



Fourth OACPS/EC/UN-Habitat International Tripartite Conference

'Slum Upgrading and Prevention in the Decade of Action'

WORKING SESSION 3:

Informal Settlements and Affordable Housing Challenges in the Asia Pacific

7th July 2021, 09:30-11:00 (EAT) 13:30-15:00 (Bangkok time) 18:30-20:00 (Fiji time)

Venue: Online

About the Fourth OACPS/EC/UN-Habitat International Tripartite Conference

The three-day Fourth OACPS/EC/UN-Habitat International Tripartite Conference on Slum Upgrading and Prevention in the Decade of Action has been organized within the framework of the global policy dialogue of the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (PSUP). PSUP was initiated by the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) and has been implemented by UN-Habitat in 190 cities in 40 ACP countries since its inception in 2008, with funding from the European Commission (EC).

The Tripartite Conference seeks to take stock of progress made in transforming living conditions in informal settlements and slums, and examine the lessons learnt, recommendations, commitments and next steps needed to meet the scale and implement the SDG and the New Urban Agenda (NUA).

Description of the session

Over 80 per cent of the total population in the Pacific live in the Melanesia sub-region that consists of Papua New Guinea, Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, where the annual urban growth rate is estimated at over 2%¹, which is the highest in the region.

While the urbanization of Pacific towns and cities continues to increase, it has two key consequences i) growing urban poverty and ii) the increasing number of informal settlements, both of which are linked and caused by the marginalization of formal land and housing supply systems. Informal or squatter settlements now cater for much of the population growth occurring in Pacific towns and cities.

For example, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea capitals are housing 35-50% of residents in informal settlements². Residents often live with limited access to adequate water and sanitation, live in housing with inadequate construction standards and space, and lack access to tenure security. In addition, their access to social services is below average and economic opportunities are harder to find. These socio-economic issues often result in communities experiencing lower education levels, worse health situations, higher crime rates, alcohol and drug abuse and interpersonal or family violence and



abuse. Children and youth are particularly affected, in addition to women, who are left with the disproportional burden of managing family and home.

An additional hurdle for informal settlements, especially in the Pacific Region, is climate change, which negatively affects the environmental, social, cultural and economic situation, and where external shocks can severely damage progress made. These settlements face particular challenges regarding vulnerability to climate change and disaster risk, unaffordable and sub-standard housing conditions and socio-economic inequality. These risks are traded off against access to employment, services and amenities offered at the urban fringe. The impact is often most felt by the poor and especially by women, girls, and the elderly. COVID-19 is another wake-up call. It is a diagnostic test to assess pre-existing vulnerabilities. For example, due to pre-existing conditions for water and sanitation, adequate housing and overcrowding, and other underlying pre-existing health vulnerabilities and inequalities such as untreated illnesses and precarious nature of informal employment and livelihood, the policies to curb COVID-19 spread were impractical in informal settlements and slums. Therefore, the urban poor living in informal settlements and slums worldwide feel the impact of COVID-19 disproportionately.

Urban informality diminishes the success rate of the Pacific nations to meet the target of SDG11 Target 1. Subsequently, it undermines the capacity to achieve the target of SDG 1 (End Poverty), SDG 5 (Achieve Gender Equality), SDG 10 (Reduce inequality) and SDG 13 (Take climate action).

Similarly, it diminishes Pacific nations ability to deliver on the New Urban Agenda principle to “leave no one behind,” and commitments for “Sustainable Urban Development for Social Inclusion and Ending Poverty” and “enabling all inhabitants, whether living in formal or informal settlements, to lead decent, dignified, and rewarding lives and to achieve their full human potential”, and the promise of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Accelerated Modalities of Action³, known as the Samoa Pathway.

Pacific New Urban Agenda (PNUA) adopted by member states in the region reaffirms commitment to develop and implement concrete actions and its key pillars/goals and related areas, including social equity, environment, resilience, and inclusive urbanization. The declaration of the Pacific Urban Forum 5th Session organized in July 2019 in Nadi, Fiji, recommended the Pacific Strategy for Informal Settlements Upgrading as a concrete action to promote social equity and resilience building for vulnerable urban communities living in informal settlements.

Expected Outcome

The regional consultations will bring together partners and ACP Member States from the region.

The event will take stock of regional trends and learning. It will question what is needed to guide and lift the inclusive urban development agenda and transform informal settlements and slums into adequate urban settings. It will share experiences, strategic frameworks that can be leveraged at local, national, sub-regional and regional levels. Finally, it will focus on the benefits of a regional approach to urban informality and climate resilience building, including a focus on **capacity**



building, data, governance, and financing. It will have contributions from Ambassadors from the Organization of the African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), Pacific Partners for New Urban Agenda (PPNUA), academia, development partners, including the European Commission.

It will elaborate the road map for developing and implementing a Pacific Strategy for Resilient Informal Settlements Upgrading, exploring opportunities for increased learning in the region, and joint target setting, monitoring and accountability for implementing the New Urban Agenda the Sustainable Development Goals in informal settlements.