

## Review

# Urbanization in developing nations and its challenges for sustainability

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**Urbanization in many developing countries over the past half century seems to have been accompanied by the excessively high level of concentration of the urban population in very large cities. This paper examined the global over view of urbanization, urbanization trends, urbanization process, urbanization in Africa and the challenges for its sustainability. Conclusively the paper made possible solutions to maintain its sustainability.**

**Key words:** Urbanization, challenges sustainability.

## INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND

Urbanization is a major changes taking place globally. The urban global tipping point was reached in 2007 when for the first time in history over half of the world's population 3.3 billion people were living in urban areas. Developing countries is undergoing an urban transition at an unprecedented scale and pace with an estimated growth rate of 5 percent, the proportion of developing nations urban residents doubles in every 15 years (UN, 2002). The proportion of the global population in urban areas is growing. A recent report about growth of urban populations from the United Nations Population Division notes that, although just under half of the world's current population lives in urban areas, nearly two thirds of the world's population will live in urban areas within the next 30 years (UN Habitat, 2006). Global population growth between 2000 and 2030 will be primarily in urban areas, with 60.4 % of the world's population expected to be urban (4.9 billion/8.1 billion people) by 2030 compared to 48.3% today (2.8 billion/ 6.0 billion in 2000). It is anticipated that a greater percentage of the world's population will live in urban areas by 2007. Most of the growth will occur in less wealthy regions of the world (growth from 1.9 billion in 2000 to 3.9 billion in 2030) with the most rapid pace of growth expected to occur in Asia and Africa. While North America and Europe are currently the most urbanized regions, the number of urban dwellers in the least-urbanized region, Asia (1.4 billion), is already greater than the urban population in North

America and Europe combined (1.2 billion) in 2000. The pace of increase in urban areas is projected to differ by initial size and region. The proportion of people living in megacities (cities with population greater than 10 million) is expected to rise from 4.3% of the global population in 2000 to 5.2% in 2015. The growth rate of megacities in the developing world will be much higher (e.g., anticipated growth for 2000–2015 for Calcutta is 1.9% vs. 0.4% for New York City). However, while large cities in developing countries will account for 20% of the increase in the world's population, small cities (less than 5 million) will account for 45% of this increases. Thus, a growing number of relatively small cities throughout the world will contain most of the world's population in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, while a few megacities will undoubtedly face unique challenges.

In order to achieve the, United Nation's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the international community's unprecedented agreement on targets towards the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, will depend to a large extent on how well developing country governments manage their cities. Cities are currently home to nearly half of the world's population and over the next 30 years most of the two-billion-plus person increase in global population is expected to occur in urban areas in the developing world. This represents a significant departure from the spatial distribution of population growth in the developing world that occurred over the past 30 years, which was much more evenly divided between urban and rural areas. The level of world

**Table 1:** percentage of world population growth.

YEARS	More developed countries		Less developed countries	
	Total pop	Urban pop %	Total pop	Urban pop %
1950	812,425	53.8	1,717,887	16.9
1960	944,851	60.5	2,074,525	22.1
1970	1,049,373	66.6	2,648,645	25.5
1980	1,136,406	70.2	3,313,804	29.3
1990	1,205,193	72.7	4,086,985	33.9
1995	1,234,567	73.8	4,531,294	36.5
2000	1,262,482	74.8	4,988,573	39.5
2010	1,307,469	76.8	5,883,294	46.4
2020	1,340,064	78.4	6,722,211	53.5
2030	1,000,000,000	81.0	3,900,000,000	56.0

**Source:** UN Population Division, 2009, Oyesiku, 2010.

Note: More Developed Regions: Northern America, Japan, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and (all of former) Union of Soviet Socialist Republics –USSR.

