



UN HABITAT

GLOBAL REPORT ON HUMAN SETTLEMENT 2011



ACTIVE CITIES: MUNICIPALITIES AND ORDINARY CITIZENS MAKE A GLOBAL DIFFERENCE

Local authorities and citizens groups at forefront of the battle against climate change

UN-HABITAT's new **Cities and Climate Change: Global Report on Human Settlements 2011**, points out that in the absence of federal or national leadership, state and local government are taking the initiative.

California's ground breaking Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 – to reduce emissions to the 1990 levels by the year 2020 — was followed in quick succession by a similar bill passed in 2008 in Washington State.

At the same time, the US Mayors Climate Protection Agreement has been signed by hundreds of Mayors across the country. The agreement encourages Mayors to work towards achieving the Kyoto Protocol targets through local action and to urge their state and the federal government to introduce policies for greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

'City leaders are where the action is and they are better placed than national politicians to effect immediate change,' said Joan Clos, Executive Director of UN-HABITAT and former Mayor of Barcelona. "Depending on their national contexts and histories, city authorities can have a considerable level of influence over both greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation to climate change. Cities and citizens can make a global difference."

The report points out that although the Kyoto Protocol does not explicitly identify a role for cities and local governments in responding to climate change, city-level actors are actively participating in climate strategies, projects and programmes. These include local authorities, community-based organizations, the private sector, the academic sector and individuals.

Local governments, for instance, have held municipal leadership summits parallel to the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1993, 1995, 1997 and 2005. Since 2005, the 'local government and municipal authorities constituency' has operated as an observer in the UNFCCC negotiations.

Many leading initiatives and local authority networks are working on climate change mitigation and adaptation. However, such networks have had an uneven impact, with evidence suggesting that they are more important in developing the capacity of those municipalities that are already responding to climate change. While the political support and knowledge transfer functions that such networks perform is valuable, 'in the absence of the financial and technological resources to execute programmes, the power of knowledge can be limited'.

In effect, networks appear to be important for those with a degree of existing capacity to act, leading to a virtuous circle where additional resources and support can be accessed. However, for those without the capacity to access such networks in the first place, such initiatives may do little to build capacity to respond to climate change and, in effect, may serve to concentrate resources and attention on cities that are already leading the response to mitigating climate change.

MAJOR INTERNATIONAL CITY NETWORKS AND INITIATIVES ON CLIMATE CHANGE

ICLEI Created in 1991, it is an association of more than 1200 local governments from 70 countries who are committed to sustainable development. ICLEI has worked with cities worldwide on climate change through its urban CO₂ Reduction Campaign, Green Fleets Campaign and its Cities for Climate Protection Campaign (CCP Campaign). Local governments participating in the CCP Campaign commit to undertake and complete five performance milestones.

The **Large Cities Climate Leadership Group**, also known as the C40 (and originally as the C20), was created in 2005 with the main goals of fostering action and cooperation on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, creating policies and alliances to accelerate the uptake of climate-friendly technologies. C40 is composed of cities from all world regions.

The **Clinton Climate Initiative** was launched in 2005 by the William J. Clinton Foundation to create and advance solutions to the core issues driving climate change. In collaboration with governments and businesses around the world, the initiative focuses on three strategic programme areas: increasing energy efficiency in cities; catalysing the large-scale supply of clean energy; and working to stop deforestation. In 2006, the initiative became the delivery partner of the C40 to assist in the delivery of urban mitigation projects. The initiative launched the Climate Positive Development Program in 2009 to support 'climate positive' development in 17 urban locations across six continents. Nearly 1 million people are expected to live and work in these developments when they are complete.

Founded in December 2005, the **World Mayors Council for Climate Change** has more than 50 members from all of the world and seeks to promote policies addressing climate change and its local impacts; to foster the international cooperation of municipal leaders on achieving relevant climate, biodiversity and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); and to have a say in the design of effective multilateral mechanisms for global climate protection.

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) represents and defends the interests of local governments globally. In 2009, more than 1000 cities in 95 countries were direct members of UCLG. It is involved in the Partnership for Urban Risk Reduction, an ad hoc coalition of international organizations with the following objectives: promote worldwide awareness campaigns about risk reduction in regions regularly affected by natural disasters; build capacity at the local level to foresee and manage risks through the transfer of technical know-how to local actors and decision-makers; and set up a global platform for local authorities on disaster risk reduction.

The **Climate Alliance** is an association of cities and municipalities in 17 European countries that have developed partnerships with indigenous rainforest communities. Since 1990, when it was founded, around 1500 cities, municipalities and districts together with more than 50 provinces have joined the alliance. NGOs and other organizations have also joined as associate members. Its aim is to preserve the global climate through a twofold mechanism: the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by developed countries and the conservation of forests in developing countries.

The **Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network** is an initiative of the Rockefeller Foundation in partnership with other entities such as academic, non-governmental, governmental, international, regional and national organizations. The network seeks to catalyse attention, funding and action on building climate change resilience for poor and vulnerable people in Asian cities. In order to accomplish this, the network is in the process of testing and demonstrating a range of actions to build climate change resilience in India, Viet Nam, Thailand and Indonesia.

The **Covenant of Mayors** is a mechanism intended to encourage mayors of cities in EU countries to significantly reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Accordingly, signatories to the covenant enter a formal commitment to go beyond the target to curb their CO₂ emissions by at least 20 per cent by 2020, as already set by the EU's Climate Action and Energy Package. About 2000 cities in 42 countries were signatories to the covenant by end of 2010.