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This chapter looks at the conditions of shelter throughout the world, and the trends likely to determine whether shanty towns become the prevailing icon of urban life, or whether we shall indeed see a world of cities without slums.

An enabling strategy

Around these issues, Habitat II broke new ground. Member States committed themselves to working with local authorities, the private sector and with organizations of civil society as genuine partners in sustainable urban development. The essence of this new consensus is an enabling strategy in which the state no longer assumes the role of direct provider, but creates a legislative and administrative environment in which shelter and services can best be delivered by a wide range of actors.

This reappraisal coincides with two other global trends:

- the unprecedented rate of urbanization, particularly in the developing world; and
- the devolution and decentralization of power and authority.

Within an enabling environment, the role of national or local government moves from the direct delivery of services to the creation of appropriate and effective mechanisms to facilitate delivery by the private and community sectors, along with new standards of accountability.

Human rights and sustainable development

A significant trend in the past decade has been the growing awareness of the relationship between human rights and sustainable development. In the field of shelter, this has led to a decline in human

rights abuses, such as mass forced evictions, and confrontation is being replaced by negotiation and participation.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the most urbanized region of the developing world, organized land invasions and mass evictions have declined markedly. As a result, energies have been channelled into negotiating security of tenure and the upgrading of settlements, mainly through self-help construction.

Elsewhere in the developing world, the experience is mixed. Post-apartheid South Africa has one of the clearest policies for preventing forced evictions, whereas in some other Sub-Saharan African countries arbitrary and violent evictions still happen. In south Asia, there have been significant settlements in the battles over shelter, but there are still instances of forced evictions.

Women are taking the lead

The growing role of women offers one of the most significant policy opportunities in this field, not only as a matter of political equity but as a key imperative for development. Women have demonstrated their contribution through the management of credit programmes, as well as by assuming positions of urban leadership. The Habitat Agenda has helped increase awareness of the tenure rights of women, and of their role in the management of community services.

Water, land, finance and secure tenure

Rising water demand and water scarcity are rapidly becoming a major challenge, particularly in water-scarce regions like West Asia. The provision of water typically highlights issues of access and cost regarding basic services, with the general rule being

that the urban poor - unable to wield sufficient political power or develop alternative sources of supply - pay the highest prices, while suffering from inadequate provision in many parts of the world.

Two of the most important components of a sustainable shelter policy are land and finance. Without assured access to either, the poor will continue to find their own - usually illegal and unhealthy - solutions. Action planning for infrastructure, title registration and micro-credit schemes offer the poor more effective solutions, though in many developing countries improved access to housing finance is also needed even for moderate-to-upper income groups.

In all regions of the world, extending urban citizenship to the poor, through the granting of secure tenure for example, is one of the most far-reaching decisions that can be taken in promoting a sustainable shelter strategy.

Local delivery of services

Today, local authorities are increasingly providing or managing the most essential urban services. In Latin America and the Caribbean, where 150 million people do not have access to safe water and an estimated 250 million lack proper sanitation, experience has shown that city-wide programmes of support to low-income settlements can have considerable impact on daily living conditions, and that decentralization has helped ensure the implementation of community development programmes, especially the provision of water, sanitation and other basic health measures.

Similar lessons emerge from Asia, though the trend towards decentralization is not without pitfalls and has at times resulted in a mis-match between the financial resources and skills of local authorities and their new responsibilities.

