

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PARTNERS GRASSROOTS PCG**  
**RESPONSE TO ZERO DRAFT OF THE NEW URBAN AGENDA** (Dated May 6th)

The New Urban Agenda, the next global commitment for sustainable urban development, holds immense potential as a transformative plan of action for our human settlements. The **Grassroots Partner Constituency Group of the General Assembly of Partners** has been a consistent voice in the Habitat III process ensuring the participation of informal workers, informal settlement dwellers and other grassroots stakeholders' voices in the process and advocating for their economic contributions, priorities and needs to be recognized in this new global commitment.

In advance of the Intersessional Meeting for Stakeholders on the Zero Draft of the New Urban Agenda taking place June 6-10, the Grassroots PCG presents the following priorities and recommendations to pave the way for a fully inclusive, equitable and transformative global commitment. We provide our vision to further strengthen the New Urban Agenda's commitment to the grassroots, and recognition of the deep linkages between informal settlements, the informal economy and other aspects of the grassroots to critical aspects of the city, including access to housing, basic services.

**Key Priorities Included in the Zero Draft**

We welcome the recognition of, and recommendations relating to, informal settlements, informal workers, the informal economy, the informal sector, and the urban poor included the Zero Draft of the New Urban Agenda, and the recognition of the need for “a radical paradigm shift in the way cities and human settlements are planned, developed, governed and managed” in line with Policy Paper 1 on the Right to the City (preamble).

**Transformative Commitments (Paragraphs 19-83)**

We welcome:

- Recognition of the need to ensure equitable and affordable access to basic physical and social infrastructure for all, including affordable serviced land, housing, energy, water and sanitation, waste disposal, mobility, health, education, and information and communication technologies (par. 25).
- Recognition of the impact of housing on livelihood opportunities (pars. 28, 30) and the need to recognize informal settlements and the informal economy as “engines for economic growth, prosperity, and job creation” (par. 31). The draft rightly recognizes the role of urban policy in *creating* informality (par. 31).
- Emphasis that housing policies should promote equity and provide alternatives to forced evictions (par. 29) and a commitment to promote increased security of tenure, with recognition for a plurality of tenure types that includes a commitment to “fit-for-purpose gender-responsive solutions within a continuum of land rights,” and consideration for issues such as proximity to services and adequate financing schemes (par. 33).
- Commitment to develop integrated housing approaches that are affordable, safe and well-located in a manner that combats spatial and socio-economic segregation, and improves

the lives of the urban poor - particularly those living in slums and informal settlements (par. 31).

- Recognition of the role of public space in increasing productivity and prosperity (par. 35), the importance of public space being free of barriers that discourage the presence of the poor and low-income dwellers (par. 36), and the role of public space as a site of economic exchange (par. 36). It further recognizes the importance of diversity in the urban economy (par. 37).
- Commitment “to an urban economy model, built on local resources and competitive advantages, which fosters an enabling environment...that allocates resources to ensure all residents have the opportunities and skills to meaningfully participate in the economy” (par. 46), and recognition of the importance of economic diversity (par. 47). We also welcome its commitment to support adequate physical and social infrastructure to improve productivity (par. 52), giving particular attention to transport needs of the working poor “as the economic benefits of extending mobility to informal settlements can be dramatic” (par. 53).

We also welcome the strong commitment to the informal sector in the following paragraphs:

- Commitment to “integrated housing approaches that incorporates the provision of adequate, affordable, safe, and well-located housing, with access to quality public space, basic infrastructure, and services like sanitation systems and public transport, as well as livelihood opportunities, combating spatial and socio-economic segregation, and improving the living conditions of the urban poor, including those living in slums and informal settlements” (par. 30);
  - The recognition of urban informality as “a result of lack of affordable housing, dysfunctional land markets, and urban policies” (par. 32);
  - Commitment “to ensure equitable access to public goods, natural resources, basic services and the use of public spaces that are essential to the livelihoods of people, in particular the urban poor, as well as formal and informal workers” (par. 57);
  - Commitment “to create an enabling and fair business environment and support innovations and entrepreneurship with strategies that are able to increase and harness the capacity of both the formal and informal economy” (par. 58);
- Most forcefully, the statement that “we commit to recognize the working poor in the informal economy as contributors and legitimate actors in the economic development process of cities. A gradual approach to formalization will be developed to preserve and enhance informal livelihoods while extending legal and social protections, as well as support services, for the informal workforce” (par. 63).**
- Noting that “an inclusive approach to formalization will respect the interests of informal workers (whether urban or rural based), be accompanied by suitable training, capacity development and access to business services as required, and be informed by the needs and challenges facing female workers” (par. 64).

