



WORLD  
RESOURCES  
INSTITUTE

WRI ROSS CENTER FOR  
SUSTAINABLE  
CITIES

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# World Resources Report Update

This is the third *WRR Update* and the first we are distributing to internal and external audiences. This volume describes primary data collection on the urban underserved, the WRR seminar series and stakeholder engagement activities related to Habitat III. While past newsletters have focused on work led by WRI's global office in Washington, DC, here we focus on our international offices' contribution to the WRR.

## ***About the World Resources Report (WRR) on Cities***

The *World Resources Report (WRR)* promotes a more economically prosperous, environmentally sustainable and socially equitable city for all. The WRR examines these three interlocking principles in the context of rapid urbanization in different regions of the world, and takes the needs of the urban underserved as its starting point. In the first year, WRI authors are producing a series of working papers that focus on the highest priority areas for cities:

*Managing Urban Expansion*

*Secure and Affordable Shelter for All*

*Regional Water Risk*

*Household Access to Potable Water*

*Access to Clean, Affordable, and Reliable Energy*

*Urban Transport and Accessibility*

History and experience tell us that transformative urban change must go beyond sector-specific solutions. In the coming months, the WRR Team will initiate a series of city-level case studies to understand how broader transformative urban change happens.

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## ***Experiences of the Urban Underserved***

The WRR takes a novel approach by examining whether prioritizing the needs of the *urban underserved* can achieve more economically prosperous and environmentally sustainable cities for all. To better understand these issues from the perspective of people living in cities, our international offices in Brazil, China, India and Mexico have conducted in-depth interviews with urban residents who are experiencing difficulty with urban services. In addition, local research teams are conducting comparable interviews in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The concept of the urban underserved is based on a multidimensional and dynamic understanding of the factors that affect the quality of life of people who live in cities. While the concept does not exactly mirror the city's income distribution, it does closely correspond to it. It encompasses the poor, the near poor and people in lower-middle classes.

Households at the lower end of the income distribution often lack access to many urban services, are deprived of basic resources and do not have reasonable alternatives to meet their service needs. While households towards the middle or upper end of the income distribution may lack complete access to one (or more) urban services, they have sufficient means to fill the gaps in access or to acquire these services through the market, their personal networks or self-provision.

Focusing on service access and quality (as opposed to household income) also inherently encompasses elements of governance, political power and representation, municipal and private finance as well as a city's capacity to plan, implement and manage urban development. Finally, from the perspective of city leaders and urban change agents, a focus on services is beneficial because it is often directly within their purview and directly affects their constituents in a significant way.

## **Seminar Series**

We are using the *Cities Research Seminar Series* as a platform to engage and learn from some of the most accomplished urban thought leaders and practitioners on topics central to the WRR. Since the last *WRR Update (Volume 2)*, we have hosted [Martin Ravallion](#) who presented on the growth, urbanization and poverty reduction; [Weiping Wu](#) on China's urban transformation; [Bipasha Baruah](#) on women's employment in the renewable energy sector; and [Shlomo \(Solly\) Angel](#) on managing urban expansion. The WRR team also met with [Ravi Kanbur](#) to discuss his research on the informal economy in cities in rapidly urbanizing regions and the growth of secondary cities and towns in Africa. All seminars and video interviews are posted on the [WRI cities page](#). Please check the website for upcoming seminars by Somsook Boonyabancha on slum upgrading and housing and Jennifer Davis on sustainable water and sanitation services for cities in the developing world.

## **Housing and the World Bank**

To inform the working paper on housing, WRI authors Robin King, Mariana Orloff, and Terra Virsilas, in collaboration with Kate Owens and Sumila Gulyani from the World Bank organized a workshop to summarize the state of knowledge on housing. World Bank operations teams representing several regions presented their work. The goal was to learn about the World Bank's work in this area and to identify knowledge gaps. Some key points included the importance of an integrated approach rather than a project-based approach for solving housing issues related to finance, supply, or affordability; how to handle qualitative as well as quantitative aspects of housing; the need for a range of options given the sector's diversity; the importance of linkages between housing to urban services; and the need to move beyond only considering ownership solutions.

## Habitat III Engagement

WRI Ross Center for Sustainable Cities staff are attending a number of events leading up to the Habitat III conference in Quito.

From February 24-26, Alyssa Fischer attended the Habitat III [African Regional Meeting](#), in Abuja, Nigeria. The meeting was attended by African ministers, civil society representatives and NGOs, who discussed African priorities for Habitat III and affirmed the [Abuja Declaration](#), which will inform the final outcome document of the Habitat III process, the New Urban Agenda.

