

## What is ComHabitat?

ComHabitat aims to promote and monitor the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, the Commonwealth Goal and associated Millennium Development Goals within and between Commonwealth countries. It focuses on networking and sharing practical examples of progress in implementation, such as successful slum upgrading initiatives. ComHabitat's work falls into three broad areas:

- Networking and advocacy;
- Research and information sharing; and
- Making the CCGHS ministerial process accessible to other partners implementing the Habitat agenda.

ComHabitat consists of the Ministerial Group (CCGHS) supported in practical ways by agencies from government, local government, civil society and the private sector. Currently, the key partners are the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Foundation, the Commonwealth Association of Planners (CAP), Commonwealth Human Ecology Council (CHEC), Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF), Homeless International, and the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID).

ComHabitat is governed by the intergovernmental Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements (CCGHS). The ComHabitat Management Group oversees the work of the ComHabitat Secretariat and are responsible for approving and monitoring the detailed annual work plan of the ComHabitat Secretariat. The ComHabitat Secretariat is responsible for the day-to-day programme of activities determined by the CCGHS. The Secretariat is currently hosted within the NGO Homeless International. ComHabitat is developing a Network to facilitate a broader engagement by many more organisations and individuals in the CCGHS process. Please contact us if you would like to become involved.



Photos:

**Above;** Both cities and slums are getting bigger. This family live in Dharavi, Mumbai, India, home to around 800,000 people and reputedly Asia's largest slum.

**Cover;** Residents come together to start work at the building site of a new community toilet block in Kampala, Uganda.

## ComHabitat Partners

### CCGHS

Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements

### Commonwealth Secretariat

Currently represented on ComHabitat's Management Group

### Commonwealth Foundation

Currently represented on ComHabitat's Management Group and providing funding for the ComHabitat Secretariat

### Commonwealth Association of Planners (CAP)

Currently represented on ComHabitat's Management Group

### Commonwealth Human Ecology Council (CHEC)

NGO centrally involved in setting up CCGHS and currently represented on ComHabitat's Management Group

### Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF)

Associated Commonwealth Organisation, currently represented on ComHabitat's Management Group

### Department for International Development (DFID)

Currently represented on ComHabitat's Management Group and providing funding for the ComHabitat Secretariat

### Homeless International

NGO currently hosting the ComHabitat Secretariat and represented on ComHabitat's Interim Management and Advisory Group

Partnerships are crucial to making a long-lasting difference to people living in slums. Government, communities, local NGOs and multilateral organisations are working together to support families relocating from alongside this railway line in Kibera, Nairobi, Kenya.



## ComHabitat

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*“Demonstrated progress towards adequate shelter for all with secure tenure and access to essential services in every community by 2015”*

[www.comhabitat.org](http://www.comhabitat.org)

## Background

In 1998, the Secretary-General established the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements (CCGHS). The CCGHS is an intergovernmental group made up of Ministers who are responsible for implementing the Habitat Agenda in their own countries. The Habitat Agenda is the main document that came out of the United Nations' 1996 Conference on Human Settlements in Istanbul; it has been adopted by all members of the Commonwealth.

At its first meeting, held in Nairobi in May 1999, the CCGHS adopted a Commonwealth goal of: "Demonstrated progress towards adequate shelter for all with secure tenure and access to essential services in every community by 2015". All Commonwealth member countries are automatically members of CCGHS and have the right of participation in the consultative process. The CCGHS meets periodically, usually in the wings of UN-Habitat meetings.

In preparation for the June 2001 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the Habitat Agenda (Istanbul+5), the CCGHS developed and adopted a Commonwealth Input to Istanbul+5. This document agreed broad objectives for the CCGHS in working towards the Commonwealth Goal, implementation of the Habitat Agenda and the relevant Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The objectives were amended by the CCGHS in May 2003 and now read as follows:

- Provide basic services to households, neighbourhoods and villages.
- Incorporate shelter provision into national poverty alleviation programmes.
- Promote good governance.
- Promote security of tenure.
- Remove systematic discrimination against women especially in respect of title to property and inheritance rights, with general support for the Commission on Human Rights resolution on the equal rights of ownership of and access to land.
- Promote attainment of the Commonwealth goal.

In pursuit of these objectives, the CCGHS recognises that realisation of the goal of adequate shelter for all can only be achieved within the context of sustainable development and good governance.

## Millennium Development Goals

As well as the Commonwealth goal, ComHabitat's work relates to a number of the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially the targets under Goal 7 - Ensuring environmental sustainability.

Target 10: Halve by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.

Target 11: Have achieved by 2020 a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.

The final report of the United Nations' Millennium Project recognised that slum upgrading and urban planning are interventions that can contribute towards all eight MDGs.

## Examples of ComHabitat activities

ComHabitat hosted a networking event during UN-Habitat's second World Urban Forum. Multi-sectoral teams from Nairobi and Mumbai shared their experiences of moving from a situation of confrontational evictions of railway-side slum dwellers, to negotiations with slum dwellers' federations resulting in mass voluntary resettlement.

ComHabitat produced a research paper, demonstrating that Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers show a general lack of focus on, and understanding of, urban poverty issues, for the Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting in Barbados. The paper argued that this lack of focus prevents governments and donors from being able to take advantage of the considerable opportunities that exist within urban areas for addressing poverty, reaching the MDGs and building an infrastructure for long-term economic growth and sustainable development.

To download the research paper or the report on the networking event, visit [www.comhabitat.org](http://www.comhabitat.org)

## Why Commonwealth?

There are Commonwealth countries on every continent. Commonwealth membership is diverse in terms of country size, income and type of economy, but members share a common working language and similar legal, political and educational systems. The Commonwealth also has a tradition of working through consensus based on shared values.

The Commonwealth provides a forum for this diverse membership to articulate a consensus position on the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. The CCGHS has emphasised its close relationship with UN-Habitat and firm support for the global campaigns on Urban Governance and Secure Tenure. The CCGHS seeks to develop partnership at all levels between government, civil society, the private sector and individuals.

## Why human settlements?

- 327 million people live in slums in Commonwealth countries, equivalent to one in six of the Commonwealth's population.
- In a quarter of Commonwealth countries, more than two out of three urban dwellers live in slums; many of these countries are urbanising rapidly.
- Between 2000 and 2030, the urban areas of the less developed regions of the world will absorb 95 per cent of the world's population growth.
- Urban poverty is often underestimated, unrecognised and poorly understood; insecure tenure exacerbates urban poverty.
- There can be no sustainable development without sustainable urbanisation.
- Adequate shelter, with secure tenure and access to essential services, is deeply connected to achievement of the millennium development goals, including those on poverty, education, and health.
- Funding to finance community-based slum upgrading is a "Quick Win" for achieving the MDGs.

## How can I find out more about ComHabitat?

If you'd like to become involved with the ComHabitat Network and kept up-to-date with our activities, please fill in the form below and send it to us. Alternatively, get in touch with us using the contact details on the back of this leaflet.

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Position\_\_\_\_\_

Organisation\_\_\_\_\_

Postal Address\_\_\_\_\_

Tel \_\_\_\_\_

Fax\_\_\_\_\_

(please include country codes)

Email\_\_\_\_\_

Please tick if you would like to receive our e-newsletter

Website (if applicable)\_\_\_\_\_

Please note any areas you are particularly interested in

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Sharing information is important. This woman in Lilongwe, Malawi, draws a plan of her dream house as part of a planning process through which the community will agree on a house design which is suitable and affordable for every family.

