

Committee/Council: Economic and Social Council  
Issue: Measures to eradicate urban slums  
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Position: Deputy President

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## Introduction

We've all seen pictures and television footage of people living in slums across the world. Unfortunately, we live in a world, where the right to a safe place to live, to adequate nutrition and to access to clean water is constantly infringed. As the global urban population grows really fast, an increasing number of urbanites live in slums, where conditions are often unsanitary. According to research results there is a global slum



{<http://www.urbanrealm.com/blogs/media/blogs/pauls/JAN10/HU/slum.jpg>}

population of more than one billion people, which is expected to be doubled by 2030. Many people all over the world are forced to live in neighborhoods under lack of hygiene facilities, clothing, food and shelter. Overcrowded living quarters offer perfect conditions for the spread of highly transmittable diseases, thus threatening to turn the faint risk of an epidemic into cruel reality. Slum dwellers without adequate access to potable water are at risk of waterborne diseases and malnutrition, especially amongst children. The same applies to slums without adequate sanitation or infrastructure, such as plumbing and garbage disposal. Illiteracy, drug-addiction, and unemployment constitute just some of the characteristic conditions commonly pertaining to slum dwellers.

## Definition of Key-Terms

Slum & slum dwellers according to the UN<sup>1</sup>:

The Proportion of urban population living in slums is the proportion of urban population living in slum households. A slum household is defined as a group of individuals living under the same roof lacking one or more of the following conditions:

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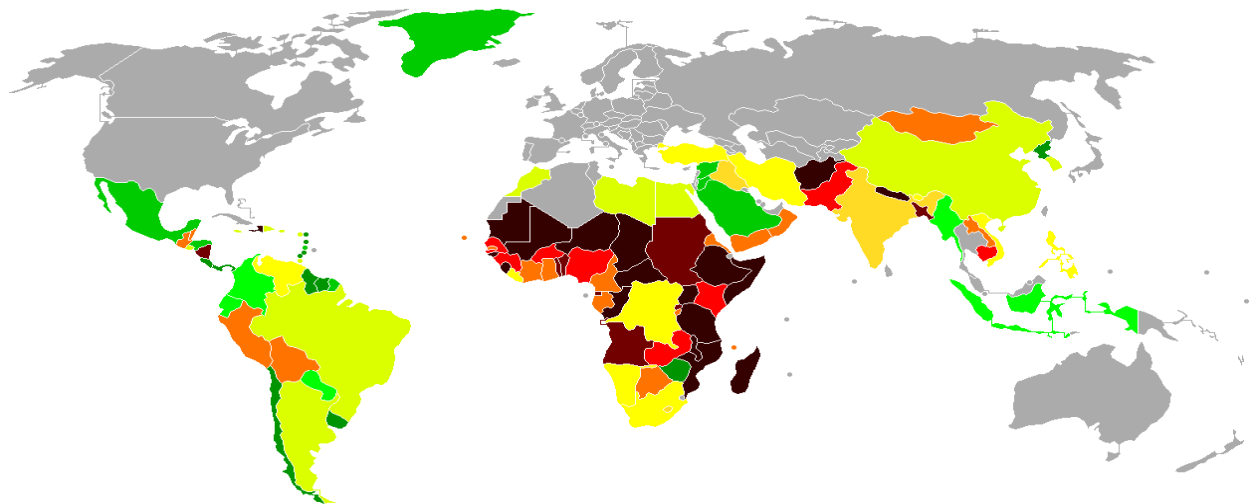
<sup>1</sup> For the extensive definition please visit the official UN site for the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Indicators: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/Metadata.aspx?IndicatorId=0&SeriesId=711>

- Access to improved water
- Access to improved sanitation
- Sufficient-living area
- Durability of housing
- Security of tenure

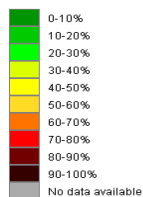
However, since information on secure tenure is not available for most of the countries, only the first four indicators are used to define slum household, and then to estimate the proportion of urban population living in slums.

### Favela

Brazilian term used for slum or shantytown.



