

# world goodwill

## NEWSLETTER

1996 N°1

### BECOMING AN URBAN SPECIES

**The rise of the city has been a key ingredient of the ferment of change that has characterised the human story throughout this century. In 1900 just fourteen percent of us lived in cities. By the year 2000 over fifty per cent will be city dwellers. In the words of Lester Brown of the Worldwatch Institute, we will have become "an urban species".**

It is the concentration of human energy that is the feature of the city. This is what draws people in the search for employment, entertainment, and creative stimulus. It is what makes the urban environment a power point in the evolution of culture and in the working out of new patterns of civilisation. It is also what makes cities the flash point of that process, for many of the problems of late twentieth century humanity are concentrated in our cities. In inner-city environments, suburbs and urban slums, tensions are fuelled by pollution, drug abuse, crime and ethnic discord; by inequalities in wealth, health care, education, job opportunities and housing; and by the loneliness that so often goes with city living.

The rise of the city confronts humanity with the challenge of community. How can we relate to each other with goodwill when we are being forced to live more closely together? How can we address the issues that make everyday existence in the city environment such a struggle for most? How can we create better human relationships when the pressures and stress of the modern urban way of life, and the absence of the intimacy and stability of the village, conspire to relegate goodwill in relationships to a lesser position in the hierarchy of needs? We shall be considering these concerns in this and the next issue of the Newsletter.

The theme of cities is being highlighted

at this time by the forthcoming Second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II). Popularly known as the City Summit, this will be the last in the cycle of global conferences which the UN has been organising in recent years. It is to take place in Istanbul this June. There is a report on the Summit elsewhere in this Newsletter, together with an interview with Summit Secretary-General, Dr. Wally N'Dow.

The City Summit brings the emerging international agenda home to our local neighbourhoods. It reminds us that the post Cold War millennium vision of an interdependent order founded on participation, sustainable life-styles, human rights, democracy, equity and peace-building requires thought and outer action at a local as well as a global level. The Istanbul gathering directs the global spotlight onto the cities and towns in which most of us live. At the same time it highlights the interaction between the local and the global environment. David Korten, of the People Centred Development Forum, describes Habitat II as "the first global conference of the twenty-first century" precisely because it has this local grounding. It is, he writes, "poised to open a global dialogue towards recreating human societies for the new era".

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Much is now being written about the city in a state of crisis, and the diverse ways in which problems are being addressed. This issue of the Newsletter offers a cornucopia of items drawing on many viewpoints. It is our hope that, taken together, these snapshots of current views on the city will stimulate your own thinking – helping you to recognise the problems as well as the signs of a new culture, creativity and inspiration which are such a part of our becoming an urban species. The

problems are urgent and we need to recognise the dangers they pose if unresolved.

But we also need to celebrate the fact that, with local leadership and policies which release goodwill energies through widespread citizen participation, cities are centres of hope in our global landscape. The city provides the challenge for communities to be engaged in all the excitement and joy of creating a culture of civility, equity and ecological responsibility.

## INTERVIEW WITH DR. WALLY N'DOW

**Dr. N'Dow is the Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Human Settlements, Habitat II, due to take place in Istanbul in June this year. A national of the Gambia, Dr. N'Dow has played a key role in UN drought relief programmes in Africa since the 1980s and has held various posts in the UNDP. In addition to his current responsibility of leading the Habitat II Conference, he is Assistant Secretary-General of the UN's Centre for Human Settlements in Nairobi, Kenya. Dr. N'Dow kindly agreed to share the following thoughts with readers of the World Goodwill Newsletter.**

**World Goodwill:** You have referred to the major UN Conferences of the nineties as 'building blocks to the future'. Could you explain what you mean by this and tell us what you think is the significance of these conferences as we prepare to enter a new millennium?

**Wally N'Dow:** Today, a few short years before the end of the century, we stand on the brink of a world as radically changed as that which confronted the framers of the United Nations Charter when they met in San Francisco in the waning days of the Second World War. Our task is to make sure that the United Nations, as it marks its fiftieth anniversary, remains adequate to the task of confronting the rising threats to human security, real security, that now face the world.

