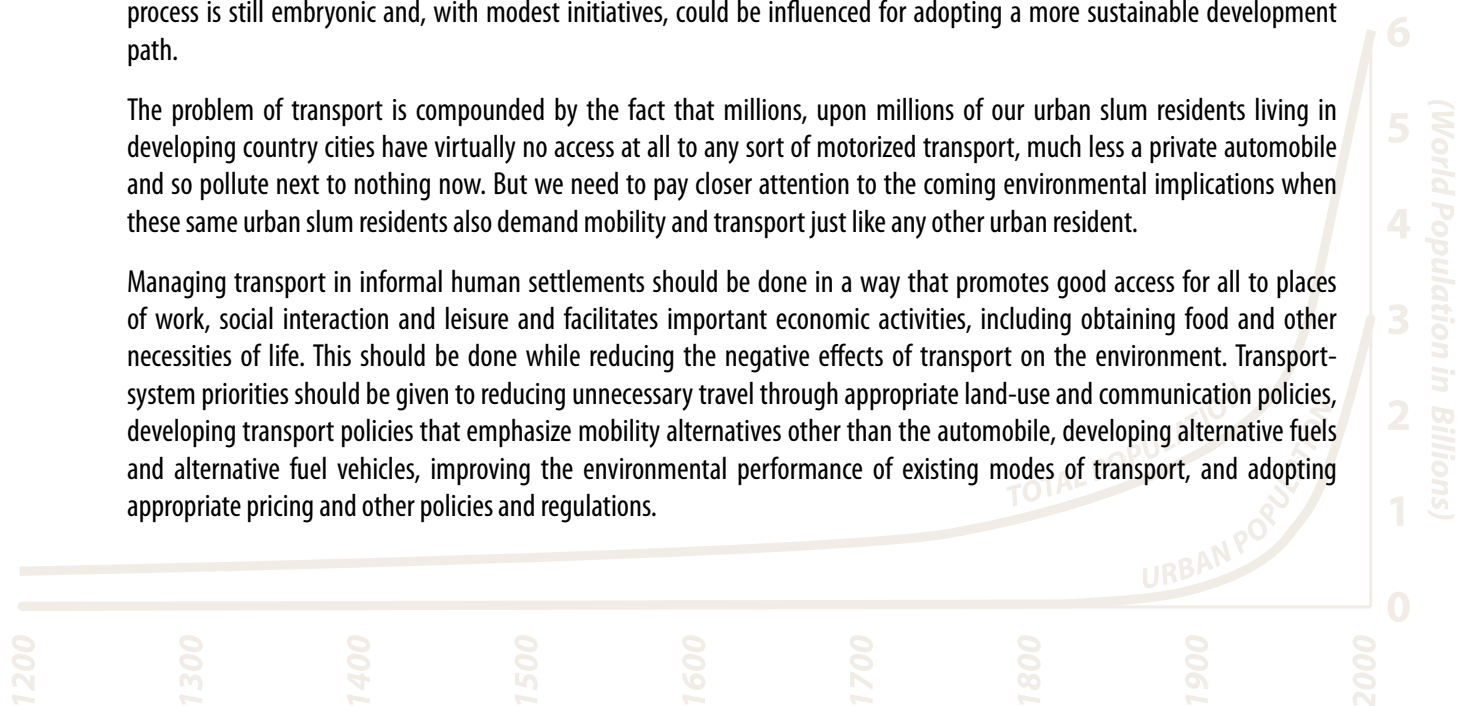
Poverty is a major contributor to the energy situation in slum areas. Recent surveys in African cities show that fuels such as kerosene and gas are beyond the reach of the urban poor, forcing them to resort to unsustainable energy sources, such as charcoal. Access to affordable, modern energy services is a pre-requisite for sustainable human development and for achieving the MDGs. Currently, one third of the global population does not have access to power - for lighting, cooking, refrigeration – and under today's policies and investment trends in energy infrastructure, 1.5 billion people will still lack access to electricity in 2030.

