



WORLD HABITAT DAY AGENDA

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The United Nations has designated Monday, 2nd October 2006 for global observance of World Habitat Day. The event is to remind everyone of the collective responsibility for the future of the human habitat, and to highlight the state of human settlements and the basic right to adequate shelter.

The theme of the celebration, being ***Cities – Magnets of Hope***, is to draw everyone's attention to the importance of managing rapid urbanization and reducing urban poverty, and is to stimulate ideas and actions towards making cities acceptable places of dwelling.

With the level of migration into cities, it is not an exaggeration that cities are now the home for half of the population of mankind, and that two-thirds of humanity will be living in cities by the year 2050, more than half of which people could be living in slums.

Slums are said to be traits of poverty and are informal settlements, where the residents are characterized as having little or no access to such services as set out in the “*Millennium Development Goals*” [MDG]. The MDG is an outcome of a meeting held at the dawn of the new millennium, where world leaders committed themselves to a goal of eradicating hunger, illiteracy, gender inequality, child mortality, HIV/AIDS, environmental degradation etcetera, all of which are features of slum living.

Target 11 of the MDG commits governments to achieve significant improvement in the lives of slum dwellers by the year 2020. In attaining this target, slum upgrading and prevention becomes inevitable, though evictions and demolitions are not the best practice. The right approach to this target is the integrated slum upgrading, in which slum dwellers including women and youths are involved in planning and managing their neighborhoods.

The National Union of Tenants of Nigeria, as the apex organization for Nigerian residents, is working with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme [Nairobi] to attain the MDG Target. The primary aim of this is to compliment government's effort to improve the living conditions of the people, particularly those in the urban centers, where growing level of population has culminated in the rising pressure on accommodation and social amenities. It is this pursuit that has given credence to the designation of the union as a focal-point for World Habitat Day celebration in Nigeria.

Last year, the union arrayed the event with activities aimed at drawing public attention to the global theme entitled "Millennium Development Goals and the Cities. This year, the union intends to add beautiful colors to the event by celebrating it in conjunction with the Government of Rivers State of Nigeria and in partnership with multinational and civil society organizations that reflect interest in human settlements development. This is with a view to involving them in the pursuit of the goal of the event. The order of activities commemorating the event is as follows:

Date	Activity	Venue	Special Guest
SUNDAY 24/09/06	State Church Service [Inter-denominational]	Corpus Kristi Cathedral, Port Harcourt	Executive Governor of Rivers State
TUESDAY 26/09/06	Press Visitation	Urban Slums	Not Applicable
THURSDAY 28/09/06	Launching of Urban Welfare Office	#25B Abonnema Wharf Road, Port Harcourt	Mayor of the City of Port Harcourt
SATURDAY 30/09/06	Interactive Session	Hotel Presidential, Port Harcourt	Chief [Sir] F. A. Ihunwo HRM Eze [prof] F. Eke
MONDAY 01/10/06 [Grand Finale]	Opening Ceremony	Integrated Cultural Centre, Port Harcourt	Executive Governor of Rivers State
	Closing Ceremony	Hotel Presidential, Port Harcourt	Hon. Commissioner of Housing & Urban Dev.

HIGHLIGHTS OF EVENTS

State Church Service: this is part of the events marking the opening of the World Habitat Week. The event will be used to create awareness of Christians' responsibility for the future of the human habitat and to raise alms from various churches to support the homeless and the socially excluded. Expected to grace the occasion is the Executive Governor of Rivers State with other top government functionaries as well as representatives of civil society organizations, traditional rulers and community leaders.

Press Visitation: this event is to be carried out in conjunction with the Press, and is to highlight the living conditions of the poor, especially the conditions in which people live in slums. The aim of the event is to understand the Poor's needs, particularly the needs of those that are living in the most depressed physical conditions including the destitute and the psychotics. The visit will incorporate interview with slum dwellers, and is to equip the stakeholders with current information on slum phenomenon.

Launching of Urban Welfare Office: this event is to officially open an "Urban Welfare Office" to be sited along Abonnema Wharf Road, Port Harcourt. The need for the Office comes in response to the large concentration of industrial settings in Rivers State and the consequent population outburst in Port Harcourt, which situation has plagued the city with rising level of demand for social amenities. The Office will, when opened, pursue the social welfare enhancement of the residents of Port Harcourt by [1] monitoring the living conditions of the residents with a view to drawing the stakeholders' attention to areas of challenges and [2] promoting clean neighborhood among the residents with a view to making the city more inclusive and decent for human habitation. The whole scheme is to complement government's effort to improve the living conditions of the city dwellers, and is in pursuit of the goal of this year's celebration of the World Habitat Day, which focuses on making cities acceptable places of dwelling.

Interactive Session: this is a Radio/TV programme involving a panel discussion on the theme of this year's event. The aim of the programme is to highlight the essential dimensions of poverty and their effects in an urbanized society. Featuring at the panel are the Permanent Secretary of Rivers State Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Chief [Sir] F. A. Ihunwo and the President of the union, HRM Eze [Professor] Frank Eke.

Grand Finale: this is the main activity marking the World Habitat Day celebration in Rivers State and is divided into four parts namely [1] official Opening Ceremony of the event; [2] Launching of Programme; [3] Presentation of Habitat Awards; and [4] Closing Ceremony. Highlights of the activities are as follows:

[1] **Opening Ceremony:** this includes [1] opening of the event by the State Governor; [2] presentation of addresses and goodwill messages; and [3] cultural display/traditional dances.

[2] **Launching:** this event is to raise fund to support the establishment of an "Integrated Slum Upgrading Programme" [ISUP] in Port Harcourt, and is to compliment government's effort to achieve meaningful improvement in the lives of slum dwellers by the year 2020.

Fund realized from the launching will be used to provide facilities such as public toilets, waste disposal and water boreholes; and to initiate projects such as health centers, nursery schools and ultra-modern markets/shopping plazas in the urban slums. Towards this pursuit, stakeholders of slum communities including government and the slum dwellers will be integrated into the Programme.

[3] **Award Presentation:** this year's World Habitat Day is to be celebrated in Rivers State with presentation of awards to outstanding persons including authorities, organizations and well-meaning individuals that have made significant contributions towards shelter development in the State. The yardstick for selecting candidates for the award is the satisfaction of the parameters for adequate shelter. These include:

[i] **Habitability** – provision of housing at a non-hazardous location, with structures permanent enough to protect the residents from the extremes of climatic conditions, which structures must have facilities for safety, sanitation, water, nutrition, recreation etc.

- [ii] **Affordability** – provision of housing at such rent level that the attainment or satisfaction of the other basic needs of the residents such as food, clothing, healthcare etcetera is not frustrated.
 - [iii] **Location** – provision of housing at such location that the residents are not subjected to extreme effort in getting to and fro certain places such as place of work, health center, school, market etc.
 - [iv] **Secure Tenure** – provision of housing at such condition that protection of the residents from forced evictions or other forms of harassment is guaranteed.
- [4] **Closing Ceremony**: this event is designed for a banquet party to be held in honor of the award winners and to mark the official closing of the celebration. The occasion is to be used to present paper on the theme of the celebration and to entertain the audience with variety shows including musical band, drama and other sight attractions.

For more detail about the World Habitat Day, visit <http://www.unhabitat.org/whd> or contact:

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