



UN HABITAT



THE STATE OF AFRICAN CITIES 2010

NUMBER OF SLUM DWELLERS HALVED ACROSS NORTH AFRICA

according to UN-HABITAT's new *State of African Cities Report 2010: Governance, Inequality and Urban Land Markets*.

Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia have collectively almost halved their total number of slum dwellers from 20.8 million in 1990 to an estimated 11.8 million in 2010. Tunisia has even managed to eradicate urban slums altogether.

According to the report, across the whole of Africa, 24 million slum dwellers have witnessed improved living conditions over the last decade. However, while cities in North Africa reduced their share of slum dwellers from 20 to 13 per cent, in Sub-Saharan Africa, their share of slum dwellers decreased by only five per cent (or about 17 million).

Ghana, Senegal and Uganda are at the forefront as they managed to bring down their urban slum population by more than 20 per cent, but unfortunately, rapid urbanization, demographic expansion and new urban slum formation is cancelling out many of these achievements.

At a rate of 3.4¹ per cent, Africa is urbanizing faster than any other continent, but most of the urban growth is taking place in slums which means that in Sub-Saharan Africa, slum improvements have been unable to keep pace with the rapid urbanization of its population.

"As the fastest urbanizing continent in the world, Africa is not only confronted with the challenge of improving the lives of slum dwellers but also the challenge of preventing the formation of new slums," said Joan Clos, Executive Director of UN-HABITAT. "This will take considerable political will and financial resources. Most of all it will require a commitment to strategic urban planning that integrates public-private partnerships so that the needs of the poor will be met."

Concerned about this, in 2000, world leaders committed themselves to the Millennium Development Goals including the target to improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. Slums, as defined by UN-HABITAT feature: lack of access to safe water sources; lack of access to sanitation; lack of durable housing; lack of sufficient living area; or lack of security of tenure. The number and type of shelter deprivations experienced by slum dwellers differ from country to country and even city to city.

The report provides statistics that show that this MDG target has already been exceeded worldwide, with a total of 227 million people moving out of slum conditions. However, the bulk of the improvements have been in Asia, especially in China and India, where the lives of an estimated 172 million slum dwellers have been improved.

In comparison, Sub-Saharan Africa has been the weakest performer with most countries not on track to meeting most of the millennium goals.

In analysing the successful policies and strategies implemented in North Africa, the authors point out that progressive urban rehabilitation and housing strategies have shifted from direct government intervention. Ineffective top-down housing authorities have been replaced with public-private partnerships proven to deliver both low-income and market-rate housing units and meet the demands for adequate housing for a rapidly urbanizing population.

In conclusion, the report highlights how diverse state-led interventions, policy strategies, strong political will and accountable governance ensured success in achieving the MDG goals and maintaining the progress made thus far in the region.



¹2005-2010 Africa rate United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2010). World Urbanization Prospects : The 2009 Revision. CD-ROM Edition - Data in digital form (POP/DB/WUP/Rev.2009).

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