

UN-HABITAT



REPORT ON

**WORLD HABITAT DAY CELEBRATION IN GHANA
MONDAY 4 OCTOBER 2004**

**THEME: CITIES—ENGINE OF RURAL
DEVELOPMENT**

REPORT ON THE CELEBRATION OF WORLD HABITAT DAY IN GHANA

The Events

August 2004

A planning committee made up of representatives from the Ministries of Works and Housing, Local Government and Rural Development, Environment and Science, Women and Children, Social Welfare, Accra Metropolitan Authority, the Habitat Focal person was established to plan the celebration of the day. The representative of the Ministry of Works and Housing chaired the committee.

A number of meetings were held and a number of activities undertaken including preparation of budget. The Ministry of Local Government and Rural funded the celebration.

Monday 4 October 2004



Banners were hoisted to announce the celebration of the day

1. The GTV Morning Show:

This is a 15-minute (6.45-7.00 a.m.) clip of the National television station used for discussions on topical issues. This station is nationwide and is watched all over the country. The mayors of Accra, Elmina and Tamale were at the station on Monday 4th October as discussants on the theme.

2. The Radio Discussions on GBC Radio

Two Directors of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and Ministry of Environment and Science were at a radio talk show in Accra. People phoned in from all parts of the country and made their contributions.

3. The News Paper Article

The most widely circulated national newspaper (Daily Graphic) carried a feature article written by the HPM in its features column.

4. The News Conference

A news conference was hosted by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. About 50 people (including Members of Parliament, Ministers of State, Directors of Ministries, the private sector, academicians, Civil Society Organizations, Members of Professional Bodies and UN Agencies attended the news conference. This was carried on two major television stations in the country.

The Deputy Minister of Ministry of Environment and Science chaired the News Conference. There was also an address by the Deputy Minister of Works and Housing and a key note address by the Deputy Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Captain Rtd. Nkrabea Effah Dartey.

In the keynote address the Deputy Minister asserted that in developed countries whilst the rural areas (countryside) connotes a place for leisure and relaxation, where people from the cities can take time off their busy schedules and have some rest, the same cannot be said of the rural areas in developing countries. These areas have been characterized by the lack of basic necessities; high rate of poverty, unemployment, etc., which have forced many to move into the few cities in search of greener pastures.

He tried to identify the different types of human settlements with examples as:

- Mega cities such as London
- Cities such as Nairobi and Accra.
- Urban areas such as Elmina.
- Sub-Urban residential areas which are found in cities.
- Inner City slums, e.g., Agbobloshie.
- Villages.

For the cities, the inner city slums present a number of challenges and have to be confronted with appropriate interventions to avoid chaos.

Due to the complex nature of the problems in cities local governance should work. There is the need to break down cities into manageable units for good local governance.

He was happy to announce that in Ghana, the city of Kumasi is doing very well because local governance is working. Town council system is very operational and the mayor is not overwhelmed with all the issues in the city. He advised that other cities should strive to get small operational and manageable units to handle localized issues.



The Deputy Minister delivering his address

To make cities a place conducive for people to live, the following issues are worth considering as we celebrate this and subsequent World Habitat days:

- a. All stakeholders should continue talking. He particularly called on the Banks and the Ghana Real Estate Development Agency (GREDA) to support government in housing development in the cities.
- b. World Habitat Day should not only be a celebration but an all-year activity for practical results.
- c. The city of Accra is too choked and in subsequent years the celebration should be organized outside Accra to enable others to take part.
- d. It has become imperative to strengthen Local Governance if the problems of the cities and rural areas are to be properly addressed

As part of the news conference there were solidarity messages from GREDA
And the Ghana Institute of Planners.

The President of the Ghana Institute of Planners, Mr . Kofi Osei Dankwa pledged the support of Development Planners to the Government of Ghana in solving the problems in human settlements.



The President of the Ghana Institute of Planners delivering his Solidarity Message

GREDA proposed a National Housing Forum at which all stakeholders should meet and discuss to determine a comprehensive all embracing housing policy for Ghana.

On behalf of the Resident Coordinator, the WFP Representative in Ghana, Ms Trudy B Bower-Pirinis read the Secretary General's address. The HPM in Ghana read the Executive Director's address.



Ms Trudy Bower-Pirinis reading the Secretary General's address



A Section of the audience at the news conference



A Section of the audience at the News Conference



The Deputy Minister of Local Government and Rural development in a discussion with the Mayor of Accra at the News Conference



Deputy Minister for Works and Housing (middle), Deputy Minister for Environment and Science (left) and the WFP Representative in Ghana (extreme right) at the celebration.