### **Key Recommendations: Transformative Commitments**

**The Zero Draft’s references to economic growth, competitiveness and investment must not undermine the argument that radical change in the paradigm is needed.**

Although the draft argues forcefully for a new paradigm to guide urban policy, there is still an undertone of commitment to economic growth, competitiveness and investment in some

paragraphs, e.g. par. 55 which frames health and education as necessary to “allow cities to compete in the global creative economy, adding value, increasing productivity and attracting investment and employment.” The draft also focuses on the city as an “enabling environment for investment and innovation” (par. 46) and that is “providing a predictable framework attractive for investments” (par. 53). References to “the private sector” and “private business” do not distinguish between the corporate private sector and the non-corporate private sector.

Cities are engines of growth, but are also marked by extreme concentrations of contrasting wealth and poverty. As outlined in Policy Paper 7 on Urban Economic Development Strategies, “employment-led economic development” is the primary concern of many cities’ governments and stakeholders, and urban economic development depends on a multi-pronged investment targeted toward employment growth via investments in housing; in infrastructure, public transport and public services; in formal and informal businesses; and in human capital.

The disadvantaged integration of informal jobs into the wider urban, national and global economies can yield a ‘subsistence economy’ that only allows inhabitants to survive, but not to progress sufficiently to change their living conditions, nor to realize their full potential contribution to urban productivity. Investment must not be targeted outward with the aim of global competitiveness between cities, but rather inward, toward maximizing local employment and the local economy.

- ***We propose an amendment to the subheading preceding Paragraph 45: SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE URBAN PROSPERITY ECONOMIES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL***

**References to the informal economy must capture the wide range of activities and forms of employment that are a part of its makeup.**

Within the draft document, there are no mentions of self-employed or own-account workers. In its totality, informal employment includes informal work carried out both in formal sector enterprises as well as in informal sector enterprises and households. In other words, it includes: Own-account workers and employers employed in their own informal sector enterprises; contributing family workers, irrespective of whether they work in formal or informal sector enterprises; employees holding informal jobs, whether employed by formal sector enterprises, informal sector enterprises or as domestic workers employed by households; members of informal producers’ cooperatives.<sup>1</sup>

- ***We propose an addition to section Leave No One Behind, Urban Equity and Poverty Eradication (paragraphs 20-24) to include: Recognizing that all forms of work, including informal work in formal and informal sector enterprises, self-employed work, own-account workers, and contributing family workers, and the care economy, contribute to the urban economy.***

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<sup>1</sup> International Labor Office (2014). *Transitioning from the informal to the formal economy*. 103<sup>rd</sup> Session Report.

*We propose an amendment to the end of Para 49 to read: “In this regard, multi-stakeholder partnerships should be developed together with enhancing the capacity of local and national governments to work with the private sector, academic institutions, organized groups of grassroots workers, and community development partners in formulating and implementing local economic development and urban planning strategies”.*

**References to grassroots stakeholders must capture the wide range of types of actors, including organizations of informal workers, informal settlement dwellers, such as unions, federations and associations.**

Although the draft mentions informal workers, it does not explicitly mention informal workers’ representative organizations. There is one mention of trade unions (par. 65) and one mention of cooperatives in relation to housing (par. 110) but neither in relation to informal work. Despite the draft’s multiple calls to engage “private sector, academic institutions, and community development partners” in meaningful participation in local economic development planning (e.g. par. 49), its failure to make explicit mention of workers’ organizations could result in their continued exclusion from policy settings.