Less Developed Regions: Africa, Latin America, Asia, (with the exceptions of Japan and Asian part of the USSR)

Oceania: Australia, New Zealand, Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia

urbanization today and the number and size of the world's largest cities are unprecedented. At the beginning of the twentieth century, just 16 cities in the world the vast majority in advanced industrial countries contained a million people or more. Today, almost 400 cities contain a million people or more, and about seventy percent of them are found in the developing world. By 2007, for the first time in human history, more people in the world will be living in cities and towns than will be living in rural areas and by 2017 the developing world is likely to have become more urban in character than rural.

## URBANIZATION PROCESS

Urbanization process is described as the movement of people from rural to urban places and concomitant changes in the lifestyle of the people, including values, attitudes and behaviours. It is one of the indicators of socioeconomic transformation most societies have passed through as a result of industrialization and economic development. Therefore, it is more than mere concentration of the population in large numbers in urban centres, but a phenomenon driven by a series of interrelated processes of changes such as the economic, demographic, political, cultural technological and social changes which themselves result in changes in the urban land use systems, social ecology (social and demographic compositions of neighborhoods) built environment and urbanism (particular ways of life typical of urban settings) (Oyesiku, 2010). There is a general agreement on the basic tenets of the urbanization process and the factors that are responsible, though the factors and the process are not the same within and between regions. For instance, in the more developed countries of the world, urbanization is considered to have been the consequences of industrialization and economic

growth of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which brought about transformation of the regional landscape in terms of demographic composition and changes in intra-sectoral composition of the economy. In developing countries on the contrary, urbanization has occurred only partially as a result of industrialization and economic development while in the more developed countries economic development is concomitant to urbanization and modernization, this is not absolutely so far the less developed countries (Oyesiku, 2010).

## URBANIZATION TRENDS

The general pattern and trends in urbanization is population growth rates in the world have produced a noticeable steady but gradual increase in the proportion of the population living in several urban centre and cities. This is a process that is bringing about a new order in the ways of people live and does things. What is recent is the scale on which people live in cities and changes associated with this phenomenal rapid increase. Men and women have been living on earth for over a million years, and majority of them have lived in settlements of city status for as long a period. The world's population, estimated at about 500 million in 1650, increased to about 1.1 billion two centuries later, and 2.5 billion in 1950. Although the rate of world population growth has slowed down, the sheer number of people is on a steady increase, from 1950 the world's population increased to 3.02 billion in 1960, 4.45 billion in 1980 and about 6.25 billion inhabitant by the year 2000 (Oyesiku, 2000). What is noticeable in the rate of world population growth is that while it took 200 years (1650 and 1850) for the population to double, it took just forty years for the population to double between 1950 and 1990.