Proportion of each country's urban population living in slums (according to UN-Habitat definition):



{[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Urban\\_population\\_living\\_in\\_slums.png](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Urban_population_living_in_slums.png)}

## Background Information

### Africa

*"Africa faces the huge challenge of "improving the lives of slum dwellers, but also preventing the formation of new slums," says Joan Clos, executive director of the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)."*

- Extract from article by Kaci Racelma on: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201203220954.html>

Millions of Africans live in slums, and the rapid growth of African cities is not helping mitigate the situation. According to UN-HABITAT, it is estimated that in sub-Saharan Africa approximately 200 million people (61.7% of the region's urban population) were living in slums in 2010, which is considered to be the highest percentage in the world. Furthermore, in Northern Africa, another 12 million people (13.3% of its urban inhabitants) are living in slum settlements.

Adequate sanitation, potable water and electricity are privileges unknown to most African urban slum dwellers. In combination with overcrowding and substandard housing, these conditions promote the rapid spread of many transmittable diseases, leading to avoidable deaths. In Mali, for example, more than 80% of slum dwellers lack good housing, while the average life expectancy is estimated at 51 years of age.

In 2007, an assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned that "urbanization and climate change may work synergistically to increase disease burdens." Slum dwellers face harsh environmental challenges due to the low-quality construction materials used in buildings and slum houses. As a result, many slum dwellers are severely threatened by accidental fires and other man-made or natural disasters. In September 2011, for instance, more than 100 people were killed, when a leaking petrol pipeline exploded in Mukuru wa Njenga, a densely populated Nairobi slum.

### Asia

In 2005, it was estimated that the region was home to more than half the world's total slum population, with some regions featuring far worse living conditions than others. Southern Asia harbors 27% and Eastern Asia approximately 15% of worldwide slum dwellers. Since China and India are the most populous countries in the world, they have significant proportions of their urban populations living in slum settlements and under the relevant conditions. Although China hosts the world's largest slum population, nearly 196 million people, its slum prevalence in 2001 was lower than India's.

Most of the slum dwellers in Southern Asia, nearly 170 million people, reside in India, which accounts for 17% of the world's slum dwellers. India has accepted many best practices and good policies in recent years that have some positive impact on the lives of slum dwellers, but these have not yet been implemented on a sufficient scale to prevent the proliferation of slums. Although the economic growth rates have indicated a positive development in recent years and extreme poverty was reduced by 10% in the last decade, the impact of poverty reduction is still not being felt in cities. Unless more radical policies are adopted in India, the global target for improving the lives of slum dwellers by 2020 will not be reached.

90%, approximately 195.7 million people, of Eastern Asia's slum dwellers live in China and account for 20% of the world's total. Since 1990, China has succeeded in increasing the application of low-cost housing schemes, thus preventing the creation of new slums in most cases. However, the country already suffers from high levels of slum prevalence. It is believed that there are three reasons for this: First of all, the total population of China constitutes one fifth of the world's population. Second in the list is the needed time for slum prevention policies to bear visible results. Last but not least could be the mismatch between UN-HABITAT and national definitions of what constitutes a slum.

Although Southern and Eastern Asian countries have tried hard to eradicate slums, Western Asia is far behind in the exertion of preventing the formation of slums. In countries such as Jordan, slums grow at a rate that exceeds 4.3 % per year, and Lebanon has also experienced an increase in its slum population.

### Europe

Europe is not known for its slums or poverty. Nevertheless, just like every place on earth, it has are some dark spots not easily discoverable.

In Spain for example, Canada Real Galiana is a 16km-long, 75m-wide strip of economic and social misery. Believed to be Europe's largest shanty town, it is a mere 15-minute drive from Madrid's city centre. *"This place reminds me of one of the most run-down slums in Guatemala I used to work in"*, says Susana Camacho, employee of Fundacion Secretariado Gitano (FSG), a local NGO. Commonly known as the "slum of shame", the 40-year-old settlement, home to 30,000 people, is completely devoid of any public services – no pavements, schools, sewage or drainage systems.

The area is infamous for its rubbish and for being Madrid's principal outdoor drugs supermarket. More than 4,000 grind their way across the Galiana every day en route to the incinerators, while social workers estimate that 90% of Madrid's illegal drug supply is channeled through here.

