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**RELEASE: Cities Need to Focus on Equitable Access to Core Services to Achieve Economic Prosperity and Environmental Sustainability.**

***New World Resources Report examines whether extending core services to urban under-served will lay the groundwork for more sustainable urban growth***

**QUITO//WASHINGTON (October 14, 2016) —** Rapidly growing cities are finding it increasingly difficult to provide their residents with core services, like housing, water, energy and transportation **—** a challenge that is exacerbated as the share of poor people living in urban areas grows.

New research from the [World Resources Institute](http://www.wri.org) finds that in most cities in the Global South, more than **70 percent** of residents lack reliable access to basic services like livable, well-located housing; clean water; sustainable energy; and accessible and affordable transportation. The [*World Resources Report: Towards a More Equal City*](http://www.citiesforall.org/) examines whether prioritizing access to core urban services will create cities that are prosperous and sustainable for all people.

The first installment of the World Resources Report, a paper that frames the key arguments, is being released as urban leaders from around the world gather in Quito, Ecuador, to set the global agenda for cities at the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, known as Habitat III, a meeting held only once every 20 years. WRI’s new research aims to create a movement in urban transformation that will help Habitat III and the New Urban Agenda move from plans to implementation.

“For the past five years, everyone has been talking about cities. We used to think that only nations could tackle big global challenges. Now we realize mayors and urban change agents have important leadership roles to play,” said **Ani Dasgupta**, Global Director, WRI Ross Center for Sustainable Cities. “This dynamic matters because the next generation of urbanization will be very different than what it was in the past century. The challenge is how do we build cities where *everyone* can live, move and thrive?”

The challenges of urban growth are remarkably different today. The world’s urban population is expected to increase by 2.5 billion people by 2050, with more than **90 percent** of that increase occurring in Asia and Africa.

WRI’s research identifies four key challenges to achieving sustainable cities:

* highest rates of urbanization are in sub-Saharan Africa, South and Southeast Asia;
* urbanization is now happening in more low-income countries than in the past;
* the share of poor people living in urban areas is on the rise worldwide; and
* cities in the Global South have the fewest public resources per capita.

In 2012, more than 482 million urban residents lacked access to modern fuels and 131 million lacked access to electricity; and in 2015, 140 million people did not have reliable, clean water. For millions of under-served city-dwellers, the lack of access to core services undermines peoples’ economic productivity, challenges them to fend for themselves in inefficient and costly ways and risks polluting the environment.

“Urbanization presents a challenge, but also offers an opportunity to find new ways of planning, building and governing cities. For many rapidly urbanizing cities, the challenge is to deliver quality core services that are affordable, reach more people and are less resource-intensive than traditional solutions,” said **Victoria A. Beard**, Director of Research, WRI Ross Center for Sustainable Cities and lead author of the report. “The World Resources Report takes equitable access to services as its entry point. We examine if equitable access to core services is the key to unlocking economic growth and environmental sustainability in cities.”

During the next year, WRI will release working papers that evaluate:

* Housing: how cities can provide growing numbers of residents with secure and affordable shelter located near economic opportunities and urban amenities;
* Energy: how cities can meet growing energy needs through improved access to modern fuels, clean and efficient cook stoves and distributed renewable energy;
* Transportation: how cities can avoid car-centric decisions and support walking, biking and public transportation for all.
* Water and sewage: how cities can find alternative approaches for treating and delivering affordable and reliable potable water cost-effectively, while reducing stress on urban watersheds.
* Land use and urban expansion: how cities can limit unplanned urban expansion through coordinated spatial planning, more effective land use and density regulations, and monitoring of land markets.

Sector-specific approaches are a start, but they are not enough. To build thriving cities of the future will require transformative change. Preliminary case studies in this first installment find the following ingredients are key to urban transformation: a strong coalition of urban change agents with a shared vision, a seminal problem that unleashes a cycle of positive change, the availability of financial resources to implement ambitious reforms and a long-term political commitment can spark broader, city-wide transformation. WRI will develop a series of city-level case studies from across the world to examine how transformative change does or does not happen, addressing the following questions:

* Is there a discernible pattern to how transformative urban change unfolds in a city and how it is ultimately institutionalized?
* What are the roles of governance, finance, and capacity to plan and manage urban change over time?
* What actions can coalitions of urban change agents take to support transformative urban change?
* Why and how does transformative urban change stall or regress?

The first installment of the World Resources Report is available at [www.citiesforall.org](http://www.citiesforall.org/).

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