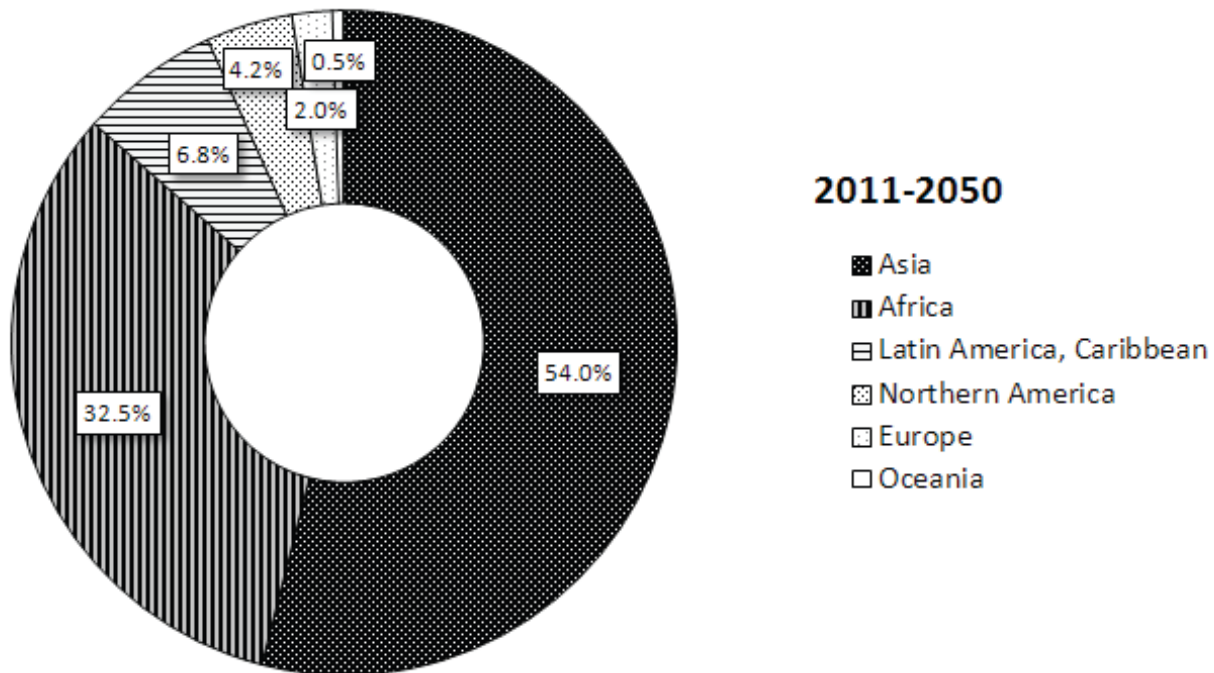


Figure 1: World Urban population increase (2011-2050).

## GLOBAL OVERVIEW OF THE URBANIZATION

The turn of the 21st century has witnessed rapid transformation of the world's population into urban dwellers. The urban population has increased from less than 30 per cent of the total in 1950 to more than 47 per cent in 2000 with over half of the world's 7 billion people living in urban areas, 4 out of 5 of whom are Europeans. According to the 2011 global outlook, the pace of urbanization is faster in the developing countries than in the developed countries. For example, it took London 130 years to grow to a population of 8 million while Mexico City in Latin America took only 30 years to reach the same mark. During the last 50 years the number of such cities with 10 or more million increased from 80 to 365 with Asia projected to account for half of the urbanized cities by 2015, 153 of these large cities will be in Asia, which will also host 15 of the world's 27 "mega-cities. Europe, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean are already largely urbanized regions, with 75 per cent of their populations residing in cities. Although still largely rural, Africa and Asia face an explosive demographic shift in the next few years being the most rapidly urbanizing region of the world (World urbanization prospect, 2011).

### Increase in urban population by major regions, 2011-2050 (per cent of total urban increase)

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division: World Urbanization Prospects, the 2011 Revision, New York, 2012. It is

instructive to note that Africa is the fastest urbanising continent globally. In the words of, Anna Tibaijuka, former UN-Habitat Executive Director:

Africa is the fastest urbanizing continent in the world. In 1980, only 28 percent of the African population lived in cities. Today it has risen to about 37 percent. The annual urban growth rate in Africa is 4.87 percent, twice that of Latin America and Asia. Cities and towns in Africa are also growing at twice the 2.5 percent growth rate of the rural population in Africa. In terms of numbers, currently 400 million people will be added to the African urban population, putting tremendous pressure on cities and towns" (Dr. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka, 2006)

By 2030, half of the Africa's population will be urbanized with the cities collectively becoming home to one billion people, equivalent to the continent's total population in 2009. Its industrialization with urban population alone producing 80 percent of its GDP. The transition from rural to industrial based urban economy is a compelling development agenda for the African states where priority focus is invariably on public policies, with investment to build adequate governance capacities, equitable service delivery, affordable housing provision and better wealth distribution. However one of the concerns over Africa's urbanization is its growth rate and sustainability given the startling reality that the population is expected to double by 2030 (UN Habitat, 2010).