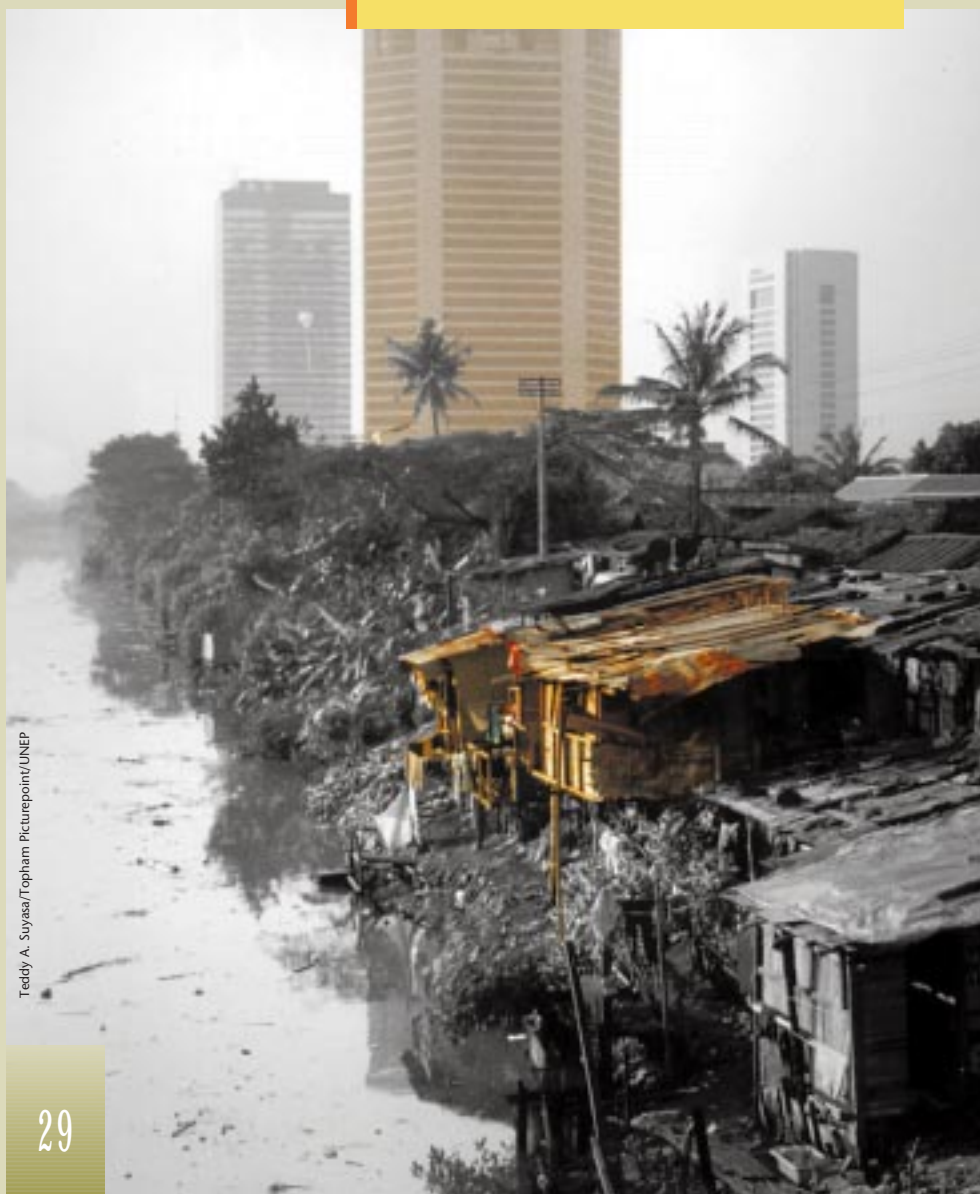
some regional variations

- In highly industrialized countries, demographic trends - including smaller families and an ageing population - are increasing the demand for smaller housing units closer to social services and amenities.
- Falling birth rates are expected to lead to a gradual decrease in the urbanization rate in many developing countries.
- In most European countries the conservation, renovation and modernization of existing stock is a higher priority than the provision of new housing.
- In Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), where the quality of old dwellings is generally inferior to the housing stock in Western Europe, modernization of existing stock is a key requirement.
- In Turkey, as well as the Russian Federation and the Central Asian republics, overall demand for new housing stock remains high.
- In the United States, a strong economy has pushed the price of housing in many cities out of reach not just for the poor, but for young middle class families also.

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Squatters in selected cities

City	Country	% of households living as squatters
Guayaquil	Ecuador	49.00%
Ulaanbaatar	Mongolia	48.40%
Monrovia	Liberia	42.00%
Tacna	Peru	30.00%
Mysore	India	18.90%
Lima	Peru	18.80%
Bangkok	Thailand	17.90%
Phnom Penh	Cambodia	16.40%
Jinja	Uganda	16.00%
Pokhara	Nepal	14.00%
Camaguey	Cuba	10.30%
San Salvador	El Salvador	9.50%
Cajamarca	Peru	8.50%
Vientiane	Lao	7.40%
Bishkek	Kyrgyzstan	6.00%
Algiers	Algeria	5.90%
Buenos Aires	Argentina	5.70%
Cebu	Philippines	5.00%
Vina del mar	Chile	3.90%
Cienfuegos	Cuba	3.30%
Belgrad	Yugoslavia	2.30%
Valparaiso	Chile	1.67%
Katowice	Poland	1.50%
Kuwait	Kuwait	0.80%
Ljubljana	Slovenia	0.10%
Yerevan	Armenia	0.04%
Gdansk	Poland	0.02%



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