



## **HABITAT III OPEN-ENDED INFORMAL CONSULTATIVE MEETINGS**

**NEW YORK**

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### **PRESENTATION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT OF THE *HABITAT III THEMATIC MEETING ON INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS - "LEADING CHANGE IN THE CITY"*, PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA, 7-8 APRIL 2016**

**Presented by Mr William Jiyana, Department of Human Settlements, South Africa**

Chairperson,

Hosted by the Government of South Africa, the Habitat III informal settlement meeting was held in Pretoria, South Africa from the 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> April 2016. Over 500 participants from 52 countries attended. This report provides a summary of the key points raised in all events alongside some of the proposed recommendations to emerge from the meeting.

Participants agreed that urbanization is here to stay and is occurring very rapidly. However, in some contexts, urbanization is not well managed and is exacerbating poverty, resulting in the proliferation of slums and informal settlements. Participants also made clear that in any conversation about global development, the elimination of poverty is essential - and additionally, improving the lives of slum dwellers as top priority. In light of the ongoing 1 billion slum dwellers in the world, delegates reinforced the role that slum upgrading will play in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, especially goal 11 and target 11.1.

The main plenary discussions covered topics from policies and strategies, planning and land use, financing and participatory approaches to development and slum upgrading. All sessions reflected on how these key issues would be integrated and addressed by the proposed New Urban Agenda.

Speakers reinforced the urgency to act on improvements to the lives of slum and informal settlement dwellers. With data showing that the number of people living in slums and informal settlements will increase in the coming decade, there was a call for all stakeholders to move more quickly with their

poverty alleviation efforts to combat its negative effects. All these new urban residents need shelter, employment and basic services. It was agreed that 'the longer we wait, the bigger the problem'.

There was a general endorsement from key speakers that the solutions were not simple. Speakers called for actions that were inclusive and engaging of all the relevant stakeholders - especially slum and informal settlement dwellers themselves. Speakers from civil society and those living in slums and informal settlements themselves reinforced the importance of including them in the heart of any approach. They called for stakeholders to recognize their humanity, their skills, their experiences and contributions to both their local communities and the broader urban context. 'Slum dwellers should not just be the subject of the discussion but should be clearly part of the discussion'. Speakers called for resources and technical support to enable slum and informal settlement communities to move their own development agenda forward. At the same time, to help foster the platforms and processes to do this in broader partnership with others so that the city-wide integration can be achieved.

Many speakers reiterated the role of partnerships as key mechanisms to improve the lives of slum and informal settlement dwellers. This included making concerted efforts to strengthen existing partnerships whilst at the same time, institutionalizing inclusive platforms as a core approach to facilitating integration and inclusion in slum upgrading. Any New Urban Agenda must ensure that slum dwellers are engaged through participatory approaches. In-situ upgrading was suggested as sustainable mechanism which was also in line with Agenda 2030.

It was argued that interventions to improve the lives of slum dwellers should consider all dimensions of that improvement – not just the physical ones but the social, economic and cultural ones. Every physical intervention must consider the social impact and also consider things like social and economic capital.

At the same time, speakers called for innovation, 'fit for purpose' responses, and meaningful policies and legislation. There was particular discussion around the role of housing and 'habitat'. Many speakers highlighted that habitat is not just housing but must consider mobility, services, and citizen participation, linked to the house.

It was proposed that legislation should speak more directly to the needs and aspirations of slum and informal settlement dwellers and consider basic topics that all urban residents need and aspire to have: the 'right to stay where you are', to invest in your home, to receive municipal services, the right to adjust your boundaries to make the most of your property.

Financing was also a key issue raised in the plenary discussions in terms of funding infrastructure and maintenance for programmes and projects to improve the lives of slum dwellers. Speakers suggested that financing must be taken seriously across all levels of government. Developers and land owners must be better engaged given the fact that land is a source of much speculation in urban contexts and many informal settlements and slums are in fact occupying private land. At the same time, speakers

were able to make the connection between financing and legislation, citing the need for greater political will regulatory courage to develop mechanisms that will help raise money for pro-poor urban development and particularly slum and informal settlement upgrading. Taxes from land value increases and construction for example, are being used to cross-subsidize large scale city-wide slum and informal settlement upgrading.

Speakers and participants also turned their attention to the link between the fortunes of urban contexts, availability of integrated affordable housing and the presence of slums and informal settlements. In particular, speakers on this topic were keen to note the multi-faceted nature of housing per se: housing is not just a physical urban asset but represents the socio-cultural and economic histories and fortunes of those living in that house, in that place. 'Behind each house we have a family and dreams' and this idea of the socio-cultural role of housing must be at the centre of responses to improve adequate and affordable housing.

