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### **Commonwealth Action on Human Settlements: ComHabitat's Progress Report 2007 – 2009**

A Paper by the Commonwealth Secretariat

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# ComHabitat's Progress Report 2007-2009

## Introduction

1. This paper reviews progress achieved over the past two years by the Commonwealth's partnership on human settlements, ComHabitat. The value of the partnership is that it brings together agencies from different sectors that are implementing the Habitat Agenda (government, local government, civil society and professional organizations). All these groups are actively involved in addressing human settlements concerns within their own spheres, but they also collaborate through ComHabitat to achieve their goals through networking, advocacy, information sharing and the creation of partnerships to promote more integrated approaches.

## Background

2. The Commonwealth's principal mechanism for addressing human settlements concerns is a multi-stakeholder partnership known as ComHabitat. This consists of a Ministerial Group – the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements (CCGHS) – and a collaborative partnership of agencies from government, local government and civil society. Partners include: Commonwealth Foundation; Commonwealth Association of Planners; Commonwealth Human Ecology Council; Commonwealth Local Government Forum; Department for International Development; Homeless International and the Commonwealth Secretariat, which has been hosting a Secretariat for ComHabitat in the interim period. Other partners include UN Habitat and Société Française des Urbanistes. ComHabitat promotes implementation of the Habitat Agenda and is working towards the Commonwealth Goal of: “*Demonstrated progress towards adequate shelter for all with secure tenure and access to essential services in every community by 2015*”.

## Key Messages

3. In 2005, the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements (CCGHS) endorsed a Work Plan with the following substantive elements: Research and information sharing; Networking and advocacy; and the CCGHS. Achievements against this work plan between 2007 and 2009 are summarised as follows.

- **Research and information sharing.** ComHabitat research has helped member governments and other stakeholders to assess progress on: the MDGs and Commonwealth goal on human settlements; the capacity for managing urban development; and the availability of, and options for, urban development finance. The web site has also disseminated briefing papers, lessons learned through ComHabitat activities, and examples of multi-stakeholder approaches around the Commonwealth.
- **Networking and advocacy.** ComHabitat has delivered debates and networking events that have deepened understanding of practical approaches to urban poverty reduction, partnerships in water and sanitation, and priorities in disaster risk reduction. ComHabitat has been a strong advocate on the need to place human settlements at the heart of the development agenda. It has also built a strong partnership and an extensive range of contacts that form part of a wider ‘ComHabitat Network’ which positions the partnership well to deepen its impact in the years ahead.

- ***The CCGHS.*** The CCGHS sets the strategic objectives for ComHabitat. It has used the Commonwealth's strengths in consensus building to help Ministers prepare for international negotiations. By sharing experiences and building connections between member states, the CCGHS has contributed to the efforts of Commonwealth citizens to implement the Habitat Agenda.

4. Over the last two years (i.e. 2007 – 2009), funding for ComHabitat has been provided by the Commonwealth Foundation and Commonwealth Secretariat, as well as through inputs-in-kind from participating organisations. Conscious that funding would conclude in March 2007, the ComHabitat Management Group developed a new strategic plan for 2007–2011 (Annex 1). This builds on the network's experiences and achievements, and provides a framework for attracting new partnerships and resources. This new strategic plan was formally endorsed by CCGHS in April 2007. The strategic objectives of the new Strategic Plan are to:

- improve financial investment to ensure adequate shelter for all, including access to essential services;
- strengthen leadership and governance in sustainable and equitable human settlements development; and
- reduce risks and build community resilience in an urbanising world.

5. To underpin the sustainability of the ComHabitat mechanism, the Plan is embedded within the mandates and expertise of its key partner institutions. It will draw on the institutional resources of partnership, but requires additional funding to fully implement the plan. The Commonwealth Foundation has increased its support of CCGHS over the past year and now has a staff member actively involved in seeking financial support for the Commonwealth's human settlements programme.

## **COMHABITAT ACHIEVEMENTS (2007 – 2009)**

This section outlines the activities of ComHabitat and its partners over the past two years which have contributed to meeting the strategic objectives set in the (2007 – 2011) strategic plan.

