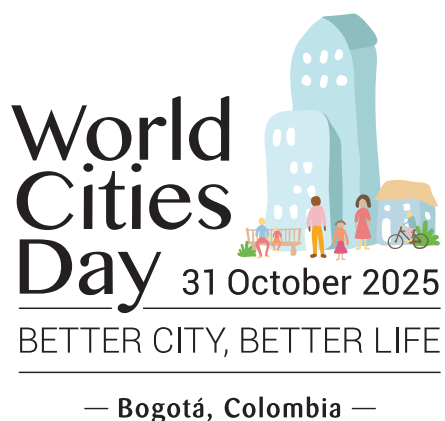




People-centred smart cities

Every city should be a place of opportunity for all. But in today's world, too many people are being left behind.

Nearly three billion people live in inadequate housing. More than 1.1 billion live in informal settlements and slums. Over 300 million are homeless. These issues are often invisible in smart city plans.

While technology is moving fast, more than 2.7 billion people are still offline.

There is nothing smart about a city that leaves people behind.

Smart cities must be people-centred. Technology should serve citizens, and not the other way around.

With the right digital tools – from geospatial mapping to data monitoring and early warning systems – we can save lives, secure land rights, and expand access to housing and services in our cities.

Technology is only meaningful when it changes daily life: when a family accesses clean water, when a student can study online, when a neighbourhood is ready for the next flood or heatwave.

This World Cities Day is about reimagining what “smart” really means in urban development.

A people-centred smart city leverages technology to improve the quality of life of people.

Smart cities are cities that work for everyone.

As we look ahead to the World Urban Forum in Baku in 2026, our task is clear: connect digital innovation to housing, land, and basic services – so that the future of cities is not only smarter, but also fairer, safer, and more resilient.