*We propose: Recognition of organized groups of informal workers and informal settlement dwellers as a grassroots stakeholder in the city planning process.*

*We propose an amendment to the end of Paragraph 49 to read: “In this regard, multi-stakeholder partnerships should be developed together with enhancing the capacity of local and national governments to work with the private sector, academic institutions, organized groups of grassroots, informal workers and informal settlement dwellers, and community development partners in formulating and implementing local economic development and urban planning strategies.”*

**Strengthen the linkage between informal livelihoods and informal housing by citing lack of access to decent work as a push factor for informal settlements and their growth.**

Par. 31 recognizes urban informality to be the “result of lack of affordable housing, dysfunctional land markets and urban policies.” It continues: “We must redefine our relationships with informal settlements and slums, including the informal economy, in ways that leave no one behind, taking into account that those areas are also engines for economic growth, prosperity, and job creation.” We would add that *Improving residents’ access to decent work that provides a living wage is fundamental to improving access to adequate housing -- informal settlements are also a product of residents’ insufficient access to quality livelihoods that would afford access to adequate housing.*

**We propose the following amendments and additions:**

- *Paragraph 25: We recognize that we must ensure equitable and affordable access to basic physical and social infrastructure for all, including affordable serviced land, housing, employment, energy, water and sanitation, waste disposal, mobility, health, education, and information and communication technologies...*

- *Paragraph 31: Urban informality should be recognised as a result of lack of affordable housing **and decent work**, dysfunctional land markets and urban policies. We must redefine our relationships with informal settlements and slums, including the informal economy, in ways that leave no one behind, taking into account that those areas are also engines for economic growth, prosperity, and job creation.*
- *Paragraph 33: We commit to promote increased security of tenure **for housing and livelihoods**, recognizing the plurality of tenure types, and to develop fit-for-purpose gender-responsive solutions within the continuum of land rights. It is necessary to strengthen programs and institutions that have been successful in addressing security of tenure to foster housing improvement and planned urbanization, while innovating strategies to cater to groups that have lagged behind the most, with particular attention to women's tenure security as a cornerstone to their empowerment and gender equality and the realization of human rights. Such innovations should include logic of the proximity of services, adequate financing schemes, and technical, legal, and financial assistance to those who produce their own housing*
- *Addition to the end of Paragraph 47: **Recognition of the job-creation and economic potential of the informal economy, and its links to wider economic processes, can enable informal workers to realize their full potential contribution to urban productivity.***

**Strengthen commitment to prevent forced evictions through the institutionalisation of collaborative planning towards eviction alternatives in partnership with organized groups of informal settlement and slum dwellers.**

Par. 29 emphasises “that housing policies should promote equity with provisions that address discrimination, forced evictions, and the needs of the homeless and people in vulnerable situations, enabling participation and engagement of communities and stakeholders.” Later, par. 81 states that resilience measures should take into consideration “appropriate land use and urban planning, enforcement of building codes, early warning systems, business continuity plans and contingency plans for critical infrastructure” in order to reduce the number of deaths, displacements, and direct economic losses caused by disasters.

***We propose:** We emphatically insist that the New Urban Agenda commit to an end to the practice of forced evictions of any kind and for any reason. Instead, stakeholders must prioritize local partnerships between government and organized communities of the urban poor in order to promote the co-production of in situ, incremental slum upgrading as an effective alternative to evictions and the default approach to dealing with inadequate, unsafe housing, infrastructure and basic services. To this end, strategies for “participation and engagement of communities” must be institutionalised and resourced. Strategy development for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda should factor collaborative development into programme design. Investment must be made in organising communities for effective participation.*

**References to data collection must include and prioritise the use of community-driven data collection.** Par. 44 states that “Democratizing technical contents of political decisions is essential,” and commits to “ensure that sound monitoring systems are put in place for a

transparent and participatory data collection and management, as well as open access to data, which is critical for informed decision-making, including the appropriate allocation of opportunities and equal and fair distribution of resources.” In addition, par. 161 - 163 (in Effective Implementation) emphasises the need for “disaggregated and locally-generated data,” highlights the essential role of data collection and indicators at the international, national, and local levels to monitor progress and adjust implementation strategies, and calls for the need for data to “capture existing inequalities and efforts to promote inclusive development.” The draft commits to “implement the creation, promotion, and enhancement of participatory data platforms” but does not make specific reference to data on slums or to data collected by organised informal communities.