### America

During past recessions, US cities had become hearts of poverty and crime. However, it was the suburbs that suffered and not the city centers. Between 2000 and 2008, the population of the suburbs grew by 25%. Out of many contributing factors, urban gentrification<sup>2</sup> is one of the major causes driving poor people out of cities. Other

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<sup>2</sup> Definition of gentrification by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary:

"The process of renewal and rebuilding accompanying the influx of middle-class or affluent people into deteriorating areas that often displaces poorer residents."

factors include immigration dynamics, decentralization of the jobs of the lower economic and social classes as well as the availability of affordable housing.

In Latin American slums, 117 million people live in poverty. The region's megacities, including Mexico City, Sao Paulo, Bogota, Rio de Janeiro, and Lima, procreate overcrowded living conditions without access to clean water or electricity, poor nutritional status, and usually lack of basic health services. These marginalized populations are made up of the poor, the homeless and vulnerable indigenous groups that have migrated to the city in search of a better life; they are the urban poor of Latin America.

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

### United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT)

Quoting from their official website, <http://www.unhabitat.org/categories.asp?catid=9>:

“The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-HABITAT, is the United Nations agency for human settlements. It is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all. [...] UN-HABITAT's programmes are designed to help policy-makers and local communities get to grips with the human settlements and urban issues and find workable, lasting solutions.”

### Dharavi Slum in Mumbai, India, as presented on [geography.about.com](http://www.geography.about.com):

“Dharavi is a slum ward located in the suburbs of India's most populated city of Mumbai. Unlike many urban slums, residents are typically employed and work for extremely small wages in the recycling industry that Dharavi is known for. However, despite a surprising rate of employment, tenement conditions are among the worst of slum living. Residents have limited access to working toilets and therefore they resort to relieving themselves in the nearby river. Unfortunately, the nearby river also serves as a source of drinking water, which is a scarce commodity in Dharavi. Thousands of Dharavi residents fall ill with new cases of cholera, dysentery, and tuberculosis each day due to the consumption of local water sources. In addition, Dharavi is also one of the more disaster prone slums in the world because of their location to impacts of monsoon rains, tropical cyclones, and subsequent flooding.”

### Kibera Slum in Nairobi, Kenya, as presented on [geography.about.com](http://www.geography.about.com):

“Nearly 200,000 residents live in the slum of Kibera in Nairobi which it makes it one of the largest slums in Africa. The conventional slum settlements in Kibera are fragile

and exposed to nature's fury because they are largely constructed with mud walls, dirt or concrete floors, and recycled tin rooftops. It is estimated that 20% of these homes have electricity, however municipal work is underway to provide electricity to more homes and to city streets. These "slum upgrades" have become a model for redevelopment efforts in slums throughout the world. Unfortunately, the redevelopment efforts of Kibera's housing stock have been slowed due to the density of the settlements and to the land's steep topography.

Water shortages remain to be Kibera's most crucial issue today. The shortage has turned water into a profitable commodity for the wealthy Nairobian that have forced the slum dwellers to pay large sums of their daily income for drinkable water. Although the World Bank and other charitable organizations have established water pipelines to relieve the shortage, competitors in the market are purposefully destroying them to regain their position on the slum dwelling consumers. The Kenyan government does not regulate such actions in Kibera because they do not recognize the slum as a formal settlement."

Rocinha Favela in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, as presented on [geography.about.com](http://geography.about.com):

"A "favela" is a Brazilian term used for slum or shantytown. The Rochinha favela, in Rio De Janeiro, is the largest favela in Brazil and one of the more developed slums in the world. Rocinha is home to about 70,000 residents whose homes are built on a steep mountain slopes prone to landslides and flooding. Most houses have proper sanitation, some have access to electricity, and newer homes are often constructed entirely from concrete. Nevertheless, older homes are more common and constructed from fragile, recycled metals that are not secured to a permanent foundation. Despite these characteristics, Rocinha is most notorious for its crime and drug trafficking."

Neza-Chalco-Itza in Mexico City, Mexico, as presented on [ibtimes.com](http://ibtimes.com):

"One of Mexico City's many barrios, Neza-Chalco-Itza is the largest slum in the world with roughly four million people. Slums in Mexico City began growing in the early 1900s when the railroad brought new industry -- as well as new industrial zones -- to the city.