Another notable concern is that Africa's urbanization model is not improving basic living standards and wealth creation. Unlike in some global regions, Africa's urbanization is driven by the "push" factors of

**Table 2:** Projected Africa population and percentage increase

Region	Pop(mid 2003) million	Pop projection(2025) million	Pop projection(2050) million	Percent urban
Africa	861	1,289	1,883	33%
Sub-Sahara Africa	711	1,084	1,636	30%
Northern Africa(7)	188	267	331	45%
Western Africa(16)	256	402	617	35%
Eastern Africa (19)	263	395	590	20%
Southern Africa (5)	50	41	39	50%
Middle Africa(9)	104	184	305	33%
Nigeria	133.9	206.4	307.4	38%

**Source:** Adapted from Oyesiku,2010

Note:In parentheses are the numbers of countries in the sub-region of Africa. The Nigeria population was about 150million in the 2006 nationwide census.

environmental overload and degradation, resource general theory that urbanization provides greater access to jobs, basic services, and social safety nets.

## URBANIZATION IN AFRICA

By mid-2003, approximately 2.96 billion people lived in urban areas, with 41% of them found in the less developed regions of the world in which Africa is foremost. As at 2003, the African continent housed only 13.6% of the world's population with 33% of her 861 million inhabitants in urban centres and cities. The sub-regional variation in Africa showed that Eastern and Western Africa had the largest concentrations even though they were among the least urbanized in the continent. Southern Africa (Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland) had the highest level of urbanization, with over half of its people in the cities, and eastern Africa countries the least urbanized.

### Challenges of urbanization

Humans have created urban areas right since the ancient times. Urbanization, as we know it now, began with the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century, and has only been on the rise ever since. Statistics tell us that half of the world's people already live in urban areas, with that number set to expand in the years to come. Our cities have been luring people for various reasons, the basic one being the hope of a better life. People are drawn to the cities for the comforts they offer, the opportunities they hold, and the sleek lifestyle they promise.

### Rising levels of pollution

Cities have been invariably blamed for their contribution to the disturbing levels of pollution. Densely populated areas, coupled with a scant regard for environmental laws add to the woes. The urban population's daily commute costs the planet hard, with public transport

systems failing to deliver, or people simply choosing luxury over sensibility and using private cars, which add to the emission of toxic fumes. Traffic congestion is a perennial problem, with no feasible solution foreseeable in the near future. Huge cities create enormous amounts of waste, and the urban lifestyle includes creation of waste that is mostly non-biodegradable, thanks to the generous use of plastic wares. This leads to an unprecedented increase in the garbage that stays in our landfills, polluting the soil for years to come (Wikipedia, 2012).

### Population explosion

Countries experiencing a steady growth in population have their specific problems to deal with. With this population growth centered in and around the urban areas, the problems are further narrowed. The rapidly increasing number of arrivals to the cities are proving to be unmanageable to the authorities, owing to lack of resources and organizational skills. The rising demand for space pushes the property prices higher, simultaneously paving the way for the creation of slums. Living conditions here take a definite beating due to the absence of basic amenities like safe drinking water, clean toilets, and drainage systems (Wikipedia, 2012).

### High cost of living

Living in a city does not come cheap, with people having to pay the added cost of transportation and taxes for regular commodities. It's not too hard to imagine a time when city dwellers will be asked to pay a tax on the oxygen they breathe. The swelling population makes every commodity price, and at the same time, leads to an influx of low-grade substitutes of food products, water, and even medical supplies. Costs of food, transportation, rents, and other necessities are perpetually on the rise, as their demand keeps exceeding the supply (Wikipedia, 2012).

### **Economic disparity**

While the cities are a haven for the opportunity seekers, the unfortunate reality is that they are not handed out equally. Cities are the best places to view examples of economic inequality, where the rich keep getting richer, with the poor remaining the way they are. Extreme affluence and acute poverty live right next to each other in the cities, albeit grudgingly. At some point, this makes way for rebellion. Opportunities, or rather, their limited nature, translates into unemployment. As the population spirals out of control, the disenchantment is bound to increase, resulting in a flare-up of sorts. If there's one thing we fail to understand, it is the fact that every city has its limits, and burdening it will only cause it to burst at the seams (Charlies, 2012).