This brings us, appropriately, to the challenge we face as we embark on the road to Istanbul. It is important to understand here that the work of Habitat II is part of a larger process tied in with efforts by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to "reinvent" the United Nations. And here, Istanbul, where Habitat II will be held in June 1996, is the logical end of a road that already stretches from Rio and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to Vienna and the International Conference on Human Rights; then Cairo and the International Conference on Population and Development; Copenhagen and the Social Summit on Social Development and, most recently, Beijing and the Fourth World Conference on Women. It winds up in Istanbul and the City Summit.

This unprecedented and remarkable continuum of United Nations conferences deals with some of the most serious and pressing challenges that will confront the world community in the next century. Together they are rewriting the economic and social agenda of the United Nations, providing us with a more holistic,

more humane message about our global problems and about the cooperative solutions they require. And that, in the final analysis, is what Istanbul is all about. That is where it all comes home. I intend no pun, but with the bulk of humanity living in cities, it is there that we will have to come to grips with all these issues.

**World Goodwill:** What is it that makes Habitat II so special and different from the previous UN conferences?

**Wally N'Dow:** We can no longer just talk about our cities and their problems, we have to act. We have to find solutions locally, regionally and universally, and we can do this only if we share the information and knowledge each one of us has. This is not a North-South issue. It is not an East-West issue. It is a global issue, and in recognition of this Habitat II will not be a traditional conference of nations negotiating agreements between and among governments. It will be a precedent-setting conference of nations, localities and groups seeking to learn from one another how to solve the human settlements problems that now make for the common denominator of an urbanising world. It will be a conference of partners representing every level of government – from local authorities to national leaders – and every walk of life: the private and voluntary sectors, non-governmental organisations, professional organisations and associations, trade unions, women's groups, coalition of the youth and the elderly, community representatives.

People everywhere face similar problems of poverty, inadequate shelter, inequality, family breakdown, environmental stress and the resurgence of old diseases, such as tuberculosis, and new ones, such as aids. No one country offers a model solution. We all need new solutions – solutions that can come as we learn from one another.

**World Goodwill:** What do you hope will be achieved by the Habitat II Conference?

**Wally N'Dow:** One of the prime aims of Habitat II is to build a global partnership between local communities and the public and private sectors. With that partnership as the moving force, we have launched the first global data base of Best Practices in Improving Living Environment. We did this just recently at a remarkable international conference sponsored by the Municipality of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. Central and local governments, as well as the corporate and community sectors, can turn to it as they search for new ideas, new forms of cooperation and workable solutions to the urban problems that confront them. I mention this as a prime example of what we want to achieve in Istanbul. In short, we do not want to go there to bemoan the situation; we want to go there to do something concrete about it, something that will engage the creative energies to be found in rich and poor nations alike to attain our goal: To make the world's cities and communities productive, safe, healthy, more equitable and sustainable.

And I should add that nowhere is the creative energy we need to be found in greater or richer abundance than in the civil societies of our individual countries. Recognising this fact of our international life, the last session of the Habitat II Preparatory Committee voted to open up the Conference to its true constituents – the non-governmental community and the local authorities who, in the final analysis, must do the job. And with their help, Habitat II will write a new chapter in the way the UN approaches the problems confronting it in the 21st century.

**World Goodwill:** What role do you think spiritual values have in the creation of more people-centred urban environments?

**Wally N'Dow:** The future of our human settlements – from hamlet to megacity – will not be determined by “bricks and mortar” alone. More housing is needed and rebuilding decaying infrastructure is essential – the litany is a long and familiar one. But for all we do about it, the malaise that now eats at the heart of our cities will not disappear unless we also pay attention to the urban soul, unless we advance the human solidarities that transform the built environment into human – and humane – settlements: the livable neighbourhoods of our interdependent world.

History, geography and social change create the context for human solidarity; rational processes build cities, but faith, loyalty, honour and trust among its members create communal life. Beyond “bricks and mortar”, therefore, our cities, towns and villages need the social capital provided by a human solidarity of tolerance, mutual respect and shared values – social and spiritual – that generate close community bonds and trust, the bedrock of healthy human settlements.