***We propose:** Urban development policy and practise must be informed by the uniquely rich information that organised informal settlement and slum dwellers gather through settlement and city-wide community-driven data collection methodologies, including profiling, enumeration and mapping. Data collection serves as a critical tool for the empowerment of these communities, and as a powerful basis from which to enter into partnerships with other key stakeholders, including the State, to set the agenda for development priorities and upgrading needs.*

### **Effective Implementation (Paragraphs 84-167)**

We welcome:

- The proposal that national and local governments’ implementing actions “should be integrated with stakeholders’ participation as well as new partnership arrangements” (par. 85) which provides a welcome call for cross-sector partnerships.
- The call for member states to “implement urban planning strategies that facilitate a social mix and provision of quality public spaces, ensuring economic vibrancy... favouring social interaction and the appreciation of diversity” and states that “a network of quality public spaces and streets will be designed, considering measures that allow for the best possible commercial use of street-level floors, fostering local markets and commerce, formal and informal” (par. 101).
- The mention of the need for participatory urban planning processes, with some explicit mentions of the urban poor, women, and grassroots organizations. There are also mentions of the General Assembly of Partners (GAP) of which WIEGO and SDI are active members through the Grassroots Partner Constituency Group.
- Recognition of the existing mandate of UN-Habitat and its proposed lead role in coordinating the United Nations System on urban development issues.
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### **Key Recommendations: Effective Implementation**

**Concrete plans for partnerships between national, state and local government with non-government actors, especially grassroots, must be more clearly concretized within this outcome document.** Organised informal workers and informal settlement / slum dwellers are strong and mobilized agents of change, collectively working together in membership-based organizations that have much to contribute to city budgeting, planning, implementation and monitoring processes. This recognition of these agents as stakeholders and their incorporation

into modes of implementation are fundamental building blocks for engagement and collaboration in urban development processes. The roles and frameworks for government implementation at the national, sub-national and metropolitan level have been clearly defined (par. 86-91); however the diverse roles and frameworks for “partners,” which would encompass grassroots, civil society, private sector and other stakeholders, has not. Clarity is needed on the roles of these partners in priority setting, implementation, and monitoring activities. In addition, the support to be provided to these partners, including building their technical and financial capacities to execute their roles, is unclear.

The New Urban Agenda must map out and solidify opportunities for formal partnership and collaborative governance between local government, national government and grassroots groups (such as unions and associations of informal workers), as well as technical and financial capacity building to ensure this standard is met during the implementation stage.

*We propose to Stakeholder Engagement Framework subsection (paragraphs 92-95):*

- **Paragraph 92:** We recognize that successful realization of sustainable urban development in all areas considered by this agenda strongly depends on the combined and coordinated effort of all stakeholders involved, both governmental and non-governmental. We will therefore ***build capacity for and*** implement broader partnerships in a multilevel governance structure, through the open, democratic and inclusive participation of stakeholders at all levels.
- **Paragraph 93:** This partnership approach includes all stages of the policy process, from ***community-driven data collection, priority setting, and*** planning to budgeting, implementation, and monitoring through well-resourced permanent mechanisms that include designated times and spaces for all, with particular attention to grassroots and marginalized groups.
- **Paragraph 95:** We will put in place broad-based ***capacity building and*** cooperation mechanisms, consultation processes, reviewing mechanisms, and platforms that create ownership among different parties, for the monitoring and continuous review of national urban policies, including land and housing policies, with the goal of informing any amendments, as appropriate.