### **A 'State of the Commonwealth Cities' project including a Commonwealth-wide network to monitor progress towards the MDGs and Commonwealth goal on human settlements**

6. At the CCGHS meeting held in Nairobi, 2007, Commonwealth Ministers responsible for Human Settlements discussed the need for greater monitoring of member states' progress towards the Commonwealth goal of "demonstrated progress towards adequate shelter for all with secure tenure and access to essential services in every community by 2015". The Commonwealth People's Forum (forum for civil society) that met in Kampala, 2007, called for the production of a 'State of the Commonwealth's Cities' report for the next CHOGM, which would assess opportunities and threats of urban growth in relation to poverty alleviation, sustainable and people-centred development and reducing disparities in living conditions, and would recommend inter-governmental actions.

7. Following these mandates, ComHabitat is proposing to establish a Commonwealth-wide network to monitor progress towards the MDGs and Commonwealth goal on human

settlements. This project is intended to develop the capacity of local authorities to monitor development objectives and use this tool in planning resource mobilisation and allocation.

8. Through the development of a publication on the 'State of the Commonwealth Cities', this project will identify twelve cities that will pilot the project and will build the cities' capacity for exploring new, innovative indicators as well as building on existing indicators on progress towards human settlement goals, and capacity for evidence-informed decision-making to make human settlements more sustainable, economically, socially and environmentally sound.

9. The concept note for this project was circulated by the Commonwealth Foundation to the London based High Commissions of Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Nigeria, South Africa and to contacts within DFID to determine levels of potential interest with a view to seeking future funding partners. Although no positive interest has been received to date, the Foundation is also supporting the project in other ways.

10. ComHabitat has now started work on a scoping study for the State of the Commonwealth Cities report and on establishing a Network of Inclusive Commonwealth Cities. The scoping study has been prepared in time for this CCGHS meeting. This first stage of the project has been funded by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Foundation. The research will be presented as a paper at the CCGHS meeting in Nairobi in March 2009 and at the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) Conference in the Bahamas in May 2009.

11. CLGF, in collaboration with ComHabitat, has identified twelve cities to be part of a pilot Network on Inclusive Cities. The network aims to bring together a range of different urban centres (Freetown, Sierra Leone; Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; Johannesburg and eThekweni, South Africa; Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago; Brisbane, Australia; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Birmingham, UK; Ahmedabad and Hyderabad, India; Vancouver, Canada; and Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea) to work collaboratively on sharing experience, ideas and learning to promote a more inclusive approach to the challenges of urban development in the Commonwealth. In the first instance these cities will contribute information and data to the paper for CCGHS to guide the work on measuring progress towards the Commonwealth goal. It is hoped that the network will develop to encourage exchange of good practice and learning and to bring in more partners. The network will be officially launched at the CLGF Conference in May 2009.

**ComHabitat has been at the forefront of discussions on improving financial investment to ensure adequate shelter for all, including access to essential services**

12. The CLGF *Conference on Local Government Access to Development Finance in Africa* was undertaken successfully in South Africa in September 2008. It built on the paper prepared for ComHabitat in 2007/08. The conference served to highlight the role of local government in meeting many of the poverty targets set out within the MDGs but also the relative lack of focus on support for the sector when development finance is allocated. This is being exacerbated by the increasingly complex aid architecture, including the move towards greater direct budgetary support. The conference also looked at other strategies for raising development finance such as municipal bonds and PPPs. One key outcome highlighted the

limited information available within the sector and CLGF will be producing a user friendly toolkit to address this.

13. In November 2007, the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council (CHEC) concentrated its efforts in the Commonwealth Peoples Forum (CPF), and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Kampala on a highly successful *Workshop on Energy, Water and Sustainable Livelihoods* as part of the CPF. The workshop considered the relationships of water and energy and how the burdens of lack of water and energy can fall unevenly on the poor and how these burdens can be relieved with best practices. The end result of the workshop was to produce a series of resolutions and guidelines for adoption by CHOGM.

**ComHabitat has contributed to strengthening leadership and governance by Habitat Agenda partners in approaches to sustainable and equitable human settlements development**

14. In 2007, CHEC Nigeria ran a highly successful “*Training of Trainers*” programme for local government officials on incorporating planning and sustainable development in their activities. This programme was a result of the CHEC meetings at the 2003 Abuja, Nigeria, CHOGM and implements the objectives of the World Urban Forum (WUF), 2006, in Vancouver.