**World Goodwill:** On a personal level what is it that inspires you in your work for Habitat II?

**Wally N'Dow:** What inspires me in my work for Habitat II is the conviction that today the United Nations has an unusual opportunity to help the world prepare for the new millenium. Success here, however, will be achieved only to the extent that we make our human habitat – the smallest no less than the largest – safe and livable. It is the only way we will be able to pass on to our children a world that can sustain them in harmony, a world rid of the shameful poverty, the inequality, the discrimination that still pervades its ghettos, a world at peace with the environment and with itself. That is the collective challenge that, I hope, inspires all of us as we look ahead now to Istanbul and Habitat II.

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## HABITAT II: THE CITY SUMMIT

“Today almost one half of the world's population lives in cities; projections for the year 2025 show that more than two thirds of us will be city dwellers. The world's cities are growing by one million people each week. Cities today play a significant role in development. They continue to attract migrants from rural areas because they enable people to advance socially and economically. Cities offer significant economies of scale in the provision of jobs, housing and services, and are important centres of productivity and social development.

“However the stress of this rapid urban population growth is often overwhelming. The long list of afflictions includes urban poverty rates of up to 60 percent. Despite growing investments, more than one third of the urban population live in sub-standard housing. Forty percent of urban

dwellers do not have access to safe drinking water or adequate sanitation. Primarily due to a rapid growth and deteriorating urban environment, at least 600 million people in human settlements (cities, towns and villages) already live in health and life-threatening situations, and almost 50 percent of these are children.”

There are many further problems to add to the above, such as improper land use; rising traffic congestion and pollution; lack of green spaces; and an increasing vulnerability to disaster. In short, as the Habitat II literature indicates: “The city which originated civilisation may in the end destroy it.”<sup>1</sup>

As a result of this precarious situation, 20 years after the first Habitat Conference held in Vancouver in 1976, a second Habitat conference will be convened in Istanbul, June 3-14,

1996. It will address two themes of global importance: *Adequate Shelter for All* and *Sustainable Human Settlements Development in an Urbanising World*. The goal of the conference is to make the world's cities, towns and villages healthy, safe, equitable and sustainable. Its key objectives are to raise global and national awareness of the positive role of cities and towns, to improve people's living environments, and to adopt and implement a Global Plan of Action. The focus is on the well-being of people and our relationship to our living environment.

Twenty years ago, at the first UN Conference on Human Settlements there was full confidence in the role and ability of states to lead the process of human settlements development. Today this is no longer the case. Since then "the world has experienced a determined quest for inclusion, participation and democracy".<sup>2</sup> As a result, a unique feature of Habitat II is the strong encouragement from States for the active participation of local governments, the private sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations (CBOs) and the academic and scientific communities. UN Member States have agreed that these partnerships are vital, not only for more effective planning, resource mobilisation and investment in all aspects of shelter and human settlements development, but also for distributing the benefits of economic growth more equitably. All these actors have been asked to produce a realistic Global Plan of Action for the period 1996-2000 on the two stated Habitat themes.

As at past United Nations conferences, many CBOs and NGOs throughout the world are developing a Global Habitat II NGO Programme. The main theme of this programme is "to build a widening coalition of groups working together to

articulate peoples' voices and press for an agenda that includes, among other things, the right of everyone to a place to live in peace and dignity". Additional parallel activities include: an International Trade Fair, organised around the theme "Good Ideas for Better Cities"; Partner's Forums; Exhibitions and Thematic Round Tables.

Another major initiative designed to inspire action and to serve as a vehicle for the exchange of knowledge, experience and expertise is the identification of "best practices for improving the living environment". These will include successful and sustainable approaches to poverty eradication; managing the urban environment; providing access to land, shelter and finance; empowering women and men; and many other issues which will be documented and disseminated widely.

In the words of Dr. N'Dow, Secretary-General of the conference: *Habitat II is more than a Conference. It is a recognition by the international community – an awakening...that time is running out...; that if we want to save the future, we have no choice other than to find answers today to one of the most neglected and urgent problems of our time, one that goes to the very heart of everyday lives – how we live, where we live, and, above all, if we live at all.*

<sup>1 & 2</sup> UN Habitat II publications.

For specific information relating to Habitat II and its NGO-related activities, please contact:

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Sometime between World War I and 2 New York became the first city with 10 million people; the world's first "megacity". At that time London was the only city to approach New York's size. However today, New York has long been overtaken by cities such as Tokyo, which is nearing the 30 million mark, and Mexico City, which is nearing 20 million. New York took 150 years to reach eight million people whereas Mexico City and São Paulo are taking only 15 years to increase their populations by eight million.

