

Section 1 : Social and Economic Dimensions

Chapter 7 : Promoting Sustainable Human Settlement Development

A. Providing adequate shelter for all

At least 1 billion people do not have access to safe and healthy shelter, which is fundamental to a person's physical, psychological, social and economic wellbeing.

Activities

Governments should:

- take immediate measures to provide shelter for the homeless
- adopt and/or strengthen national shelter strategies
- support the shelter effort of the urban and rural poor by facilitating access to land, finance and low-cost housing materials and by upgrading informal housing settlements and slums
- support and develop environmentally compatible shelter strategies at all levels of government and initiate partnerships with the private, public and community sectors
- reduce the impact of rural drift to the urban areas by improving the living conditions of the rural sector.

B. Improving human settlement management

In the 21st Century the majority of the world's population will be living in cities. If properly managed, urban settlements can improve the living conditions of the residents and manage natural resources in a sustainable way.

Activities

Governments and local communities should:

- improve urban management
- strengthen urban data systems
- encourage intermediate city development.

C. Promoting sustainable land use planning and management

Objective

To provide for the land requirements of human settlement development through environmentally sound physical planning and land use to ensure access to land for households and where appropriate, the encouragement of communally and collectively owned and managed land.

Activities

Develop a national land resource management plan, by:

- establishing national legislation to guide the implementation of public policies for environmentally sound urban expansion, land utilisation, housing and improved management of urban expansion
- create efficient and accessible land markets by improving land registry systems and streamlining procedures in land transactions
- develop fiscal incentives and land use control measures for a more rational and environmentally sound use of limited land resources
- encourage partnerships among the public, private and community sectors in managing land resources for human settlement
- strengthen community based land resource protection practices in existing urban and rural settlements
- accelerate efforts to promote access to land by the urban and rural poor, including credit schemes for purchase and development schemes, improving safe and healthy shelter and infrastructure services
- develop and support the implementation of improved land management practices which deal comprehensively with potentially competing land requirements for agriculture, industry, transport, urban development, green spaces, reserves and other vital needs
- promote understanding among policy makers of the adverse consequences of unplanned settlements in environmentally vulnerable areas and of the appropriate national and local land use and settlements policies required for this purpose.

D. Promoting the integrated provision of environmental infrastructure: water, sanitation, drainage and solid waste management

There is need for an integrated approach to the provision of infrastructure in human settlements. This should result in improvement to the quality of life, increased productivity, improved health and reduce the burden of investments in curative medicine and poverty alleviation.

Activities

All countries should:

- adopt policies that minimise, or avoid, environmental damage
- ensure that relevant decisions are preceded by environmental impact assessments taking into account the costs of any ecological consequences
- promote development in accordance with indigenous practices and adopt technologies appropriate to local conditions
- promote policies aimed at recovering the actual cost of infrastructure services, while at the same time recognising the need to find suitable approaches to extend basic services to all households
- seek joint solutions to environmental problems which affect several localities.

E. Promoting sustainable energy and transport systems in human settlements

Current energy and transport systems result in pervasive air problems. Thus, there is need for energy planning and management, promotion of renewable and alternative energy sources and evaluation of the costs of current systems. Insufficient investments in urban transport planning, traffic management and infrastructure result in inefficient use of resources and have a severe impact on the urban population.

Activities

Governments and local communities should:

- develop research and promote public transport
- provide safe gateways and footpaths
- research the effect of emissions and the transport sector generally on the environment
- practice integrated transport and land use planning
- consider convening, regional conferences on transport and the environment.

F. Promoting human settlement planning and management in disaster prone areas

Objective

To enable all countries, in particular those that are disaster prone, to mitigate the negative impact of natural and manmade disasters on human settlements, national economies and the environment.

Activities

All countries should:

- develop a culture of safety
- develop pre-disaster planning
- initiate post-disaster reconstruction and rehabilitation planning.

G. Promoting sustainable construction industry activities

Objectives

To enable the construction sector to meet human development goals, while avoiding harmful side effects on human health and on the biosphere.

To enhance the employment generation capacity of the construction sector.

Activities

Governments and local communities should:

establish and strengthen indigenous building materials industries on inputs of locally available natural resources

enhance the utilisation of local materials by the construction sector

adopt standards and other regulatory measures which promote the increased use of energy efficient designs and technologies

formulate appropriate land use policies and introduce planning regulations aimed at protecting environmentally sensitive zones against physical disruption by construction and construction related activities

promote the use of labour intensive construction and maintenance technologies

develop measures to increase the affordability of building materials

promote the free exchange of information on the whole range of environmental and health aspects of construction

introduce legislation and financial incentives to promote recycling of energy intensive materials in the construction industry

discourage the use of construction materials and products which create pollution during their life cycle

promote information exchange and appropriate technology transfer among all countries

promote research in construction industries and related activities.

H. Promoting human resource development and capacity building for human settlements development

Most countries face three human resource, development and capacity building shortfalls. The first is the absence of a policy environment capable of integrating the resources and activities of the public, private and community sectors. The second is the weakness of specialised training and research institutions. The third is the insufficient capacity for technical training and assistance for low-income communities.

Activities

Governments and local communities should:

create a policy making environment supportive of the partnership between the public, private and community sector

provide enhanced training and technical assistance for technicians, professionals and administrators, and appointed, elected and professional members of local governments

provide direct assistance for human settlement development at the community level

promote the inclusion of integrated environmental management into general local government activities.