15. CLGF began the third phase of the *Commonwealth Local Government Good Practice Scheme* (CLGGPS) in August 2008, supported by Department for International Development (DFID). The Scheme is supporting council to council partnerships designed to build capacity through exchange of experience among practitioners. Projects are up and running in the target countries of South Africa, India, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Jamaica. Projects focus on initiatives which reduce poverty and improve governance and service delivery, e.g. Bo and Makeni (Sierra Leone) and Warwickshire are working on improving waste management, and Leicester and Rajkot (India) are looking at improving community consultation and participation to plan services more effectively. By working with local government associations it is expected that the lessons emerging from the projects will help to improve the national policy making framework.

16. Also, the *Pacific regional capacity building* project has a strong focus on strengthening local government and includes work on improving governance and service delivery. It actively promotes work to improve local/central relations through generating dialogues and by encouraging a greater focus at the regional level (PIFS) on local government and issues of local governance. CLGF has linked with UNESCAP to promote the Pacific Urban Agenda and a small team of practitioners attending the World Urban Forum, November 2008, organised a networking event on “*Reinventing planning in a New Urban Pacific*” and discussed possible strategies to take the Pacific Urban agenda forward.

17. In 2007 almost 30 ministers of local government took part in the *CLGF Conference* along with many local government leaders, key officials of central government and local government, representatives from civil society, academic organisations and the private sector. CLGF would be taking the recommendations from the conference to CHOGM. These recommendations will also underpin CLGF’s own policy making for 2009-12.

ComHabitat is implementing a project on **‘Reinventing Planning’ to enhance capacity for managing urban development in more sustainable ways by assessing training needs, disseminating materials, supporting new practices, and developing learning networks.**

18. CCGHS, in April 2007, endorsed the need for capacity building in the field of planning. Since then the Commonwealth Association of Planners (CAP) has undertaken the following project activities:

- CAP has disseminated the book *‘Making Planning Work’* amongst its member institutes.
- CAP held regional events during 2007, in Fiji, Barbados and Kampala and then fed the results from these into the Planning Africa Conference in Johannesburg in 2008. The central theme of all these events was *‘re-inventing planning’*.
- CAP took the findings from these events forward to the UN-Habitat World Urban Forum in November 2008 in Nanjing, and presented them in a CAP Networking Event. CAP’s President was the opening speaker in the Dialogue on *‘Harmonious Cities and Balanced Regional Development’*, and was able to use her speech to raise awareness of CAP’s activities.
- By working closely with the Société Française des Urbanistes, CAP has been able to forge connections between Commonwealth and Francophone planners in West and Central Africa around the re-inventing planning agenda.
- In partnership with, and thanks to over £50,000 financial support from, the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Lincoln Foundation, CAP has been able to launch an on-line self-assessment of capacity for planning. Over 550 responses came from planners in 32 Commonwealth countries (plus one from Zimbabwe and one from Gibraltar). Another 700 replies came from non-Commonwealth countries. The results of this work were presented to the UN-Habitat World Urban Forum in November 2008.
- CAP commissioned a study on *‘Approaches to gender in planning in the Commonwealth’*. The final report will be available in April 2009, but interim findings were presented to the Gender Roundtable at the World Urban Forum in November 2008. CAP’s President was honoured by being asked to chair the Roundtable.
- CAP has also signed a Memorandum of Co-operation with the Prince’s Foundation for the Built Environment, to work together on skills and leadership development. HRH Prince Charles gave a video-address to the World Urban Forum.
- The 4<sup>th</sup> World Urban Forum in November 2008 Nanjing reinforced the importance of planning to implement change and the importance of sustainability as the back bone of new forms of planning.

19. In June 2008, CHEC supported the founding of the Global Housing Foundation, New York. The Foundation is now an active international operation with enormous potential for the mobilisation of public, private and intergovernmental efforts in favour of industries and enterprises that implement projects for the provision of affordable housing worldwide.

20. ComHabitat produced a paper on *‘Financing Decentralisation and Local Government to meet the MDGs’* which was circulated at the Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting in Guyana in October 2007. Greater effort will be made to ensure that ComHabitat is able to play a more substantial role in this year’s Finance Ministers meeting.