The Abuja Declaration focused on seven primary recommendations: structural transformation for sustainable and inclusive economic growth, people-centered urban development, strengthening governance institutions, leveraging urban growth to enhance continental integration, improving environmental sustainability and climate resilience in cities, advancing global development partnerships and strengthening UN-Habitat's role in Habitat III, the Sustainable Development Goals, and other global processes. Many African actors view Habitat III as a logical follow-up to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 (the African Union's development goals for the next 50 years).

A key focus of the discussions was the challenge of informal settlements. Though many cities are working to eliminate slums, forced evictions still occur. Adequate protections for slum communities, such as formal negotiations of land rights and resettlement initiatives, are essential to achieving slum eradication goals while remaining sensitive to people's needs.

Leading up to Habitat III in October 2016, the WRI Cities team is focusing on the following priority events:

- *Thematic Meeting: Informal Settlements*, April 7-8, Johannesburg, South Africa
- *Latin America and Caribbean Regional Meeting*, April 11-13, Toluca, Mexico
- *ITF Summit on Green and Inclusive Transport*, May 18-20, Leipzig, Germany
- *German Habitat Forum*, June 1- 2, Berlin, Germany
- *Preparatory Committee 3 on Habitat III*, July 25-27, Surabaya, Indonesia

## WRI's International Offices

A snapshot of the work our international offices are doing related to the WRR:

### Brazil

Our Brazil team has made progress on projects that address social housing and transit-oriented development (TOD). The Urban Form team recently conducted a study on the *Minha Casa Minha Vida* approach to social housing, including three scenarios focused on housing: within the city center, at the edge of the city center and distant from the city center. The National Housing Secretariat invited WRI to convene a working group responsible for developing manuals and guidelines to assist cities in implementing these social housing projects. The team is also working to improve the understanding of finance and governance mechanisms for TOD in transit hubs, with the goal of providing the tools to make this model a reality in Brazil. An international seminar on experiences in Latin America and a workshop on financing TOD in Brazil informed this work.

### China

The China office has carried out work related to the WRR on transport, wastewater and low-carbon energy. Their urban mobility team completed a report on Qingdao's Low-Carbon Transport Action Plan and disseminated results at the Transforming Transportation conference in January. The team also signed MoUs with mayors of four Chinese cities to pilot the idea of a "transit metropolis" and submitted a proposal on congestion charging in Beijing to the mayor in January. The urban efficiency team recently presented its sludge-to-energy work at China's key sludge management platforms and completed drafts of two publications: "Low Carbon Planning Methodology Guidelines for Chinese Cities" and "Technology and Policy Assessment for Urban Sewage Sludge Treatment and Policy Recommendations." Four cities/provinces have adopted WRI's sludge-to-energy tools for their wastewater management, a shift which will benefit 37.5 million people, help reduce 700,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year and produce an extra 39 million m<sup>3</sup> of clean natural gas. China's Ministry of Housing and Urban and Rural Development is also adopting WRI's methodology, which will potentially create impact at the national scale.

### **India**

In India, the mobility team is helping Bangalore with strategic planning and far restructuring to improve service for over 2.5 million passengers. The team is also assisting Delhi with its sustainable transport agenda. The team contributed to the BRT chapter of the Indian Road Congress's upcoming Urban Road Manual and started a review of gender in bus systems in Ahmedabad and Bangalore. The team is also supporting improvements to urban bus services in the state of Gujarat as well as bike share proposals and car-free day campaigns in multiple cities. The urban efficiency team launched a Green Power Market Development Group that convenes solar energy providers and consumers to resolve barriers to scaling up sustainable energy solutions. With assistance from the group, GPMDG members have procured over 150 MW of renewable energy. The team is also engaging neighborhoods in Bangalore to facilitate energy savings. For the next phase of the [New Climate Economy](#) report, researchers are analyzing the economics of public, private, and self provision of urban services in Bangalore. They are also working on integrated resource planning for land and urban services as well as policy recommendations for India regarding service level improvement plans (SLIP) and land management. Finally, two papers by WRI India authors were accepted at the World Bank's 2016 Land and Poverty Conference, addressing state-led innovative mechanisms to access serviced lands and scaling up land readjustment for urban development through a town planning scheme in Dholera, Gujarat. The team also organized a TOD financing workshop in Delhi and created a Guidebook on Understanding TOD for city officials.

### **Mexico**

The Mexico office has made progress on transport, national-level urban development policy and building codes. Researchers are working with the country's Secretary of Mobility on an integrated transport system, including fare collection and financial structure. They are also supporting plans for a new bus rapid transit (BRT) corridor and are also influencing the construction of a public transport terminal at the airport. The urban form team is working on national-level policy (*Reforma Urbana*) to drive urban development in Mexican cities, conducting TOD trainings in multiple cities and helping the Federal Government assess future urban growth. The urban energy team is working on building codes and targeting buildings in Mexico City suitable for retrofit.