*The Gaia Atlas of Cities*

Approximately 380 million urban residents in the developing world still do not have adequate sanitation; at least 170 million lack access to a nearby source of safe drinking water. All twenty of Earth's largest cities have air that falls below World Health Organisation (WHO) standards. In Bangkok thirty percent of productivity is wasted in

## Facts & Figures

time lost in traffic congestion, and children's IQs are said to drop as much as 4 percentage points due to the lead content of urban air.

*The Human Face of the Urban Environment*

Cairo and Mexico City each harbours around one-quarter of their country's populace; indeed each has more people than dozens of individual nations (and Cairo has more cars than all of China)....

Within New York live individuals with business holdings equal to the aggregate wealth of a town with 50,000 people. Also in New York live individuals with no homes at all. In New Delhi a handful of millionaires consume more material goods every three months than many fellow citizens consume in their lifetimes. In many other cities – Los Angeles, Miami, Rio de Janeiro, Lagos,

Nairobi, Johannesburg, and Manila – some of the richest people on Earth live within a kilometre of the poorest of the poor.

*The Gaia Atlas of Future Worlds*

Worldwide, there are estimated to be about 100 million street children – children in the West characterised as homeless. Among street children surveyed in 1992, between 23 percent and 43 percent used drugs other than nicotine.

*The Earth Times*

Overcrowding is a feature of most major world cities today, but in the cities of the developing world it is a fact of daily life. Lagos tops all other cities with an occupancy rate of 5.8 people per room. By comparison, Indian cities average about 3 people per room, while North American cities have between 0.5 and 1 person per room.

*The Gaia Atlas of Cities*

# THE URBAN CHALLENGE

We will strive for the ideals and sacred things of the city, both alone and with many... we will transmit this city not less, but greater, better and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us.

*Oath for Athenians 500BC*

The beauty of the present situation is that even in the smallest community a practical expression of what is needed on a worldwide scale is offered to the inhabitants; differences in families, in churches, in municipalities, in cities, in nations, between races and internationally all call for the same objective and for the same process of adjustment: the establishing of right human relations. The technique or method to bring this about remains everywhere the same: the use of the spirit of goodwill.

*Alice Bailey*

Cities don't only mean high density, pollution, traffic jams, homelessness, street children: problems and despair. They also mean diversity, social cross-cutting, information, culture, health facilities, opportunities and hope. Therefore in many countries, people migrate towards cities and people migrate from one country to cities abroad. And all this population movement will eventually bring along a rich acculturation process, which, initially, may provoke irrational prejudices, intolerance and violence, tensions, unrest and new problems of governance....

In fact the game that is starting to be played in cities is not just the usual housing and infrastructure game. The game is called building up a new society. In cities humanity has to learn to re-shape and re-orient society towards a new renaissance in which ethical values will overcome greed and social segregation, in which solidarity will substitute the intolerance of the present transitional period....

The urban challenge isn't limited to sheltering the population surplus. It has to provide homes not just houses, places not just space, human solidarity not just productive systems. The future of cities means, in great measure, the future of civilisation, of social structures, of human bonds.

*Jorge Wilhelm, Deputy Secretary-General,  
Habitat II; Brazilian architect and city planner*

One of the challenges facing city planners of the future is how to restore a sense of meaning, a sense of belonging to a community and neighbourhood, into our cities. Sewage systems, water supplies, electricity, housing, shopping, car parks and all the other numerous needs of a city have to be planned and provided for – but that is only the physical dimension.

But why do we provide these amenities? Is it only to

house and feed the human body, or is it also to house and feed the human soul? If it is both, then our urban planning will be very different than if our aim is only to gratify our material and sensual needs. A city that does not address the spiritual needs of its inhabitants and does not consider the importance of caring for the soul will end up being a city of greed rather than a city of God.

*Satish Kumar, editor, Resurgence magazine*

Cities are the most fantastic artefacts and works of art that human beings have made... in them we move together for common interest, to exchange ideas.