## **ComHabitat has engaged in discussions on the need to reduce risks and build community resilience in an urbanising world**

21. CHEC has participated, under the leadership of Professor Ian Douglas, in two major projects related to the growth of Asian urban areas:

- The impacts of coal-mining and industrial development on Chinese urban areas Symposia in Mentougou and Huaibei, and
- Peri-urban growth around Asian cities (Symposium in Taipei, Taiwan).

22. CHEC has actively worked on problems of African urban development, climate change and flooding as it affects poor people in informal settlements. CHEC has also engaged in investigations of urban food security in the face of the increased flooding that is highly likely to occur as a result of climate change, particularly in South Asia. Although the Strategic Plan 2007-2011 discusses climate change mitigation there is some urgency to promote further adaptation to climate change.

23. CHEC, with its Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), New York, supports its New York representative, Narelle Townsend and her involvement with the UN caucus, the NGO Committee on Human Settlements. Narelle Townsend and Professor Eleanor Morris were the CHEC delegates to the 16<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (March 2008) which focused on the vast number of environmental disaster migrants (2.5 million) now added to the existing economic immigrants. With both environmental and economic migrants, the population burden is overwhelming yet the delegates were unwilling to discuss positive interventions of population growth.

24. In early 2008, the Commonwealth Foundation in partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth associations, and a range of other governmental and non-governmental organisations organised a series of six briefings for governments, policy-makers, opinion formers and others who are in a position to influence the Commonwealth response to climate change. The aim was to raise awareness about critical climate change issues facing the Commonwealth and how they can be effectively addressed. While some briefings covered a broad range of issues, others including 'Climate Change and Cities', 'Climate Change, Vulnerability and Voice', 'Climate Change, Water and Health' addressed more specific issues including those relating to the CCGHS strategic objective of 'reducing risks and building community resilience in an urbanising world'. The briefings were very well received and very successful in raising the profile of the Commonwealth's work in this area.

## **FUTURE ACTIVITIES AND CHALLENGES (2009 - 2011)**

Future work will be focussed on the following areas:

25. A full **‘State of Commonwealth Cities’ study** and an operational **‘Network of Inclusive Commonwealth Cities’**. The second phase of this work will seek to implement the findings from the network in a practical way. These cities will be expected to identify relevant MDG related objectives and targets, and to measure and relate their effectiveness in achieving them.

26. **‘Reinventing Planning’ project**. In addition to the Cities report, the following activities are identified to take forward the ‘Reinventing Planning’ project (2009-2010):

- A concerted push on **capacity-building**, with the following components:
  - Audit and appraisal of planning education and continuing professional development across the Commonwealth in relation to needs for new urban planning;
  - Commissioning of distance learning materials on two key areas – planning for rapid urbanisation and planning for hazards mitigation (indicative cost £150,000).
- **Mainstreaming gender awareness in planning practice across the Commonwealth**, building on the preliminary and exploratory work that CAP commissioned in 2008. This would be a mix of research and workshops run through CAP’s ‘Women in Planning’ network.

27. **CLGF Conference**, Freeport, May 2009. CLGF’s biennial conference will be taking place in Freeport, The Bahamas, 11-14 May 2009. This is an important learning and networking opportunity for local government practitioners across the Commonwealth. It will focus on the Commonwealth vision for improving local government and will take forward key issues such as access to finance, improved planning, and partnership working, as part of the strategy towards improving the effectiveness and efficiency of local government and the services they provide in the Commonwealth.

28. **International Conference on Human Ecology**, Manchester, July 2009. CHEC is collaborating in the calling of a major symposium on Human Ecology. There will be a number of topics relevant to the Habitat Agenda, including ‘Urban Food Production and Urban Metabolism, and ‘Eco Cities in Developed and Developing Countries’.

29. Since the conclusion of stewardship by Homeless International of the ComHabitat Secretariat, ComHabitat Management partners agreed that interim arrangements need to be put in place in order for ComHabitat to keep up its profile and continue its management functions as it seeks new funding for the Strategic Plan. ComHabitat Management partners have agreed that the Commonwealth Secretariat in collaboration with the Commonwealth Foundation would take over the financing of an **Advocacy and Information Co-ordinator** to maintain visibility of the work of ComHabitat over the course of this year.

