# UN-HABITAT

## The Global Urban Observatory

# T H E   U R B A N   O B S E R V E R

The Urban Observer is a quarterly newsletter published by the Global Urban Observatory Section (GUO) of the Monitoring Systems Branch (formerly Urban Secretariat), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT). It provides information about the Global Urban Observatory network and constitutes a platform for exchanging experiences and lessons learned from national and local urban observatories.

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## Welcome to the URBAN OBSERVER

We are happy to welcome a large number of new recipients – applicants for a GIS software grant under the "1000 Cities GIS Programme" - to this first issue of 2004. We are taking this opportunity to (re-) introduce the concept of Urban Observatories with an overview article and with news from Urban Observatories around the world.

## Monitoring Activities with a New Vision

The Global Urban Observatory launched the Monitoring Urban Inequities Program (MUIP) in 2003. This initiative will strengthen the global monitoring and reporting on goals and targets of the Habitat Agenda (HA) and the Millennium Development Goals, especially on target 11 of the MDG to 'improve significantly the lives of at least 100 million slums dwellers by 2020'.

Timely information is fundamental to tracking progress in implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and to monitoring urban conditions and trends, especially urban poverty, as input to participatory governance. As part of a new strategic approach, GUO designed the Monitoring Urban Inequities Program (MUIP) to study intra-city differentials with a view to support local policy formulation on poverty alleviation. This new direction places more emphasis on information generation at city level and below. *See article on GIS and Urban Poverty Indicators in Nairobi, page 2.*

## Local Urban Observatories – Helping Cities to Monitor and Manage Themselves More Efficiently

Local Urban Observatories bring together city officials, citizens and businesses to ask the simple question: "How well is my city or local authority achieving results that matter?" Development assistance and public expenditure in cities should be achieving *results* – more employment, fewer people living in poverty, reduced air pollution, and improved quality of local services. LUOs help track progress against these important local development goals by gathering relevant data. The observatories monitor a comprehensive range of issues based on local priorities, including social development (under-five mortality, crime rates, percent of poor households), service delivery performance (access to safe water and sanitation, amount of wastewater treated or solid waste generated), and economic performance (informal employment, city product). LUOs are encouraged to develop their own key performance indicators built around local strategic plans, policies and important service areas.

As part of this monitoring process, LUOs try to gather information that is broken down by geographical location within a city, for example by district and neighbourhood. The GUO helps cities conduct household

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surveys to highlight the significant gap between slum dwellers and wealthier residents. LUOs use modern technology such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and high-resolution satellite images for mapping and analysing spatial information. This kind of detailed information helps planners and policy-makers to better understand where the poor live in the city, their living conditions and basic needs, and the impact of programmes.

But LUOs do more than simply collect data. Feedback on the outcomes of strategies and services is crucial in helping policy-makers to better understand where things are working and where they are not, and to make more informed decisions. "The indicators drew to our attention some areas that we have never measured before, such as the economy of the city," said a local official in Harare, Zimbabwe. "This is a good indicator that helps us to focus resources and priorities." Harare council is working on integrating indicators into both the physical plan and the strategic plan for the city.

The city of Ahmedabad in India recently set up a Local Urban Observatory coordinated by the local NGO, Urban Planning Partnerships (UPP). UPP has a track record in gathering data on slums in the city using GIS to map these neighbourhoods. The municipality, a key partner of the LUO, has used the results for preparing its own slum-upgrading programme.

The GUO is concentrating on projects in selected cities. These include including Curitiba (Brazil), Cali (Colombia), Guadalajara (Mexico), Riga (Latvia), Vladivostok (Russia), Aden (Yemen), Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), and Ahmedabad and Kolkata (India). It is also exploring potential initiatives in Iran, South Africa, Uganda, Bangladesh, China and Indonesia. Most of these projects are being implemented in partnership with UN-Habitat's regional offices and other international development partners such as Metropolis, UNDP and the World Bank. The challenge is to create local demand for the monitoring system by demonstrating that it can have a positive impact on urban management –this is the only sure way to sustain LUOs over the long term.