*Ralph Erskine, architect*

Cities are again moving to centre stage, gaining a self-awareness and self-direction unknown since the middle ages. Federations and alliances of cities are redrawing geopolitical maps. In Europe the rise of the European Union and the accompanying centralisation of authority in continental agencies has been accompanied by the emergence of what Michael Parkinson of the University of Liverpool calls “entrepreneurial city regions”. The south-eastern Rhone-Alpes region of France around Lyon has created a unique co-operation pact with Italy's Lombardy region, dominated by Turin and Milan; Spain's Catalan region, centred in Barcelona; and the south-western German region around Stuttgart. These areas have dubbed themselves the “four motors of Europe”, in part because each has in recent years had the fastest growth rate in its country.

Vancouver, Seattle, and Portland, the economic engines of the American Pacific Northwest, have joined in an alliance to form a new city-region called Cascadia. New Pacific, a Vancouver-based business magazine, has sponsored a contest for a Cascadian flag.

*David Morris, Vice-President,  
The Institute for Local Self-Reliance*

Ideas and money, artists, writers, inventors and athletes, know no more frontiers and they are gravitating to cities where their efforts can bear the most fruit.... Cities have always been the loci of ... these basic pursuits of humankind, and those cities which encourage, enable and otherwise facilitate [their] fruition ... will dominate within and across borders. Many cities have a long history of marketing their comparative advantages. They include not only the financial, fashion, art and other less mentionable capitals of the world, but also cities which have leveraged their resources to become leading software development nodes, conference centres, transport and trading hubs.

*Nicholas You, Co-ordinator of Special Programmes for Habitat II*

# SUSTAINABILITY

Now with the world reaching the point at which half its people will be living in cities, it is clear that the goal of achieving a sustainable mode of life on our planet envisaged at Rio cannot be achieved unless the urban environment is sustainable.... Our civilisation is now largely an urban civilisation, and the great urban centres of the world are the crucibles of our common future. The urban centres of the industrialised world will, from the overall perspective of sustainable development, have in the final analysis a much greater impact on the local and the global environment than any other phenomenon of our times. They are where our resources are concentrated, and they are where our challenges are concentrated.... If we do not change wilfully, change will clearly come – forcefully, dramatically and tragically.

*Maurice Strong, Secretary-General,  
UN Conference on Environment and Development*

Water, at once the most vital and most abused urban resource, best illustrates the precarious relationship that now exists between cities and natural systems. Many cities are searching farther and farther afield to augment supplies from overextended or contaminated aquifers. Los Angeles, for instance, draws water from several hundred miles away. Much of it comes from Northern California, pumped over the Tehachapi Mountains, some 610 metres above sea level, into the Los Angeles basin. This journey obviously involves enormous energy expenditures. Fuelwood in Third World cities shows similar patterns. Research on fuelwood prices in India shows that the larger the city, the faster and farther the forests recede – raising transport distances and fuelwood prices.

*Lester R Brown, President, Worldwatch Institute*

What we have now is the built habitat of city, town and village dominated by cars, sprawl development, highways and freeways and oil technology. I call it the Four Headed Monster or 4HM for short, because it has four major integrally linked components: sprawl, cars, freeways and oil. Sprawling development with a few large buildings at particular nodes, 500 million cars on Earth, massive networks of freeways and highways, and an oil industry stirring up wars in the Middle East.

The ecocity, if we can summon the imagination and will to build it, will look almost exactly opposite to the present dominant infrastructure. It will be the walkable city of compact, very diverse development – “mixed uses” of housing, work, shops and schools, all very close together – assisted by bicycle and public transportation, supporting enormous biodiversity, recycling at extremely high levels of efficiency and consuming very small quantities of energy and almost all of it from renewable sources.

The ecocity will be surrounded by nature and restored agricultural areas liberated from sprawl by a two-part strategy

of withdrawal from outlying areas and diverse development in and near centres....

When we begin to understand that cities can actually become an environmental and evolutionary benefit, our imaginations are freed to explore them as the positive phenomenon they can be.

A conclusion is beginning to emerge, that the form and arrangement of the city, not the city per se, is the problem. The city itself could be part of the solution.

