UN-HABITAT

REPORT ON

WORLD HABITAT DAY CELEBRATION IN GHANA
MONDAY 4 OCTOBER 2004

THEME: CITIES—ENGINE OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT
REPORT ON THE CELEBRATION OF WORLD HABITAT DAY IN GHANA

The Events

August 2004
A planning committee made up of representatives from the Ministries of Works and Housing, Local Government and Rural Development, Environment and Science, Women and Children, Social Welfare, Accra Metropolitan Authority, the Habitat Focal person was established to plan the celebration of the day. The representative of the Ministry of Works and Housing chaired the committee.

A number of meetings were held and a number of activities undertaken including preparation of budget. The Ministry of Local Government and Rural funded the celebration.

Monday 4 October 2004

Banners were hoisted to announce the celebration of the day

1. The GTV Morning Show
This is a 15-minute (6.45-7.00 a.m.) clip of the National television station used for discussions on topical issues. This station is nationwide and is watched all over the country. The mayors of Accra, Elmina and Tamale were at the station on Monday 4th October as discussants on the theme.

2. The Radio Discussions on GBC Radio
Two Directors of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and Ministry of Environment and Science were at a radio talk show in Accra. People phoned in from all parts of the country and made their contributions.
3. The News Paper Article
The most widely circulated national newspaper (Daily Graphic) carried a feature article written by the HPM in its features column.

4. The News Conference
A news conference was hosted by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. About 50 people (including Members of Parliament, Ministers of State, Directors of Ministries, the private sector, academicians, Civil Society Organizations, Members of Professional Bodies and UN Agencies attended the news conference. This was carried on two major television stations in the country.

The Deputy Minister of Ministry of Environment and Science chaired the News Conference. There was also an address by the Deputy Minister of Works and Housing and a key note address by the Deputy Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Captain Rtd. Nkrabea Effah Dartey.

In the keynote address the Deputy Minister asserted that in developed countries whilst the rural areas (countryside) connotes a place for leisure and relaxation, where people from the cities can take time off their busy schedules and have some rest, the same cannot be said of the rural areas in developing countries. These areas have been characterized by the lack of basic necessities; high rate of poverty, unemployment, etc., which have forced many to move into the few cities in search of greener pastures.

He tried to identify the different types of human settlements with examples as:
- Mega cities such as London.
- Cities such as Nairobi and Accra.
- Urban areas such as Elmina.
- Sub-Urban residential areas which are found in cities.
- Inner City slums, e.g., Agbobloshie.
- Villages.

For the cities, the inner city slums present a number of challenges and have to be confronted with appropriate interventions to avoid chaos.

Due to the complex nature of the problems in cities local governance should work. There is the need to break down cities into manageable units for good local governance.

He was happy to announce that in Ghana, the city of Kumasi is doing very well because local governance is working. Town council system is very operational and the mayor is not overwhelmed with all the issues in the city. He advised that other cities should strive to get small operational and manageable units to handle localized issues.
The Deputy Minister delivering his address

To make cities a place conducive for people to live, the following issues are worth considering as we celebrate this and subsequent World Habitat days:

a. All stakeholders should continue talking. He particularly called on the Banks and the Ghana Real Estate Development Agency (GREDA) to support government in housing development in the cities.

b. World Habitat Day should not only be a celebration but an all-year activity for practical results.
c. The city of Accra is too choked and in subsequent years the celebration should be organized outside Accra to enable others to take part.
d. It has become imperative to strengthen Local Governance if the problems of the cities and rural areas are to be properly addressed

As part of the news conference there were solidarity messages from GREDA
And the Ghana Institute of Planners.

The President of the Ghana Institute of Planners, Mr. Kofi Osei Dankwa pledged the support of Development Planners to the Government of Ghana in solving the problems in human settlements.
The President of the Ghana Institute of Planners delivering his Solidarity Message

GREDA proposed a National Housing Forum at which all stakeholders should meet and discuss to determine a comprehensive all embracing housing policy for Ghana.

On behalf of the Resident Coordinator, the WFP Representative in Ghana, Ms Trudy B Bower-Pirinis read the Secretary General’s address. The HPM in Ghana read the Executive Director’s address.