### **Increase in crime rates**

With the undue pressure that we're putting on our cities each day, it is going to be nothing short of a challenge for the governing bodies to manage these sprawling metropolitan areas. Deftly managing densely populated areas is next to impossible, which raises issues regarding civic duties; law and order, in particular. As the city life pulls in all sorts of people, and allows for all sorts of activities to flourish, criminals, too, find their share of opportunities here. Street crimes go on to become common as the authorities find it tough to patrol cities that are crowded beyond limits. As the safety concerns increase, it is ultimately the citizens who have to bear the consequences (Charlies, 2012).

### **Environmental degradation**

Rapid urbanization has caused wide spread environmental degradation in most part of the developing countries. Primarily, environmental degradation is caused by several factors including rapid urbanization due to overpopulation, accelerated industrialization, unplanned and uncoordinated physical development resulting from poor urban management and ineffective control policies, insufficient urban infrastructure such as housing and efficient transportation system to cater for the population upsurge (Jiboye, 2003; Ajala, 2005). A World Bank report indicates that technological advancement and economic development are factors which also cause environmental degradation (World Bank, 1995). The effects of this environmental problem exist in different forms such as drought, desertification, deforestation, flood and erosion, pollution, housing congestion leading to slums and unsanitary situation, loss of bio-diversity and all forms of deplorable physical conditions. The resultant effect of these problems has adverse socio-economic, cultural and environmental consequences on the wellbeing of the people and the physical development of any nation (Jiboye, 2003).

Indeed, it has been affirmed that environmental degradation does not only indicate a state of bad living conditions or a declined environmental integrity (Omisore et al., 2003), it also affects human welfare, health, family life as well as the overall quality of a community environment (Olanrewaju, 2003). At the urban level, environmental problems affect the urban poor disproportionately because of poor quality and overcrowded housing and the inadequacies in the provision of water, sanitation, drainage, health care and garbage collection. The urban poor also often live in environmentally unsafe areas, such as polluted sites near solid waste dumps, open drains and sewers, and near industrial sites. Though the impacts of climate change on the urban poor have not been fully studied, this is emerging as an area of increasing concern as they may further exacerbate the risks of negative environmental effects for the urban poor through sea level rise, warming temperatures, uncertain effects on ecosystems, and increased variability and volatility in weather patterns (Oladunjoye, 2005).

### **Rapid urban and slum population growth**

The global urban population is projected to increase from 2.9 billion in 2001 to about 4.9 billion in 2030. In percentage terms (i.e. urbanization level), the world's urban population will increase from 48 per cent of the total world population in 2001 to about 60 per cent of the total world's population in 2030. This means that every year during this period, the world's urban population will increase by about 70 million people, which is equivalent to the creation of seven new megacities annually. In fact, almost all of the world's total population increase during the period 2001-2030 will take place in urban areas, with rural areas being just about static. It is estimated that, in the absence of serious remedial action, about half of the urban population increase between 2001 and 2030, i.e. 1 billion people, will take place in urban slums – slightly more than the 924 million people estimated to be living in slums in 2001. In percentage terms, and if no serious action is taken to address the growing slum challenge, it is estimated that the slum population will increase from 32 percent of the world's total urban population in 2001 to about 41 per cent in 2030 (UN Habitat, 2003).

### **Impacts of climate change on cities**

A further constraint will be the additional demands on towns and cities imposed by climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) expects climate change to affect urban populations through rising sea levels, increased hazard from tropical cyclones, flooding, landslides, heat and cold waves, as well as challenges of urban water quality and storage. Cities located along the world's coastlines have come under increasing threat from extreme weather events.