As with many slums, most people in Neza-Chalco-Itza live illegally on unauthorized land. However, unlike in most areas, some of Mexico City's slum dwellers also live in vecindades, former mansions abandoned by wealthy families that have been converted into low-income rental apartments. About 10 percent of all the residents of the Mexican capital live in these buildings."

Orangi Town in Karachi, Pakistan, as presented on [ibtimes.com](http://ibtimes.com):

“Technically only 10 years old, the township in Karachi, Pakistan is home to 1.5 million people and still growing. Orangi, with 22 square miles of space, is significantly less dense than most urban slums and also more structured. There are 13 official neighborhoods, each with its own council, which has allowed the township to build its own sewer system. Additionally, as only of 18 districts of Karachi, Orangi has government representation, albeit in the lowest tier of the government.”

Khayelitsha in Cape Town, South Africa, as presented on [ibtimes.com](http://ibtimes.com):

“Cape Town, South Africa is a huge, sprawling city that has given rise to a number of new neighborhoods and townships over the past decade. Khayelitsha is now the biggest of these and the community had a population explosion after apartheid ended and blacks rushed into Cape Town for jobs.

As of the last census in 2005, there were a recorded 400,000 people in Khayelitsha, but that figure is likely much higher. The township's population is incredibly young, with 40 percent of its residents under 19 years old and only about seven percent over the age of 50.”



*Slums are often unsafe and vulnerable to disasters.*  
{<http://zerowasteland.wordpress.com/2011/09/20/fires-hit-slums/>}

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description of events
2005	1 <sup>st</sup> International Meeting Platform on Sustainable Urban Development <sup>3</sup>
2005	International conference on sustainable urban development: from research to action <sup>4</sup>
2006	African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (AMCHUD)
2006	Iraq Housing Sector Analysis and Policy Directions <sup>5</sup>
2011	International Housing Summit <sup>6</sup>
2013	24 <sup>th</sup> Governing Council- Global Housing Strategy Side Event

## Relevant UN Treaties, Resolutions and Events

### [UN-ECOSOC Resolution 2011/21](#)

This resolution invites governments and regional and local authorities, to check and enumerate the populations living in slums in their countries, regions and urban areas and to set with the support of the international community voluntary and realistic national, regional and local targets to be attained by 2020, with regard to significantly improving the lives of slum-dwellers.

### [UN-ECOSOC Resolution 2012/27](#)

This resolution encourages governments to promote sustainability criteria in planning, construction and management for access to safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, urban and rural services, sustainable waste management, sustainable transport and disaster risk reduction. Also recommends that governments and all relevant stakeholders, including the private sector, promote the participation and access of people at all levels, in particular the poor, to policies, programmes and projects related to basic services, in order to address the needs of agricultural and urban populations.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?cid=84&catid=277&typeid=11>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?cid=85&catid=277&typeid=11>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?cid=4166&catid=277&typeid=11>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?cid=10387&catid=277&typeid=11>

## Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Many attempts have been made, so that the problem of urban slums can be solved. The United Nations Economic and Social Council has been trying to find a solution to the issue of urban slums for many years. Through resolutions and conferences a large variety of solutions and suggestions were implemented, but the problem needs to be addressed with a lot more effort, before it can be considered solved. Nevertheless, a UN-Habitat report found that countries such as Egypt, Libya and Morocco have “nearly halved their total number of urban slum dwellers and Tunisia has eradicated them completely.”



*Growth of the City, Expansion of Slums {<http://intldev.tumblr.com/post/45222498229/growth-of-the-city-expansion-of-slums-more>}*

## Possible Solutions

The issue of urban slums is a really crucial matter that society has to deal with. The solutions that you are called to write have to be realistic and require only a short period of time for their implementation. Apart from that, you must find solutions that help the upgrade of slum settlements with regard to potable and safe water, safer construction materials, food and hygiene. You must consider the human rights, but do not neglect to examine the economic repercussions of your proposals. You

can also focus on the construction of safer houses that can withstand the ravages of time and the construction of pipes for the creation of a sewer-system. Last but not least, you should propose solutions that can reduce the high criminality rate in slum neighborhoods. Taking into consideration that the urbanization problem is growing every day, it is obvious urban settlements are going to multiply in the next years. The only thing that you can do is propose solutions that will slow down or even prevent the growth of slums and improve urban living conditions.

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