*Richard Register, author, 'Ecocity Berkeley'*

Recently a debate has started about the footprint of cities. According to the Canadian economist William Rees the footprint of a city is the area of land required to supply it with food and timber products, and to absorb its carbon dioxide output through areas of growing vegetation. London's total footprint, according to this definition, extends to about 125 times its surface area of 159,000 hectares, or to nearly 20 million hectares. With 12 percent of Britain's population, London would require an area equivalent to the entire productive land of Britain....

The world's large cities now have the whole planet as their hinterland; they draw on resources and dump their wastes all around the globe. How can we avoid turning the planet into a desert, as the majority of our rapidly multiplying humankind becomes urban-based?...

Cities are organisms, with an evolutionary history, a life of their own, and clearly identifiable consumption patterns. The citizens who create them need to recognise and take responsibility for these patterns. Unlike countries, cities are definable structures, whose inputs and outputs can be precisely measured. They are units more easily tackled when it comes to reorganising their consumption and discharge. One way of achieving this is global co-operation. Today city people can easily collaborate with other communities in distant places. Acting globally cities can work with people in remote regions to help prevent environmental damage far away. Working together, cities can guard the functioning of the biosphere, on which cities ultimately depend....

Some cities have made resource efficiency a top priority, installing sophisticated equipment for resource recovery. In Europe the city of Salzburg has a particularly well developed recycling and composting operation. It composts most of the city's organic waste and converts it back into soil. Just outside Salzburg the authorities have installed a composting works that can handle the household waste of half a million people, 100,000 tons a year.

Elsewhere in the world, Brazil's Curitiba, a city of 2 million people, has probably taken the lead in sustainable urban development. This is a city that thrives on participation and good planning. It has created a sustainable, modern infrastructure, centred around the surface metro – a system of fast, convenient bus routes. This system has persuaded the

city's drivers to use their cars much less, and has improved travel for all. In the city's poor areas there is no rubbish collection, but people bring fresh bags of trash to the bus stops, and exchange them for bus tickets or bags of vegetables, grown on composted city wastes. The new music hall has open walls so that people can listen to concerts from the park outside.

*Herbert Girardet, author, cultural ecologist, television producer*

*In preparing this issue of the Newsletter we have drawn on a number of publications. Two by Herbert Girardet have been particularly useful and are the source of a number of quotations: Herbert Girardet, *The Gaia Atlas of Cities: New directions for sustainable urban living*. London. Gaia Books Ltd., 1992 & Herbert Girardet, 'The Urban Age: Sustainable Cities in an Urban World' in *One World Overview* (available on One World Online on the Internet: <http://www.one.world.org/>)*

## SQUATTER SETTLEMENTS

The room had one bed, in which Faustino and his wife slept. The rest of us slept on pieces of cardboard and blankets or rags spread on the floor...That is the way the thirteen of us, five families, arranged ourselves in that little room.

*Oscar Lewis*

The poor build for themselves an enormously greater number of homes and neighbourhoods than can ever be provided by public welfare and private charities. Between half and three-quarters of all urban settlement and home building in the rapidly growing cities of the Third World are built by and for the poor themselves. This majority, usually four-fifths of the population, have no access to new housing supplied by commercial developers or public agencies. Donors to housing charities vastly outnumber those who are eventually sheltered by their gifts.

*John F. C. Turner, pioneer since the 1950s in community based housing, winner of Alternative Nobel Prize*

Orangi, a suburb of Karachi, Pakistan's largest city, has grown rapidly and now has more than 700,000 people crowded into it.

Akhtar Hameed Khan came to Orangi in 1980, a charismatic leader with considerable experience in organising community self-help from his previous work in the Comilla project in Bangladesh. He found that housing was poor, san-

itation and drainage facilities inadequate, health problems on the increase and epidemics frequent.

Khan was convinced that the best way to deal with Orangi's problems was to shun outside help and strengthen the capacity of the local people to help themselves. The Orangi Pilot Project concentrated on five areas: Low-cost sanitation; Low-cost housing; Women's work centres; Women's welfare programmes; School education.

The results have been spectacular. The sanitation programme involves 28,000 families that have constructed some 430,000 feet of underground sewerage and built more than 28,000 latrines. They financed this with 30 million rupees (\$1.2 million) of their own savings, at a cost of \$66 per house – about one-quarter of what it would have cost local government.