Between the 1950s and 1990s, there was a 50 per cent increase in extreme weather events associated with global warming. Twenty-one of the 33 cities which are projected to have a population of 8 million or more by 2015 are located in vulnerable coastal zones and are increasingly vulnerable to sea-level rise (Romero, 2008). Around 40 per cent of the world's population lives less than 100 kilometres from the coast, within reach of severe coastal storms. Recent research shows that 13 per cent of the world's urban population lives in low elevation coastal zones, defined as less than 10 meters above sea level. In effect, close to 100 million people around the world live less than one metre above sea level. If sea levels rise by just one metre, many large coastal cities such as Buenos Aires, Los Angeles, Rio de Janeiro, New York, Mumbai, Dhaka, Osaka, Tokyo, Lagos, Alexandria, Shanghai and Cairo will come under threat (UN Habitat, 2005).

In cities of developing countries, informal settlements occupied by the poor are often built in high-risk areas such as steep hill slopes, deep gullies and flood-prone areas that are particularly susceptible to extreme weather conditions associated with climate change. This is further compounded by the makeshift construction materials that are unable to withstand the effects of extreme weather conditions. Urgent and decisive steps are therefore required, all over the world, including at the city level, to mitigate the impacts of and adapt to climate change.

### **Rapidly increasing demand for housing, Basic infrastructure and services**

A 2005 estimate, which took into account the existing global slum population (which is a rough indicator of global shelter need) and the projected 2 billion or so additional urban population, placed the number of people in need of housing, basic infrastructure and urban services by 2030 at 2.825 billion. In considering this number, its precision is not really very important. What is critical, however, is its order of magnitude. Close to 3 billion people, or about 40 per cent of the world's population by 2030 will need new housing as well as basic urban infrastructure and services. Assuming an average household size of 5 people, 565 million new housing units will be needed. If this number is broken down on an annual basis for the period 2003 to 2030, 22.6 million housing units per year will be required. This estimate means that 61,918 housing units per day or 2,580 per hour will need to be built. The ability of cities to respond to these demands with adequate financial investment will be constrained by the fact that the changes described above will take place within the overall context of increasing urban poverty in many developing countries. While there are no specific global estimates of urban poverty at this stage, it is generally clear that the locus of poverty is rapidly shifting from rural to urban areas, a process that is now characterized as

the 'urbanization of poverty'. The absolute numbers of poor and undernourished in urban areas are increasing, as is the share of urban areas in overall poverty (UN, Habitat, 2003).

## **SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS TO MAINTAIN ITS SUSTAINABILITY**

### **Global awareness of urbanization issues**

More importantly, it is clear that urbanization issues need to be integrated into national development policies and strategies. "Effective advocacy, monitoring and partnerships", which seeks to promote sustainable urbanization through evidence-based global monitoring and research, policy dialogue, strategic partnerships, global campaigns, education, communication and exchange of best practices.

### **Requirement of pro-poor and inclusive urban planning management and governance policies**

There is need for urban planning management and governance policies as well as effective institutions and these are still weak in many developing countries. It is precisely to note that "Promotion of participatory urban planning, management and governance", seeks to address, principally by strengthening the capacity of national governments, local authorities and other stakeholders to develop more liveable, productive and inclusive cities.

### **Ability of government to care for urban poverty, urban development and housing policies**

Addressing the slum challenge will partly entail in-situ upgrading, focusing on improving water and sanitation, as well as improving the supply of adequate but affordable housing for low-income households. To achieve the latter, serious attention has to be paid to increasing the supply of affordable land, especially for the poor. In light of this, Promoting pro poor land and housing, aims at assisting national governments and Habitat Agenda partners to adopt pro poor, gender and age-sensitive housing, land management and property administration through enabling policies and improved legal and regulatory frameworks.

### **Basic infrastructural facilities**

It is the duty of government at various levels to provide the necessary basic infrastructural facilities for his citizen. This will make life comfortable for the urban dwellers, which will definitely enhance the economics of the city and made city functioning very well. The facilities include transport, adequate water supply, better education, and

good health care delivery e.t.c.