## Performance Measurement in Mexico

A training session by Metropolis Commission 5 on monitoring urban poverty and city development strategies is set to be held at a workshop taking place on 1st and 2nd April 2004 in Ixtapan de la Sal (Mexico). The Metropolis Commission 5 is a joint Metropolis/UN-HABITAT programme designed to support the establishment of metropolitan performance measurement systems, monitoring mechanisms and information based planning processes in cities. The specific objectives of the Metropolis Commission 5 programme are to foster the development of performance Measurement systems on member cities through dissemination of information resources; to facilitate technical assistance, training and establishment of Local Urban Observatories; to provide municipal authorities with a guide on better practices; and to develop processes to share acknowledgements, work on-line, review instruments and systems of performance measurement.

During the last Metropolis Commission 5 meeting in Istanbul in November 2003, the State of Mexico requested assistance from GUO and Commission 5 for a training workshop on Urban Indicators. The workshop will focus on poverty indicators and monitoring systems for urban development plans and will cover training on urban poverty monitoring, monitoring urban development plans, indicators development and finally, the development of a work plan for establishing urban monitoring systems for the State of Mexico and the cities within the state.

## GIS and Urban Poverty Indicators in Nairobi

The Global Urban Observatory (GUO) of UN-HABITAT started the Monitoring Urban Inequities Program (MUIP) in 2003 and recently completed a study on Nairobi. The study on intra- city differentials in Nairobi City used a 5% sample (102,000 people) of the 1999 Housing and Population Census from Kenya and additional data was collected during a survey in 2002 to classify the 4700 Census Areas as slum/non-slum. Quantitative methods were used to analyse urban poverty issue with a special focus on living conditions within Nairobi, and the output is considered useful to support local policy formulation on poverty alleviation. A Geographical Information Systems (GIS) was used to visualise the differences of living conditions within the city at sub-location level, which is a spatial unit with an average of 20,000 inhabitants.

One of the objectives of the study is develop and illustrate a methodology for intra-city differentials study using census data, and the use of GIS as a tool to show the variations of urban poverty and poor living conditions within a city. Within a Population and Housing Census many aspects on living conditions such as building materials, access to water and sewerage etc are recorded in different classes. These characteristics have been re-coded into bad and good quality and later combined to develop a benchmark on living conditions at the sub-location level. The exploratory analysis focused on specific statistical computations (the principal component analysis and bi-variate correlation analysis), and used a regression model to identify the similarities of slums, as well as urban and other socio-economic characteristics. The statistical analysis shows that many poverty related factors are spatially clustered and location does impact poverty. What is also significant is that land is unequally distributed as 60% of the population of Nairobi lives on 4490 ha which equals to 8.7% of the land.
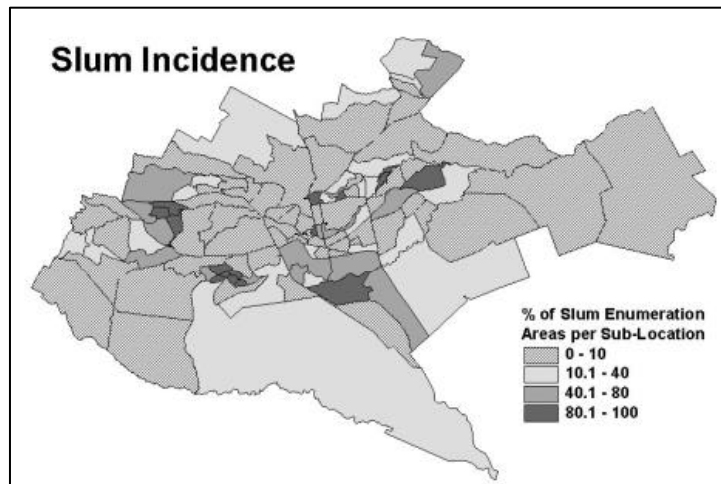