Ms Trudy Bower-Pirinis reading the Secretary General’s address
A Section of the audience at the news conference

A Section of the audience at the News Conference
The Deputy Minister of Local Government and Rural development in a discussion with the Mayor of Accra at the News Conference

Deputy Minister for Works and Housing (middle), Deputy Minister for Environment and Science (left) and the WFP Representative in Ghana (extreme right) at the celebration.
A Cultural Troupe entertaining the gathering
ANNEX 1 – FEATURE ARTICLE

World Habitat Day

Cities, engines of rural development

By Victoria A. Akinaa

Today, October 4, is the World Habitat Day. A day designated by the UN for reflection on issues of human settlements.

This year’s theme “Cities: Engines of Rural Development” is a reflection of the social, economic, political and environmental interdependence between rural and urban areas.

Urbanisation, for all intents and purposes, is a positive development factor. If properly managed, it can help reduce poverty by providing a sustainable link between the cities and the rural areas.

Cities offer habitation to excess rural population, provide educational and health needs and also markets for the produce from rural areas. Migrant workers in the cities send remittances that help to improve the rural economy.

The links between cities and rural areas depend on infrastructure networks better access to services, infrastructure, housing, governance, security of tenure and employment opportunities.

According to the UNDP Human Development Report 2004, the urban growth rate in Ghana is estimated at 3.1 per cent annually. Eighty-seven per cent of the urban population has access to safe water while 44.9 per cent has access to improved sanitation. While 33 per cent still require access to an improved water source.

The rate of urban growth is also expressed in terms of urban population in the world’s least developed countries. The urban population of the world’s least developed countries live in slums — 71.9 per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa, and 43 per cent in developing regions. This figure is expected to increase by over 500 million by 2050, representing an average of 29 million new slum dwellers per year.

Tanzania has an estimated urban population of 7.6 million people, growing at a rate of 3.1 per cent annually. It is projected to reach 8.5 million people in 2050. During the same period, urban population in Tanzania was estimated at 4.3 million, growing at a rate of 1.8 per cent to reach 5.8 million in 2050.

Although the urban population and its slums are expanding at a faster rate, the fact remains that the rural population of Tanzania remains the largest. The GPPS underscores the fact that for the migration of the youth from rural to urban areas to work as porters, street hawkers and petty traders, levels of poverty in the rural areas could have been worst.

Increase in poverty as registered in the Ghana Living Standards Survey has been described as more of a rural phenomenon. The geographical variation of extreme poverty ranges from two per cent in Accra to 59 per cent in Rural Savannah. Poverty has also been found to be profound in food crop farmers, mostly women, who are unremuneratively rural-based.

Therefore, the need to treat the urban and rural areas holistically because they form part of a dynamic system in which linkages have to be strengthened. While the cities deliver amenities in the slums, urbanisation needs of rural population have to be stepped up to reduce rural-urban migration, which is the cause of worsening living conditions of urban dwellers.

Rural-urban migration leaves rural areas with fewer people of working ages and subsequently with a lower potential for development. This situation reflects the need for rural improved policies and delivery systems.

It would require allocation of more resources to urbanisation of rural areas, providing services, infrastructure, better governance and employment opportunities for rural populations. This should be supported with adequate policy and legal instruments to attract resources, or at least retain labour and revenue in villages and towns.

On a larger scale, this wider urbanisation approach will provide the urban-rural link to a network of property urbanised rate local markets, and the big cities, thus dialogue and the present city-periphery and creating opportunities for sustainable development.

This proposed plan towards more balanced rural urbanisation goals may not be easy, especially in a trend that the changing face and the changing nature of the rural sector. But it is direly needed. Without the present vision towards the increasing rural poverty alleviation strategies, if countries are to move forward to counteract the urban decline in an integrated way of enhancing rural areas.

To stimulate the information from this alternative development strategy, the policy needs to be set at both the national and regional level. It is required with the help of the government and other actors. Second, the locality must be engaged and include the resources for the social and built environment of their rural environment.

This requires a lot of accurate resources and data collection as the district, municipal and national level population and the governance and resources from the national government and localities.

It is when the city areas are considered under continuous dynamics that we can improve the productivity of our urban-rural linkages network of property urbanised rate local markets, and the big cities, thus dialogue and the present city-periphery and creating opportunities for sustainable development.