

FOREWORD

Over the past decade, the world has witnessed growing threats to the safety and security of cities and towns. Some have come in the form of catastrophic events, while others have been manifestations of poverty and inequality or of rapid and chaotic urbanization processes. This publication, *Enhancing Urban Safety and Security: Global Report on Human Settlements 2007*, addresses some of the most challenging threats to the safety and security of urban dwellers today.

As the report tells us, urban violence and crime are increasing worldwide, giving rise to widespread fear and driving away investment in many cities. This is especially true in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, where urban gang violence is on the rise. Recent widespread violence in the *banlieus* of Paris and throughout urban France, as well as terrorist attacks in New York, Madrid and London, have all demonstrated that cities within high-income countries are also vulnerable.

Large numbers of people in cities all over the world, including most of the 1 billion currently living in slums, have no security of tenure, while at least 2 million are forcibly evicted every year. Forced evictions predominantly affect those living in the worst housing conditions, especially vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, including women and children. Many such evictions are carried out in the name of urban redevelopment, with little regard for consequences among the poor, who are left without alternative shelter provisions. The resulting social exclusion swells the army of the poor and the angry.

As this report points out, there is a very real nexus between natural events and human safety and security. The vulnerability of cities is increasing due to climate change, which has accelerated extreme weather events and rising sea levels. At the same time, urban slums are expanding into areas vulnerable to floods, landslides, industrial pollution and other hazards.

The report highlights the key role urban planning and governance have to play in making our cities safe and secure for generations to come. Through its documentation of many successful experiences, it promotes learning and sharing of knowledge on urban safety and security. I commend it to all those interested in the health of cities around the world.

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INTRODUCTION

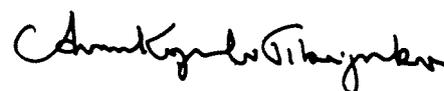
Enhancing Urban Safety and Security: *Global Report on Human Settlements 2007* addresses three major threats to the safety and security of cities, which are: urban crime and violence; insecurity of tenure and forced evictions; and natural and human-made disasters. It analyses worldwide conditions and trends with respect to these threats and pays particular attention to their underlying causes and impacts, as well as to the good policies and best practices that have been adopted at the city, national and international levels. The report adopts a *human security* perspective, the concern of which is with the safety and security of people, rather than states, and highlights concerns that can be addressed through appropriate urban policy, planning, design and governance.

The report examines a broad spectrum of crime and violence, all of which are generally on the rise globally. Over the period 1980–2000, total recorded crime rates in the world increased by about 30 percent, from 2300 to over 3000 crimes per 100,000 people. Over the past five years, 60 per cent of all urban residents in developing countries have been victims of crime. The report shows that while the incidence of terrorist-related violence is quantitatively smaller in relation to other types of violence, it has, however, significantly worsened the impacts of violence on cities in recent years. These impacts include: increased fear among urban residents; falling income resulting from the destruction or flight of businesses from affected areas; growth of the private security industry and of urban gated communities; and the diversion of development resources towards investment in public and private security. The report highlights several policy responses aimed at reducing crime and violence, ranging from effective urban planning, design and governance, through community-based approaches in which communities take ownership of the various crime and violence prevention initiatives, to reduction of risk factors by focusing on groups that are likely to be perpetrators of crime, such as the youth.

Turning to insecurity of tenure and forced evictions, the report estimates that at least 2 million people in the world are forcibly evicted every year. The most insecure urban residents are the world's 1 billion poor people living in slums. Incidents of forced eviction are often linked to bulldozing of slums and informal enterprises in developing countries, as well as to processes of gentrification, public infrastructure development, and urban redevelopment and beautification projects. The report emphasizes that forced evictions are most prevalent in areas with the worst housing conditions; that women, children and other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups are most negatively affected by evictions; and that evictions invariably increase, rather than reduce, the problems that they aim to 'solve'. The report documents a number of recent policy responses to the threat of tenure insecurity, including, at the international level, legislation against forced evictions and secure tenure campaigns and, at the national level, policies on upgrading and regularization, titling and legalization, as well as improved land administration and registration.

With respect to disasters, which are increasing globally, the report shows that, between 1974 and 2003, 6367 natural disasters occurred globally, causing the death of 2 million people and affecting 5.1 billion people. A total of 182 million people were made homeless, while reported economic damage amounted to US\$1.38 trillion. The report also shows that the aggregate impact of small-scale hazards on urban dwellers can be considerable. For example, traffic accidents kill over 1.2 million people annually worldwide. Factors rendering cities particularly vulnerable include rapid and unplanned urbanization; concentration of economic wealth in cities; environmental modifications through human actions; expansion of slums (often into hazardous locations); and ineffective land-use planning and enforcement of building codes. An increasingly important factor is climate change. There has been a 50 per cent rise in extreme weather events associated with climate change from the 1950s to the 1990s, and major cities located in coastal areas are particularly vulnerable to sea-level rise. Cities have been able to reduce disaster risk through, among other approaches, effective land-use planning and design of disaster-resistant buildings and infrastructure, improved risk mapping, institutional reform and training, establishment of effective communication and emergency response systems, as well as strengthening of reconstruction capacity. At the national level, governments are putting in place disaster risk reduction legislation, strengthening early warning systems, and instituting inclusive governance and planning in order to strengthen the resilience of cities and communities.

An important socio-economic determinant of vulnerability to the three threats to urban safety and security addressed in the report is poverty. The urban poor are more exposed to crime, forced evictions and natural hazards than the rich. They are more vulnerable to disasters than the rich because they are often located on sites prone to floods, landslides and pollution. The urban poor also have limited access to assets, thus limiting their ability to respond to hazards or manage risk, for example through insurance. Because the poor are politically powerless, it is unlikely that they will receive the necessary social services following disasters. The report therefore highlights the need for policy responses that place people, poverty reduction and community participation at the centre. It is my belief that this report will significantly raise global awareness of the current threats to the safety and security of our cities and assist in the identification of appropriate policy responses at the urban, national and international levels.



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GRHS07/intro/1

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