## Info on Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI)

Spatial Data Infrastructures are the backbone of electronic spatial information. There are a number of initiatives to assist countries to develop their own National Spatial Data Infrastructures. For more information, check the homepage of the Global Spatial Data Infrastructure Association at

http://www.gsdi.org/

You can subscribe to one or all of the SDI newsletter's regional issues for Africa, Latin America, and Asia-Pacific at

http://fgdc3.er.usgs.gov/Registration/

## Web Shots: "Shrinking Cities", Statistical Offices Worldwide

The project "Shrinking Cities" seeks to expand and provide new perspectives to the urban-planning debate, which has so far concentrated on programs to demolish superfluous housing and to improve neighbourhoods. The project wants to explore ways shrinking cities can be the starting point for new cultural practices that offer a cultural articulation of this new type of city and thus give it a positive identity. The website with case studies from Ivanovo, Manchester, Detroit and Halle/Leipzig is available in English and Russian.

http://www.shrinkingcities.com

The United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD) compiled a list of internet addresses of Statistical Offices around the world: A valuable tool for all data-minters!

http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/inter-natlinks/sd_natstat.htm

## Conferences, Courses, and Events

### Second World Urban Forum in Barcelona

The Spanish Mediterranean port city of Barcelona is preparing to receive some 2,000 to 3,000 delegates representing governments, local authorities, non-governmental organisations and other experts on urban issues from around the world for the second gathering of UN-Habitat's World Urban Forum 13-17 September 2004. Held every two years, the forum is a key event on the international calendar, a new ground-breaking global initiative to address and keep abreast of the main challenge of the new Millennium – our planet's transition to an urban world. The theme of this year's forum is: *Cities: Crossroads of cultures, inclusiveness and integration?* For registration and more information visit

http://www.unhabitat.org/wuf/2004/default.asp

### Free master's program at Lund University GIS Centre

Lund University offers a two years master's programme in GIS: free of charge, fully Internet based, in English, flexible in study tempo (25-100%), flexible in learning methods, leading to a Degree of Master in Geographical Information Systems from Lund University, Sweden. Visit

www.giscentrum.lu.se/luma-gis

## New GUO Staff Members

♣ Dr. Gora Mboup, a Statistician -Demographer. Gora is the architect of UN-Habitat's country slum estimations. He will be responsible for the monitoring of the Habitat Agenda as well as the MDG. More specifically, he will be in charge of the Monitoring Urban Inequities Program and the Urban Indicators Program.

♣ Dr. Jan Turkstra. UN-Habitat signed a cooperation agreement with the International Institute for Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation Institute (ITC) from the Netherlands (www.itc.nl). The agreement gives support from ITC to GUO for the development of GIS training manuals and the development of a number of intra-city differentials studies and GIS training activities. Jan Turkstra is an urban planner who has been working for 18 years with ITC, and implemented an impressive number of GIS projects in local governments in developing countries. His stay at UN-Habitat is part of this cooperation.

♣ Ning Deng, a consultant working on the Intra-City differential study as part of the Monitoring Urban Inequities Program (MUIP) initiative that has just completed a study on Nairobi. Ning has been with us since October 2003.

♣ Jacqueline Kegode, a Communications consultant who has joined GUO to give support to knowledge management and communication activities such as coordinating publication of information from GUO, documentation of best practices, and production of communication tools and materials. She has been with GUO since January 2004.

## New recipient to the Urban Observer?

This issue has been sent to a number of new recipients, including all persons or institutions that have shown interest in the Global Urban Observatory, recently or in the past, and are on email. If you feel that the Urban Observer should be sent to an email address different from the one we are using now, or you want a friend or colleague to receive the Urban Observer, please, let us know.