

# GLOBAL REPORT ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

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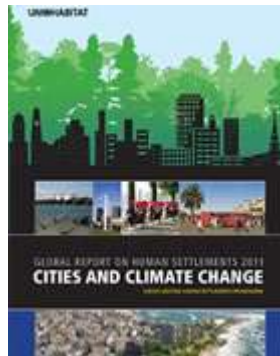
## The Global Report on Human Settlements



Prepared under a mandate of the United Nations General Assembly, the Global Report on Human Settlements provides the most up to date assessment of urban conditions and trends globally. It is an essential reference tool for researchers, academics, planners, public authorities and civil society organizations around the world.

## Cities and Climate Change: Global Report on Human Settlements 2011 – The Potential of the International Climate Change Framework for Local Action

Responses to the climate change challenge are taking place within the context of an international framework that shapes related actions and decisions at all levels. This framework can be defined here as the spectrum of agreements, mechanisms, instruments and actors governing and driving climate change action globally. The overall structure of this framework is complex and multidimensional in that it is comprised of elements that are quite different and distinct in many of their functions and approaches, constituencies, scope and focus. While international agreements negotiated by national governments such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol remain crucial aspects of the framework, they are not the only mechanisms governing climate change action. Other layers of intervention have become equally important in implementing innovative climate change responses and policies, including those at the regional, subnational and local levels.



Cities have a vital role to play in the implementation and achievement of commitments within the international climate change framework. They also stand to benefit from the opportunities created by this framework for local responses to climate change. Yet, local-level actors and authorities often lack an understanding of the nature and functioning of the various components of the international climate change framework and how they could utilize these to enhance their mitigation and adaptation strategies.

A key factor constraining urban actors' use of mechanisms within the international climate change framework is the fact that these mechanisms are primarily addressed to national governments and do not indicate a clear process by which urban areas and actors may participate. The related international structure for climate change financing, in particular, has been described as 'diverse and complex, and not primarily designed for local governments'. The funding mechanisms of the UNFCCC discussed earlier in this chapter can be used to finance projects within urban areas, but they are only accessible for urban actors through their national governments. Even though national governments represent the interests of their urban populations in international discussions on allocating responsibility for climate change mitigation, and in developing international funding mechanisms and institutions to support adaptation, getting urban priorities

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moved up on national agendas can be problematic, at best. For instance, although National Adaptation Programmes of Action have been prepared for developing countries under the Least Developed Countries Fund, there have been few initiatives for adaptation at the sub-national level.

Similarly, emissions trading currently takes place between countries and groups of countries or tends to target particular industries, thereby offering limited possibilities for actions at the urban level. For instance, the European Emissions Trading Scheme targets carbon-intensive factories and power plants by capping the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> that they emit. While some of these facilities are certainly located within urban areas, and it may be safe to assume that a large percentage of their output serves urban needs, local authorities are not generally in direct control of these activities. Of course, some exceptions exist, where, for instance, an urban centre owns a public utility, such as one for electricity generation. In contrast, the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) offers significant potential for urban projects in developing countries in such sectors as transportation, waste and the building industry. Indeed, a recent study shows that it is one of the international financing mechanisms that city authorities are most aware of. However, urban CDM-based projects account for only 8.4 per cent of the total number of CDM projects registered with the UNFCCC in 2009. Most of these were related to solid waste, with only two projects related to transport. Furthermore, the majority of the urban CDM projects are concentrated in a few countries – namely, Brazil (36 per cent), China (14 per cent), Mexico (5 per cent) and India (2 per cent).

A number of reasons have been identified for the small proportion of CDM projects being urban based. First, the responsibility for climate change action is perceived to lie with national rather than local governments. Second, city authorities are already overwhelmed by immediate local challenges and have difficulty justifying climate change-related projects and expenditures. Third, the financial resources required for climate change action (e.g. introducing energy-efficient technology and equipment) may be absent in developing countries. Fourth, the high transaction costs associated with project development and approval by authorities has been identified as an additional constraint.