30. Access to project funding will remain a challenge in the current adverse economic and financial climate. The increasing number of competing priorities coupled with a shrinking pool of donor funds will require a much more focused approach to sourcing support in future. It will be important that CCGHS clearly identify and communicate the unique benefits and value it brings to helping solve the issues surrounding global urbanisation.

31. The challenge for ComHabitat is to continue the progress that has been made over the past two years and continue to develop a solid programme of work that attracts further future funding from development agencies and other partners.

### **Issues for Ministers**

32. Ministers may wish to:

- Comment on progress achieved by ComHabitat over the past two years and whether this has helped stakeholders to achieve their objectives in implementing the Habitat Agenda.
- Review the Strategic Plan for 2007-2011 in terms of the priority concerns of CCGHS members.
- Clearly identify and communicate the unique benefits and value that the CCGHS brings to helping solve the issues surrounding global urbanisation, given the challenges currently being experienced in securing project funds.
- Agree steps towards a greater involvement of stakeholders from all spheres in the work of the ComHabitat Management Group.

## **ANNEX 1:**



## ComHabitat Strategic Plan 2007–2011

### Background

For the first time in history, there are as many people living in urban centres as in rural areas. Indeed, by 2030 more than 60 per cent of us will live in cities. The UN estimates that as many as 55 per cent of the world's poor live in urban areas today, and this proportion is expected to increase as population rises since urban areas of developing countries will absorb 95 per cent of the world's population growth between 2000 and 2030. One of the greatest challenges in this trend is the rate at which slum settlements are growing. The poverty and deprivation experienced by urban slum dwellers are often underestimated and low rates of water and sanitation coverage, high child mortality and poor education enrolment go unrecognised. Yet, good slum-upgrading programmes have been shown to greatly reduce infant and child mortality rates. Slum upgrading and strategic urban planning, and effective urban governance have therefore become central to reaching the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Habitat Agenda. It will take vision and leadership, the integration of human settlements concerns into strategic plans and budgets, innovative sources of investment and new planning skills and approaches, to ensure that needs of all city dwellers are met and that sustainable human settlements are achieved.

### Why is the Commonwealth strongly placed to take action on the Habitat Agenda?

The 53 Commonwealth countries vary greatly in terms of size, geographical location, income and type of economy. They are amongst those that are most affected by rapid urbanisation and as such they are central to achieving international development goals and objectives. Over 327 million people or almost one in six citizens living in the Commonwealth live in slums.<sup>1</sup> At least eight Commonwealth member states, all in sub-Saharan Africa, have annual slum growth rates of more than 5 per cent<sup>2</sup>. In a quarter of Commonwealth countries (11 African, 2 Asian and 1 Pacific), more than two out of three urban dwellers live in slums and many of these countries are urbanising rapidly. Indeed, for some small states this is a new and emerging trend that needs innovative solutions.

While the challenges are considerable, the Commonwealth's fundamental principles and its networks are an important resource that can achieve practical results for the Habitat Agenda. Human settlement concerns are inextricably linked to the Commonwealth's fundamental values of good governance, human rights, gender equality and sustainable development. The right to adequate shelter in particular is a principle without which there can be no security and stability for households – or the wider society.

The Commonwealth's networks can enable different spheres of government and society to reach a common understanding of problems and therefore work towards effective solutions. The networks include central government, local government, professional bodies, civil society organisations and business. Commonwealth partners can share approaches that are

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<sup>1</sup> The UN's slum dweller estimation is based on a definition of a "slum household" as lacking either: access to improved water; access to improved sanitation facilities; sufficient living area (less than 3 people per habitable room); a durable dwelling (non-hazardous location, permanent structure adequate to protect from climatic extremes); or security of tenure. All statistics in this paragraph are from UN Habitat (2003) *Slums of the World: the face of urban poverty in the new millennium?* Nairobi: UN-Habitat.

<sup>2</sup> There may be others with even higher rates, but data was only available for 32 member states, none of which were in the Pacific region.

based on similar legal, political and educational systems. In particular, there is often a common institutional legacy in relation to building and planning legislation and training for built environment professionals. Commonwealth initiatives also provide a rare opportunity to work across regions. As a trusted and neutral development partner, the Commonwealth facilitates consultations at the highest political levels, informed by this wider networking, to build consensus and advocate the concerns of developing countries.