At the same time, there was a call for caution around approaches to large scale housing. Country level experience has shown that building many houses in isolation to the broader urban context and dynamics is not the solution. Consideration must be given to how any new houses, especially if they are greenfield sites, must be connected with other urban settings and infrastructure, how people can continue strengthening any livelihood activities to move from subsistence to a stronger economic base and how the buildable plots can be managed and the services delivered.

The role of livelihoods and local economic development in slums and informal settlements was another critical issue identified in plenary discussions. Speakers called for the greater recognition of the current levels of livelihood and economic activity being undertaken in slums that not only supported many broader urban economic development outcomes but also represented an enormous and largely untapped capacity and skill base in the urban setting. The contribution of the informal economy to urbanization and the role of inclusive upgrading approaches to harness that activity and skills was considered paramount - not only for improving the lives of slum and informal settlement dwellers but for a broader benefit that comes from economic and social enhancement. Supporting the transformation of economic development in slums and informal settlements from subsistence activities to sustainable ones was thus critical. The role of housing was highlighted here again: for many informal settlement and slum dwellers, especially women, homes are important assets and contribute to their livelihoods. Homes are thus not just domestic spaces but also places for production.

The role of particular groups was identified in many of the plenary sessions. Solutions to informal settlements and slums must be more strategically directed at engaging and empowering women for example, given that many poor urban areas have significant proportions of female headed households. Some even suggested that women are one of the major positive forces of urban transformation and need more strategic empowering given their central role in families and communities. Youth were also highlighted as part of the solution to improving the lives of slum dwellers. Many slum and informal

settlements have significant proportions of young who are also unemployed. Efforts can be made to engage and train youth through inclusive approaches to slum and informal settlement upgrading and thus in doing so, skills are strengthened, local economic development more likely and youth related crime and safety concerns more likely to be addressed.

Speakers advocated that any New Urban Agenda must be directed towards improving the lives of slum and informal settlement dwellers.

A number of clear recommendations emerged from both the plenary sessions and side events and are summarized below.

- Urgent call for renewed attention and action on informal settlements and slums given the ongoing and often rapid urbanization trends in many regions and cities of the world. This would also be in line with and support the achievement of Agenda 2030.

- Reinforce the role of democracy that is open and encourages participation and broad based partnerships.

- Understand that forced evictions are not the solution for sustainable, inclusive urbanization.

- Ensure that slum upgrading focus on local improvements alongside the integrated of people and the context into the broader citywide social-economic policies and programmes. This will go a long way to reduce spatial and socio-economic exclusion.

- Prioritize partnerships aimed at improving the lives of slum and informal settlement dwellers should be inclusive, implementable and visionary.

- Invest in interactive platforms that bring all stakeholders together. This is an investment that builds trust, fosters understanding and innovation and leads to more long term results. Ensure that Government officials are part of these platforms to hear the experience of slum and informal settlement dwellers ('they must get their hands dirty').

- Institutionalize structured (government and community plans and agreements) community engagement that lives beyond political changes. These may be flexible to deal with challenges facing the communities.

- Promote urban legal reform as a key element of any intervention in relation to informal settlements - absence of workable urban laws defines informal settlements. They must be connected to the many dimensions of its context: governance of the city/legal context/historical context/financial context.

- View informal settlements as productive spaces that can contribute to broader urban economic development. Acknowledge that informal settlements as economic centers and not only deprived

areas of services and housing. In light of this, slum upgrading should be viewed as a livelihood enhancement strategy.

- Renew efforts to achieve security of tenure in slum upgrading interventions.

- Review national laws to understand how security of tenure and adequate housing can be promoted, and resources can be raised from land and other means to cross-subsidize slum upgrading.

- Prioritize community led slum data enumeration- slum dwellers should collect data as it is their own data, know themselves and recognize opportunities to solve them. Local government, NGO's and academic institutions should be key partners in this process.

- Prioritize resources and technical support for slum dwellers themselves so that they can learn and be active agents in changing and strengthening their own development agenda.

- Re-new efforts to engage politicians in the improvement process. Their understanding and support is critical.

- Renew efforts to tackle corruption and land speculation which are some of the greatest challenges to implementing Slum Upgrading and affordable Housing development. Use messages that urbanization which includes everyone to change mind-sets here.

- Have strong women centred and directed policies and programs. In particular, empower women to given their role in slum communities and as community leaders.

- Develop regional and global platforms for knowledge exchange and find avenues to share lessons learnt and inform policy and legislation

- Broaden conception of and debates on housing: to recognise the place of living as also a place of working

- A clarion call for UN Habitat to strengthen human settlements initiatives to push for political commitments by member states. UN Habitat should be entrusted with the implementation of the Habitat III agenda.

I thank you.