The joint implementation mechanism is very similar to CDM, but it applies only between developed countries. Since most of the joint implementation projects are in countries with economies in transition and emissions reduction activities are generally more expensive in these countries compared to similar activities in developing countries, the joint implementation mechanism has been used far less than the CDM. The use of joint implementation by urban actors has, therefore, also been very limited.

A further major challenge for local authorities to take advantage of the international climate change framework to implement climate responses locally is that they are often overwhelmed by competing priorities. Besides coordinating policy efforts with organizations and actors at the national and state/provincial levels to address an array of non-climate related developmental and environmental issues, they now need to deal with a multitude of issues centering on climate related mitigation, adaptation, development, and disaster preparedness and response. While coping with a myriad of competing priorities within their boundaries, they also need to explore ways in which they can better connect to multiple levels of action and information on climate change, and know how their issues fit into the larger picture of regional, national and international climate change issues. In addition, mismatches exist between climate and local policy-making timeframes. Given the fact that many of the cause-and-effect relationships are long term and potentially irreversible, they require planning that goes beyond the tenure, the administrative power and even the lifetime of most current decision-makers and other stakeholders.

Despite the above challenges, local authorities can coordinate efforts with national and state/provincial authorities to make use of financial resources offered under the UNFCCC to invest in local mitigation initiatives which offer high mitigation potentials. These include investments in the areas of transport, energy generation, waste management and the like. Local urban authorities and actors can also take advantage of existing networks and organizations that focus specifically on enhancing local climate change action at the city level. Urban authorities could get support from the UNFCCC to finance adaptation projects, not only through their national governments, but also through their participation in various city networks. For instance, the Federation of Canadian municipalities is working with ICLEI through their Cities for Climate Protection Campaign. A total of 180 Canadian municipalities are engaged in assessing and reducing green house gas emissions through the campaign. Several initiatives also offer opportunities for urban authorities to learn from and share climate change best practices and lessons.



### The Challenge of Slums - Global Report on Human Settlements 2003

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Urban authorities may also try to benefit from initiatives of multilateral and bilateral organizations seeking to enhance the capacity of developing countries to take part in and take advantage of international climate change discussions and the resulting instruments and mechanisms. For instance, The World Bank's Carbon Finance Assist Programme seeks to enhance the capacity of developing countries to engage with the flexible mechanisms of the Kyoto Protocol. Similarly, the Climate Alliance aims to enhance the participation of developing countries in CDMs. The Campaign on Cities and Climate Change of the United Nations Environmental Programme explicitly seeks to support the engagement of cities in international climate change negotiations and forums.

Local authorities can also seek to harmonize climate change interventions with existing development interventions and concerns. For instance, mitigation can be integrated within local development concerns such as energy security and infrastructure provision. Adaptation measures can serve and be integrated not only within disaster risk reduction, but also within components of the development agenda such as land-use planning and access to water, sanitation and housing. For instance, existing coping actions such as community savings networks might be combined with insurance mechanisms sponsored by NGOs.

**To download the full and abridged versions of the Global Report on Human Settlements 2011, please go to**

**<http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?typeid=19&catid=555&cid=9272>**

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### **Next Issue: Planning and Design for Urban Mobility: Global Report on Human Settlements 2013**

The report will review key trends, practices and policies on sustainable mobility and transportation patterns from cities around the world. It will also provide insights on how to improve the working and living conditions of urban populations by meeting their transport needs in an economically, environmentally and socially sustainable manner. The report will be organized as follows:

- Chapter 1: The urban mobility challenge
- Chapter 2: Trends and conditions of urban mobility
- Chapter 3: Urban goods transport
- Chapter 4: Mobility and urban form
- Chapter 5: Access to urban mobility
- Chapter 6: Urban mobility and the environment
- Chapter 7: The economics of urban mobility
- Chapter 8: Institutions and governance for urban mobility
- Chapter 9: Towards sustainable urban mobility

The report is scheduled to be launched in October 2013

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