## How does the Commonwealth take action on Human Settlements?

The Commonwealth's principle mechanism for addressing human settlements concerns is ComHabitat. ComHabitat is a partnership of the ministerial-level Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements (CCGHS) and agencies from government, local government, civil society and the private sector. ComHabitat promotes implementation of the Habitat Agenda and is working towards the Commonwealth Goal of: "*Demonstrated progress towards adequate shelter for all with secure tenure and access to essential services in every community by 2015*" and associated Millennium Development Goals. It focuses on networking and sharing practical examples of progress in implementation.

ComHabitat provides:

- a forum to foster relationships and projects. By working in partnership, the agencies involved in ComHabitat are able to make new connections and add value to each others work;
- a platform for developing country concerns on human settlements, presenting these at key international events and through information-sharing mechanisms;
- a deeper understanding of the issues through research, high-level dialogues and public debates in areas such as: partnership approaches to the provision of water, sanitation and waste management; financing constraints for urban development; alternatives to forced eviction; reducing vulnerability to disasters; addressing urban poverty in national poverty reduction frameworks; and placing human settlements at the centre of the development agenda; and
- active support to partnership approaches, for example by sponsoring exchanges to study community led approaches to slum upgrading and new building technologies, and assisting government and NGOs in Malawi to develop a plan for implementing settlement upgrading plans in line with the Malawi Growth & Development Strategy and potentially using funds released through debt relief<sup>3</sup>.

## Looking Forward

This Strategic Plan is informed by ComHabitat's experience over the past three years. It provides a focus for a new phase and a framework for the development of partnerships that attract resources and harness the Commonwealth's strengths to add value to efforts at achieving the Habitat Agenda and MDGs.

The Commonwealth's goal for human settlements is "*Demonstrated progress towards adequate shelter for all with secure tenure and access to essential services in every community by 2015*".

ComHabitat partners will work to achieve this goal and support members of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements in their efforts to:

- provide basic services to households, neighbourhoods and villages;
- incorporate shelter provision into national poverty alleviation programmes;
- promote good governance;
- promote security of tenure; and
- remove systematic discrimination against women, especially in respect of title to property and inheritance rights.

ComHabitat has identified specific areas where it, as a partnership, will focus its work. Its mission can be summarised by the call made by the CCGHS Chair's statement to the

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<sup>3</sup>Malawi reached completion point under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative in September 2006.

thirteenth session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development to put ***“human settlements at the very heart of the development agenda”***<sup>4</sup>.

## Strategic Objectives

ComHabitat has identified three strategic objectives to guide its work from 2007 to 2011.

1. To improve financial investment to ensure adequate shelter for all, including access to essential services.
2. To strengthen leadership and governance by Habitat Agenda partners<sup>5</sup> in approaches to sustainable and equitable human settlements development.
3. To reduce risks and build community resilience in an urbanising World.

## A focus on finance

Objective 1: To improve financial investment to ensure adequate shelter for all, including access to essential services.

### Rationale

Meeting the MDGs means greatly expanding investments in infrastructure and basic services, including: water; sanitation; primary health care; community development; housing and education<sup>6</sup>. Commonwealth member states have recognized that financing is a key issue in human settlements development.

Research and consultations by ComHabitat in the past three years have highlighted the following key constraints to financing:

- national frameworks, such as Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, lack a focus on urban poverty issues. This implies that human settlements concerns are not being prioritised in government spending plans and that governments and donors do not always maximise opportunities within urban areas to address poverty and meet the MDGs; and
- increasing pressure on local government to deliver basic services to meet the MDGs, yet it often does not have the financial means or capacity to do so.

### Directions

To achieve the strategic objective of improving financial investment to ensure adequate shelter for all, including essential services, ComHabitat will:

- advocate the concerns of developing countries and seek to improve international financial mechanisms for human settlements development by facilitating high-level dialogue (e.g. at Commonwealth Ministerial Meetings and other forums) on the issues of: financing human settlements development; and the inclusion of human settlements in national and local development strategies;
- exchange experiences between central and local government around the public financing of basic services to develop principles and approaches that support effective public sector decentralization and an improved flow of resources in support of the local delivery of basic services;
- research and share examples and experiences of approaches to financing human settlements development to improve access to financing mechanisms at the local level; and

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<sup>4</sup> CCGHS (2005) *Statement on Behalf of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements at the Thirteenth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development*, April 2005

<sup>5</sup> The Habitat Agenda recognises that its goals can only be achieved through various actors working in partnership. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (known as UN-Habitat), is the UN agency responsible for human settlements, cities and implementing the Habitat Agenda works with partners including: governments, international and regional organisations, municipalities and various regional and international local authority groups; parliamentarians, non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, women's and youth groups, trade unions, urban professionals, researchers and spiritual organisations.