### **Empower local government**

Urbanization may be a global challenge, but it has to be locally managed. It's in the small towns, the names of cities that you and I don't know, that the bulk of urbanization is taking place. In that sense, there must be a focus on a "system of cities" because future economic growth is going to be highly dependent on how efficient cities are in trading and connecting with other cities. This is something that has been well understood on the east coast of China.

### **Adoption of long term, flexible planning framework**

City managers urgently need a far more flexible approach that is responsive to the dynamics of urbanization. For example, in many cities there exists a mismatch between municipal boundaries and the functionality of the city; the jurisdiction is one thing and the reality of the city is something else. It's very difficult to govern a city when your jurisdictional and administrative boundaries are not aligned, or when your city plans are 30 years out of date.

### **Urban land market**

The policy makers must be able to fix the dysfunctional urban land markets that tend to dominate in most countries and cities. This is of course easier said than done because these land markets are often tied up with power, politics, and patronage. A well-functioning and open land market lets everyone know who owns the land, how they got it, and how it can be transferred. It ensures open access to information as well as easier transferability and release of land. In most cities, outdated regulations constrain urban land markets. Policymakers should adopt a city-wide view that looks at the overall economic, environmental and social health of the city, rather than just individual parcels of land. In other words, a citywide planning view is absolutely essential. If nearly half of a city is a slum, it's not a slum problem but a city problem that requires a fundamental rethinking of the city in its entirety.

### **Creation of green cities**

Designing green cities is not at all difficult. By so doing you will be creating sustainable environments. In layman terms this means environments that will not burn out or self-destruct. But in climate change parlance green cities refer to cities that use eco-friendly services that reduce carbon emission and global warming. Principally intelligent traffic solutions, green buildings, waste water management, and smart grid infrastructure are just a few of the technologies helping to steer today's urbanization toward sustainability.

Creation of Green Cities involves designing well ventilated houses, apartment blocks, and buildings that welcome natural lighting, and consume less electric power.

- ✚ It involves designing residential, social, and economic districts that are well compartmentalized and lie within easy commute
- ✚ It involves building schools, hospitals, and markets within towns and council areas of the cities
- ✚ It means building a good network of roads for easy access to all areas with reduced travel times to save on fossil fuel
- ✚ It means having good public transportation to cut down on individual car ownership and the traffic volume at peak periods
- ✚ It means the designing of sustainable water supply for residents without recourse to self-reliance
- ✚ It means having the room, planning for, and executing future expansion in roads and other social services
- ✚ It means having a dust control department that will encourage and enforce greening of property yards and setbacks
- ✚ It also means the creation of parks and protection of flood plains, ravines and forests
- ✚ It requires a close liaison with the electric power authority to invest in clean energy like solar, wind, and nuclear in place of fossil fuel
- ✚ Finally it involves advocacy and partnership with government, the legislature, and the planning authorities in enacting and enforcing regulations and codes.

### **Preparation of development policies for our cities**

The government at various levels must prepare the developmental policies that will guide development in all ramifications of human endeavors'. The governments have to set up implementation committee in order to achieve proper implementation of the policies, monitoring and review of the policies must be strictly adhere to by the initiator of the plan.

### **Robust financing system**

If all aforementioned are to succeed, such systems must not only be at a much larger scale than before, but must also recognize the progressive, or incremental, nature of house construction among the poor in developing country cities. It is in response to these "Strengthened human settlements finance systems", places emphasis on innovative financing mechanisms and improved institutional capacity to leverage the contributions of communities, local authorities and the private sector, as

## CONCLUSION

While present day cities are both the cause and result of many socio-economic and environmental problems, the major ones of which are highlighted above, it is also clear that they are and have always been the repository of knowledge and innovation. Throughout history, cities have been closely linked to the advancement of civilization in all world regions. It can be said, without exaggeration, that the history of civilization has been the history of cities. If properly planned and managed, cities are capable of providing solutions to the key urban challenges briefly discussed above.

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