*UNDP, Human Development Report 1993*

In developing-world cities today the illegal occupation of land in squatter or informal settlements is often the only way for people to get a roof over their heads. Every country has its own terms for squatter settlements and they are perceived in ambiguous ways. In Argentina they are known as "villa miserias" translated as townships of misery, in Peru the term "pueblos juvenos" means young community, and in Indonesia "kampung" simply means village.

*Herbert Girardet*

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### *Cities Action on the Environment*

One of the outcomes of the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 was Agenda 21, a comprehensive blueprint for action on sustainable development. Chapter 28 of the Agenda 21 document calls on municipalities to draw up their own Local Agenda 21 programmes to make cities more environmentally friendly.

In April 1995 it was reported that "at least 1,200 local authorities from 30 countries are actively involved in Local Agenda 21 planning activities". New structures (roundtables, forums, task-forces) have been set up to involve all sectors of the cities concerned in creating local action plans.

The International Council for Local Environmental

Initiatives (ICLEI) publishes a regular international newsletter, Local Agenda 21 Initiative, and has set up a Local Agenda 21 Model Communities Programme with fourteen participating municipalities in the Latin American, Asian and Pacific, African, European and North American regions. A recent conference held in Rome on Local Agenda 21 programmes in countries bordering the Mediterranean was attended by representatives from more than 100 cities, towns and villages (over 50% of the representatives were mayors) covering 21 countries.

The ICLEI links cities from all parts of the world in an information exchange on good environmental practices. In

Europe, the Council's action to make cities more aware of the role they can play in reducing greenhouse gases and cleaning up the atmosphere led to over 100 cities (including Munich, Vienna, Utrecht and Geneva) forming a European Climate Alliance. Alliance members are committed to reducing CO2 emissions by half by 2010. They have also established links with indigenous and traditional communities in Peru and Brazil as a step towards action to safeguard the rainforests.

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## Women and Children in the City

The Habitat II conference has, inevitably, focused attention on the problems faced in cities by specific groups. Considerable attention is being placed on the needs of women and children. Three international networks joined together in 1994 in a 'super coalition' to co-ordinate common concerns and strategies on women and the city summit. The three are: The Habitat International Council Women & Shelter Network; Grassroots Organisations Operating Together for Sisterhood (Groots); and the International Council of Women. Copies of joint statements from the coalition are available from the Women and Shelter Network.

In addition to special UNICEF programmes on the needs of the child in the city, a wide range of organisations are focusing at the Summit on children's issues. They include PLAN International, the largest arranger of child sponsorship programmes in the world (donors in the North sponsor a child in the South). PLAN will be contributing to a book and producing a range of its own publications outlining a child-

centred habitat strategy for cities. It hopes to "stimulate discussion concerning priorities for children and the role of children themselves in setting them".

The Child-to-Child scheme in Bombay, India, is one example of children as goodwill agents in the city. In a shanty town of 100,000 inhabitants, with no sanitation, children as young as ten are trained to look after the health needs of other children. They diagnose diseases, prescribe simple remedies and refer children on to health workers as needed. "The lives of many children in the community have been saved by these young workers."

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## Mega-Cities Project

Since 1987 the world's largest cities (each with a population of over 10 million) have been linked through the Mega-Cities Project, a network which fosters innovation in resolving the problems faced by these giants of the modern world. Teams meet together twice a year to discuss initiatives pioneered by member cities (often as the result of community action) in such fields as citizen involvement, combating poverty, pollution control and environment measures. Participating cities often learn that they have more in common with each other than with smaller cities within their own nation. In one example of the sharing of innovation São Paulo's public display of air pollution monitors and restriction of city centre traffic when pollution is too high was taken up and adapted by New York.

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## helping to build right human relations

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WORLD GOODWILL is an international movement helping to mobilise the energy of goodwill and to build right human relations. It was established in 1932 as a service activity of the Lucis Trust. The LUCIS TRUST is a registered educational charity in Great Britain. In the USA it is a non-profit tax-exempt educational corporation, and in Switzerland it is registered as a non-profit association. WORLD GOODWILL is recognised by the United Nations as a Non-Governmental Organisation and is represented at regular briefing sessions at UN Headquarters. The LUCIS TRUST is on the Roster of the

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