<sup>6</sup> UN Millennium Project (2005) *Investing in Development: A practical plan to achieve the millennium development goals*, New York: UNDP.

- explore new approaches to local financing for human settlements development that involve a wider array of actors.

### Outcomes

- Financing mobilised at a national and local level for human settlements development.
- Principles and approaches identified and promoted to facilitate decentralisation.
- Senior finance, planning and human settlements officials have a deeper understanding of the concerns and practical approaches to improving financial flows for adequate shelter and basic services for all.
- Innovative approaches identified to local financing of human settlements development.

## **Building effective leadership**

Objective 2: To strengthen leadership and governance by Habitat Agenda partners in approaches to sustainable and equitable human settlements development.

### Rationale

It is widely acknowledged that strengthening governance at all levels is essential for sustainable development, and that this requires effective leadership by all agencies with a role to play. To nurture sustainable human settlements, Commonwealth member states have stressed the need to share practical ideas, showcase good practice and analyse what lessons can be learnt from experience.

Approaches such as the UN Habitat Urban Governance Index, and the Commonwealth Local Government Forum's Aberdeen Agenda (which sets out principles on good practice for local democracy and governance), can help to underpin sustainable and equitable human settlements development.

Leadership is also needed in the planning sphere. A recent position paper by the professional association representing planners in the Commonwealth calls for leadership and new skills amongst planners, stakeholders and all levels of government to address the challenges of rapid urbanisation. It recognises that new urban development approaches need to be: explicitly pro-poor and inclusive; acknowledge the dynamics of informal sectors; and create opportunities for all. There can be no rigid blueprint for urban development, since this rests on a diverse set of cultures and legal systems. The approach recognises the potential that exists to use information and communication networks, Commonwealth universities and other training institutions, professional groups and practitioners, to develop curricula and learning materials, and to share experiences in sustainable planning of urban centres.

### Directions

To achieve the strategic objective of strengthening leadership and governance in approaches to sustainable and equitable human settlements development, ComHabitat will:

- review and promote experiences and implementation of successful initiatives to improve governance of human settlements; and
- exchange ideas and experiences on new approaches in urban development, and promote initiatives such as the Commonwealth Association of Planners' work on "New Urban Planning".

### Outcomes

- Stronger champions for more inclusive and integrated approaches to human settlements planning leading to more economically, environmentally and socially sustainable human settlements.
- More information available to support stakeholders at all levels in improving the governance of human settlements development through leadership.
- Approaches implemented that improve governance for sustainable human settlements.
- Built environment professionals and other stakeholders showing leadership in developing new urban planning approaches.

## Addressing risk

Objective 3: To reduce risks and build community resilience in a rapidly urbanising World.

### Rationale

The international community has been heavily engaged in disaster management issues in recent years, and people have found themselves faced with devastating large-scale events. Hurricane Ivan badly affected Jamaica and devastated Grenada in September 2004; the December 2004 tsunami affected countries in Asia and the Indian Ocean, including Sri Lanka and The Maldives; and a massive earthquake occurred in Kashmir in October 2005. It is estimated that more than 200 million people on average have been affected every year in the past two decades by disasters<sup>7</sup>. The impact of disasters on people's lives can be greatly reduced by effective forward planning and governance.

Informal settlements and slum communities are often built on marginal land such as floodplains and coastal swamps, making poor people particularly vulnerable to events such as floods, storm surges and fire. Such events have to be seen as factors preventing poor people improving their quality of life and they greatly aggravate poverty. The worsening of the flood situation and the rise of sea level as a consequence of climate change will thus further increase poverty. It is important to involve the affected communities in planning for post-disaster rehabilitation, disaster risk reduction and the design of more disaster resistant dwellings and appropriate hazard alleviation measures.

