



P a r t n e r s h i p

**MISSION**

To contribute to the elimination of poverty and encourage economic development  
by facilitating implementation of the Habitat Agenda through  
the Millennium Development Goals

## **The ComHabitat Partnership**

ComHabitat is an equal partnership between the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Foundation, the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council, Homeless International, and the UK Department for International Development. These organisations work together to achieve the aims and objectives of ComHabitat, and work in different ways with partners and networks in their own specific areas of work. Some key issues that are essential for success in programmes to provide clean water, sanitation and improve human settlements are listed below as possible discussion points. This is followed by a brief summary of ComHabitat's aims and the work of partners on this issues.

### **Key Issues**

- 1) **Promoting effective governance, including partnerships between local government and civil society.**
- 2) **Facilitating the provision of credit for low and no-income groups**
- 3) **Enabling local people to get a voice in decision making and gain more control over programmes to improve their quality of lives**
- 4) **Working partnership with UN Habitat**
- 5) **Promoting the exchange of knowledge and experience gained in successful partnerships throughout the Commonwealth.**

1. **Promoting partnerships between local government and civil society**, which some have called the interface for sustainable development, and which is the cutting edge for activities to deliver clean water, sanitation and other related aspects of human settlements including low cost housing, healthcare and education. Genuine working partnerships require a commitment to community-based participatory programmes, shared decision making and trust. ComHabitat will build upon and complement the diverse work of its partners.

- The Commonwealth Foundation's Citizens and Governance Programme looks at the nature of governance, what it means in practice; and the skills, knowledge and other capacities, together with the environment necessary to develop these attributes that citizens and governments need for 'good governance'.
- The Commonwealth Secretariat is mandated by member governments to work closely with civil society, and together with the Commonwealth Foundation has set up a joint post to liaise with civil society groups.
- CLGF is actively involved in developing partnerships between its constituents and civil society groups through local government service partnerships. It also promotes practitioner to practitioner partnerships through the Commonwealth Local Government Good Practice Scheme, to enable local councils to learn from each other to improve local governance and basic service delivery.
- Homeless International works closely with Shack/Slum Dwellers International who's members have developed partnerships between communities and the city authorities that have led to citywide sanitation programmes with communities designing, constructing and maintaining their own community sanitation blocks.
- CHEC has worked with local partners on successful community projects involving making land habitable through water management and planting trees; and promoting

women's self-help groups, enabling them to have greater input into local decision-making processes, to start income-generating projects, and to initiate activities to improve the quality of village life.

- 2. Credit for low and no-income groups.** Community-based projects are often a very cost-effective way of providing clean water, sanitation and shelter, but traditionally, it is not possible to obtain a loan without first having an income and an address.

The ministerial Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements has mandated ComHabitat to identify "new and innovative resources and [use] existing funding more effectively", and initially identify international funds dedicated to the provision of shelter.

DFID has launched an initiative called the Community Led Infrastructure Finance Facility (CLIFF) with start-up financing of £7 million, with the Swedish Government committing a further \$2 million. Homeless International is the implementing manager.

CHEC has experience in helping women to operate small businesses in the informal sector by developing micro finance schemes.

- 3. Giving local people a voice in decision and more control over programmes** that are meant to benefit them by providing access to such basics as clean water, a healthy environment and shelter is generally accepted as crucial to success. All too often, however, programmes fall short of this ideal. In order to make sensible decisions on solutions to their problems, people need both access to decision makers and to relevant and reliable information.

ComHabitat aims to provide a link between governments at all levels and civil society organisations. Civil society groups participate in the ministerial meetings of the CCGHS, and ComHabitat's mandate includes providing a clearinghouse for information and the exchange of skills and expertise.

The programmes of partners approach this problem in different ways. The Commonwealth Foundation's Citizens and Governance Programme is looking at how the participation of civil society in governance impacts upon the meeting of people's basic needs. The Foundation and the Secretariat have set up a post to act as a point of contact with NGOs, and to monitor their respective activities in relation to civil society. CLGF is planning a number of regional and national events to encourage a more participatory approach to local democracy and the development of local government service partnerships. CHEC is engaged in a range of work involving partnerships governments, local governments, international bodies, professional and academic organisations and community based groups. Finally, Homeless International's partners have had some success in bringing people to the fore, for example in South Africa, where the Peoples Housing Process, which involves organised communities becoming housing developers, has become a central pillar of South African Housing Policy.

- 4. Working partnership with UN Habitat.** ComHabitat aims to assist and compliment the work of UN Habitat, and is planning to collaborate on an initiative with the Global Urban Observatory to translate the commitments of the Millennium Development Goals into policy and action. It will actively support the UNCHS global campaigns on Good Governance, essential to establishing norms of local governance and inclusive cities, and Secure Tenure, which is key to finance for shelter development and land administration. CLGF is working closely with UN Habitat, notably in its Global Campaign on Urban Governance, Homeless International has good linkages with UN Habitat, and CHEC has been in close collaboration with UN Habitat since the early days of its Accreditation to ECOSOC.
- 5. Promoting the exchange of knowledge and experience gained in successful partnerships throughout the Commonwealth.** CHEC through its Commonwealth environmentally

focussed human ecology conferences and workshops (including events at CHOGM) is a catalytic stimulus for exchange of knowledge and experience; ensuring the interconnection of the value of the global environment and the interests of all levels of society and governance, drawing attention to individual awareness and responsibility. Exchange visits are seen as a particularly powerful way to nurture learning and give support between communities and allow people to gain the confidence that they too can do something by seeing for themselves what others have achieved under difficult circumstances. ComHabitat will build on the experience that partners already have in such exchanges, notably the Commonwealth Foundation (in its Professional Exchange Programme), CLGF (in its programme for exchange of key local government personnel) and Homeless International (involving public officials and other professionals, and community members). The alliances formed during these visits also provide the assurance that practical support and advice is available from other city-community teams. The wide cross sectoral network which ComHabitat brings together will also ensure wider opportunities for exchange of views and good practice, but it also reinforces and reflects the need for collaboration and partnership in meeting the dual challenges of ensuring secure tenure and effective urban governance across the Commonwealth.

**Further information can be obtained from the following web sites:**

The Commonwealth Local Government Forum: [www.clgf.org.uk](http://www.clgf.org.uk)

The Homeless International partners:

[www.homeless-international.org](http://www.homeless-international.org)

[www.achr.net](http://www.achr.net)

[www.sparcindia.org](http://www.sparcindia.org)

[www.sdinet.org](http://www.sdinet.org)

The Commonwealth Human Ecology Council: [www.chec.org](http://www.chec.org)

The Commonwealth Foundation: [www.commonwealthfoundation.com](http://www.commonwealthfoundation.com)

The Commonwealth Secretariat: [www.thecommonwealth.org](http://www.thecommonwealth.org)

The Department for International Development: [www.dfid.gov.uk](http://www.dfid.gov.uk)

ComHabitat: [www.comhabitat.org](http://www.comhabitat.org)