A Cultural Troupe entertaining the gathering

Daily Graphic

EDITORIAL
MONDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2004

PRISONER ABUSE

Acting Commissioner of the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), Ms Anna Bossman, is reported to have bemoaned the congestion in our prisons and police cells, following her visit to the James Fort Prisons and some police cells in Accra, remarking that the punishment that convicts suffer is the loss of their freedoms, not their dignity.

Usually, officials of CHRAJ visit our prisons and cells to ensure that the dignity of the inmates is not violated, in line with provisions in our Constitution which state that "the dignity of all persons shall be inviolable". Unfortunately, each year they stumble upon violations of the fundamental rights and dignity of some convicts and suspects.

It was no different this year as the reports indicated that Ms Bossman found out that three prisoners had been on remand for about three years, while two others had been on remand for almost seven years, and in the case of one of them, he had not been in court even once.

However, Article 15 (3) states unequivocally that "a person who has not been convicted of a criminal offence shall not be treated as a convicted person and shall be kept separately from convicted persons".

How is it possible for a suspect who

World Habitat Day

By Victoria A. Ankwa

TODAY, October 4, is the World Habitat Day. A day designated by the UN for reflection on issues of human settlements.

This year's theme "Cities; Engine of Rural Development" is a reflection of the social, economic, political and environmental interdependence between rural and urban areas.

Urbanisation, for all intents and purposes, is a positive development factor. If properly managed, it can help reduce poverty by providing a sustainable link between the cities and the rural areas.

Cities offer habitation to excess rural population, provide educational and health needs and also markets for the produce from rural areas. Migrant workers in the cities send remittances that help to improve the rural economy.

The links between cities and rural areas depend on infrastructure networks; better access to markets, higher levels in agricultural production, information and jobs. The development of the links demand a people-centred, gender-sensitive and participatory approach to give the communities access to services, infrastructure, housing, governance, security of tenure and employment opportunities.

According to the UNDP Human Development Report 2004, the urban growth rate in Ghana is estimated at 3.1 per cent annually. Eighty-seven per cent of the urban population has access to safe water while 44.8 per cent has access to improved

sanitations, while 23 per cent still require sustainable access to an improved water source.

The rate of urban growth, according to UN-HABITAT, is creating slum populations in these urban areas of the developing regions of the world. Currently, 78.2 per cent of the urban populations in the world's least developed countries live in slums — 71.9 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa, and 43 per cent in developing regions. This figure is expected to increase by over 560 million by 2020, representing an average of 29 million of new slum dwellers per year.

This phenomenon is also true of Ghana. In 2001, Ghana had an estimated urban population of 7.1 million people; growing at a rate of 3.1 per cent annually. It is projected to reach 9.5 million people in 2010. During the same period, slum population in Ghana was estimated at 4,993,000, growing at a rate of 1.83 per cent to reach 5.8 million in 2010.

Although the urban population and its slums are expanding at a faster rate, the fact also remains that the rural population still includes the largest number of the needy population living below the poverty line. The GPRS underscores the fact that but for the migration of the youth from rural to urban areas to work as porters, street hawkers etc poverty levels in the rural areas could have been worse.

• Cities, engines of rural development

Increase in poverty as registered in the Ghana Living Standard Survey has been described as more of a rural phenomenon. The geographical variation of extreme poverty ranges from two per cent in Accra to 59 per cent in Rural Savannah. Poverty was also found to be profound in food crop farmers, mostly women, who are invariably rural-based.

There is, therefore, the need to treat the urban and rural areas holistically because they form part of a dynamic system in which linkages have to be strengthened. While the cities deliver improvements in the slums, the urbanisation needs of rural populations have to be stepped up to reduce rural-urban migration, which is the cause of worsening living conditions of urban slum dwellers.

Rural-urban migration leaves rural areas with fewer people of working age and subsequently with a lower potential for development. This situation reflects the need for new, improved policies and delivery systems.

It would require allocation of more resources to the urbanisation of rural areas, providing services, infrastructure, better governance and employment opportunities for rural populations. This should be supported with adequate policy and legal instruments to attract resources, or at least retain labour and revenues in villages and towns.

On a larger scale, this wider urbanisation approach will provide the urban-rural link with a network of properly urbanised

local markets, the big cities, thus decongesting the present city-periphery and creating opportunities for sustainable development.

This proposed change towards more balanced rural urbanization; goes against established patterns and may not be easy, especially the trend of the market has generally overlapped the rural sector. But it can be the present vicious cycle of increasing rural population proliferation, and a way forward to counter to solve the urban slum in an integrated way enhancing rural areas.

To stimulate the implementation of this alternative strategy, the policy needs to be set on two national urban and rural policy is required with the government and the private sector. Second, the local government must be engaged and encouraged to improve the social and built environments of their rural areas.

This requires a lot of support from the district, municipal and metropolitan assemblies and by the Government arrangements from the private civil society and local ties.

It is when the cities and rural areas are considered as a continuous dynamic system that we can have sustainable development.