The Conference of Commonwealth Meteorologists has noted that about 90 per cent of all disasters are hydrometeorological in nature and effective services are needed to support early warning and preparedness for disasters. Climate change is a growing concern for human settlements. The predominant focus of international initiatives on climate change and cities – such as the Cities for Climate Protection campaign of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) – is on climate change mitigation. There has been much less emphasis on promoting adaptation to climate change in our growing cities. There is a strong case for special assistance to help poor urban people to adapt to climate change. This is where Commonwealth networking could help to add value.

An international meeting of Commonwealth professional associations and international organisations<sup>8</sup> showed that building codes, planning regulations and disaster response and recovery plans are not always adequate to address current disaster risks. This needs to be addressed and projected risks from climate change must also be integrated into planning for sustainable human settlements.

### Directions

To achieve the strategic objective of reducing risk and building community resilience in a rapidly urbanising World, ComHabitat will:

<sup>7</sup> World Conference on Disaster Reduction, 18–22 January 2005, Kobe, Hyogo, Japan: *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters*.

<sup>8</sup> Commonwealth Foundation Workshop *Preparing for Change: Adaptive Strategies for Climate Change and Disaster Management in the Commonwealth*, held 9–12 October 2006, Mahé, Seychelles.

- review national legislative frameworks related to disaster management and mitigation to ensure that human settlements concerns are adequately considered;
- galvanise built environment professional organisations to respond to technical challenges posed by climate change and disaster risk management; and
- share examples and experiences of approaches to disaster management and mitigation, and community based climate change adaptation.

### Outcomes

- Frameworks reviewed and shared for integrated approaches to disaster risk reduction, disaster management and adaptation to climate change.
- Jointly owned work plans to advocate disaster risk reduction, disaster management and adaptation to climate change within the Commonwealth.
- Effective policy frameworks in place and operational at national and local levels, supported by communities and professionals with skills to develop, monitor and implement.

### **Implementation**

The value of the ComHabitat partnership is that it brings together agencies from different sectors that are critical to implementing the Habitat Agenda (government, local government, non-governmental organisations, professional associations and the private sector). Ministers that lead on implementing the Habitat Agenda in their own countries are also part of this partnership through the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements. All these groups are actively engaged in implementing the Habitat Agenda in their own spheres, but they also collaborate through ComHabitat to achieve their own goals effectively through more integrated approaches to the development challenges of human settlements. The reach of the ComHabitat partnership makes it particularly effective in networking, advocacy, information sharing and the development of innovative policy approaches.

ComHabitat is governed by the ministerial-level CCGHS. A Management Group, made up of partner organisations, oversees the work of the ComHabitat Secretariat and is responsible for approving and monitoring the detailed annual work plan of the ComHabitat Secretariat. Management Group members are: the Commonwealth Secretariat; the Commonwealth Foundation; the Commonwealth Association of Planners; the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council; the Commonwealth Local Government Forum; Homeless International, and the UK Government's Department for International Development. At present, the secretariat function of ComHabitat is provided by Homeless International. ComHabitat has a working relationship with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and is developing a network to facilitate broader engagement by many more organisations and individuals in the CCGHS process. Throughout the period of the Strategic Plan, ComHabitat will engage practitioners in developing countries in reviewing the direction and implementation of its work.

The Strategic Plan will draw on the institutional resources and experience of its partner institutions, but ComHabitat will also need to raise additional resources to fully implement this strategic plan.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The strategic plan will be monitored and evaluated through processes at four levels:

- the CCGHS approves the Strategic Plan and reviews its progress on a biennial basis;
- Commonwealth civil society forums provide opportunities to gain wider input on ComHabitat's direction and activities, including partnerships;
- ComHabitat's Management Group will be responsible for implementing and monitoring the overall Strategy and for overseeing the work of the ComHabitat Secretariat; and

- each partner organisation will monitor activities for which it is the lead organisation; this monitoring will inform and drive the implementation of individual projects.

In addition to setting monitoring and evaluation criteria for activities under the Strategic Plan, ComHabitat will develop ways to support the review by its partners of progress towards the Commonwealth goal.

The CCGHS governs the ComHabitat partnership and its biennial meetings provide an opportunity to evaluate progress made midway through this plan (in 2009) and at the end in 2011.