Large-scale primarily urban-based electricity utilities in developing countries and cities have strong economic incentives to regularize electricity provision to slum communities and other urban low-income communities in order to reduce and avoid so much technical energy loss. This idea is particularly important in countries and cities that rely on coal-based electricity generation. Reducing the overall energy consumption footprint in this manner will have strong positive global environmental benefits.

Africa is the fastest urbanizing continent in the world with urban population growth rates estimated to be double national growth rates. Although urban transport environmental problems are growing, the region's urban transport development process is still embryonic and, with modest initiatives, could be influenced for adopting a more sustainable development path.

The problem of transport is compounded by the fact that millions, upon millions of our urban slum residents living in developing country cities have virtually no access at all to any sort of motorized transport, much less a private automobile and so pollute next to nothing now. But we need to pay closer attention to the coming environmental implications when these same urban slum residents also demand mobility and transport just like any other urban resident.

Managing transport in informal human settlements should be done in a way that promotes good access for all to places of work, social interaction and leisure and facilitates important economic activities, including obtaining food and other necessities of life. This should be done while reducing the negative effects of transport on the environment. Transport-system priorities should be given to reducing unnecessary travel through appropriate land-use and communication policies, developing transport policies that emphasize mobility alternatives other than the automobile, developing alternative fuels and alternative fuel vehicles, improving the environmental performance of existing modes of transport, and adopting appropriate pricing and other policies and regulations.



Non-motorized transport is a major mode of mobility, particularly for low-income, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. One structural measure to counteract the socio-economic marginalization of these groups is to foster their mobility by promoting affordable, efficient and energy-saving modes of transport.

In order to achieve sustainable transport in informal human settlements, Governments at the appropriate levels, in partnership with the private sector the community sector and other relevant interested parties, should:

- a) Support an integrated transport policy approach that explores the full array of technical and management options and pays due attention to the needs of all population groups, especially those whose mobility is constrained because of disability, age, poverty or any other factor;
- b) Coordinate land-use and transport planning in order to encourage spatial settlement patterns that facilitate access to such basic necessities as workplaces, schools, health care, places of worship, goods and services, and leisure, thereby reducing the need to travel;
- c) Encourage the use of an optimal combination of modes of transport, including walking, cycling and private and public means of transportation, through appropriate pricing, spatial settlements policies and regulatory measures;
- d) Promote and implement disincentive measures that discourage the increasing growth of private motorized traffic and reduce congestion, which is damaging environmentally, economically and socially, and to human health and safety, through pricing, traffic regulation, parking and land-use planning and traffic abatement methods, and by providing or encouraging effective alternative transport methods, particularly to the most congested areas;
- e) Provide or promote an effective, affordable, physically accessible and environmentally sound public transport and communication system, giving priority to collective means of transport with adequate carrying capacity and frequency that support basic needs and the main traffic flows;
- f) Promote, regulate and enforce quiet, use-efficient and low-pollution technologies, including fuel-efficient engine and emissions controls and fuel with a low level of pollution emissions and impact on the atmosphere and other alternative forms of energy;
- g) Encourage and promote public access to electronic information services.

Lastly, improving transportation systems through pricing, investment, and particular appropriate technological options such as encouraging bicycling as well as regulatory measures to reduce urban traffic congestion are also crucial.

Africa left out in climate change debate

Africa is the “forgotten continent” in the fight against climate change. It needs help to cope with projected water shortages and declining crop yields, says Mr. Yvo de Boer, the U.N.’s top climate change official. Mr. de Boer, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change said he is concerned that big developing countries, such as China and India, had won far more funds than Africa from rich nations to help cut greenhouse gases, for instance by investing in wind farms, hydropower dams or in cleaning up industrial emissions.

“Africa is not getting a lot out of climate change policy at the moment,” he said. “But climate change will affect Africa very severely.” The UN says that Africa, the Arctic, the deltas of major rivers in Asia and small island states are likely to be especially affected by climate change. For Africa, it says that between 75 and 250 million people on the world’s poorest continent are projected to face increased water stress by 2020. “That in itself is enough for more world action,” Mr. de Boer says. – *Reuters*