

HABITAT II YOUTH CAUCUS VISION STATEMENT



**Building
our Global Home**

Youth for Habitat II Vision Statement

"Building Our Global Home"

INTRODUCTION

We, Youth for Habitat II, are young people throughout the world from diverse backgrounds working together on the international, regional, national, and local levels for the improvement of the lives of youth everywhere. We see in the Habitat II conference and the processes leading up to and beyond it, an opportunity for youth to demonstrate their value as idealistic and visionary, yet active and energetic, members of society. At the same time we see Habitat II providing a forum for the sharing of knowledge and experience between youth and youth-serving organisations working at all levels from the largest international youth networks to community-based organisations bringing their experiences from the field to the Habitat conference as best practices.

Youth make up one third of the total population of the planet. Of these, the vast majority are living and concentrating in rapidly urbanising cities. Young people continue to migrate to urban areas in search of employment, shelter and educational opportunities, often finding that the strain of unsustainable growth and mismanagement of these communities turns their visions of hope into utter despair. Meanwhile, youth in rural areas face increasing marginalisation because of ever-diminishing growth in their communities.

With this statement, we present our vision of a global home, the conceptual and practical steps necessary for its realisation, and identify the priority areas of concern for youth in the context of human settlements.

BUILDING OUR GLOBAL HOME - UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

The Habitat II process must address the underlying values and principles which can provide coherent and integrated solutions to the many socio-economic, environmental, and technical problems associated with urban and rural development. There is an increasing cooperation among the many non-governmental organisations throughout the world in influencing decision-making processes. This has resulted in an emerging unity of thought in approaching global issues. Such approaches must continue to be rooted in the realisation of the fundamental principle of the oneness and equality of humanity. This notion that humanity constitutes a single people must be the impulse and inspiration in pursuing the goals of Habitat II. We support open participation of youth and youth organisations from as broad and diverse backgrounds as possible in all levels of decision-making.

PRIORITY AREAS

Basic Necessities

Adequate shelter is an inalienable human right. This does not just mean a house, but also provision for adequate food, clean water, and sanitation. This right is not an end in itself, but a prerequisite for the active contribution of all people towards more sustainable and fulfilled communities. Suitable programmes should also be developed in rural, indigenous, and urban communities, to meet other basic necessities such as education and health-care, and to address the needs of homeless youth.

Youth Participation and Governance

Young people bring valuable qualities and perspectives to decision-making processes. Youth in all countries must be increasingly free and active participants in all levels of decision-making and implementation, particularly at the local level. In this way, communities can begin to benefit in full from the positive contribution of this important sector of society. In turn, we as youth commit ourselves to sharing our diverse experience and realising our common goals through vigorous commitment. Projects which emerge from the results of these consultations must be executed in a spirit of unity and common purpose to ensure that our qualities are explored to their fullest. The personal and collective contributions of youth to the community must become an instinctive and integral part of citizenship. A strong sense of civic engagement and commitment to the community should be developed early in a person's life, through meaningful participation and volunteerism. Youth access to current decision-making processes would facilitate the development of new models of governance which are at once creative, accessible, accountable, and service-oriented.

The Environment

Cities are an integral part of the human environment. They represent interdependent, potentially vibrant and fulfilling communities in which the interests of the individual are best served by working toward the benefit of the whole. Lack of consultation and poor decision-making between urban planners, the private sector, civil organisations, and individuals has accelerated the appalling environmental degradation observable in the world. Only through unprejudiced consultation, followed by united action, can the interests of the city as a whole, and, thus, of its constituent members, be ensured. Community development will need to incorporate principles of environmental preservation, rehabilitation, recreation and ecological city-building, not only to bring our cities into patterns of sustainable development, but also to respond to the human spirit's great need for close contact with nature. Local authorities must enforce environmental protection legislation. The role of food production as the foundation of the community and the basis for economic security needs to be carefully considered in the design of all human settlements.

Education

Education develops and releases the intellectual, practical, and spiritual potential of every human being. In this spirit, education is a fundamental right. Problems associated with health, crime, unemployment, substance abuse, and intolerance should all be addressed, at least in part, through educational initiatives, both formal and informal. Resources and facilities must be available for young people to acquire the basic vocational skills necessary for life and livelihood, while fostering emphasis on interdependent, individualised, and proactive learning. Educational programmes and projects must also incorporate the promotion of moral values, a sense of civic responsibility and engagement, life-long learning, entrepreneurship, and the concept of world citizenship. Planning and partnerships between governments, the private sector, and civil society in providing affordable and accessible education is vital to the successful integration of these concepts.

Work and Unemployment

Many of the challenges faced by people in cities arise from, and contribute to, the problems associated with unemployment. The right to employment should be a fundamental priority of economic and social policies which would enable all people, regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, or disability, to attain and secure sustainable livelihoods. Special attention should be paid to the problems of structural long-term unemployment, underemployment, and unemployment resulting from economic policies, technological change, and corporate sector decision-making. Society should recognise the importance of job-sharing, self-employment, and employment outside the formal market, including household responsibility, and voluntary work. Exploitative child labour must be brought to an end by improving the socio-economic conditions of society. Moreover, we seek a broader appreciation of the value of work, not merely as a means of livelihood, but also as a contribution to the prosperity of communities. Work helps give meaning, significance, and fulfilment to the lives of young people. As such, urban community design could incorporate the appreciation of work as a form of service, thereby insuring that the creative energies of all people have a channel of meaningful employment through which they can be expressed. Progress in this area will lend great momentum to the elimination of extremes of wealth and poverty, extremes most sharply observable in concentrated urban settlements, and which can often render young people in these areas disillusioned and vulnerable.

Young Women and the Girl-child

The development of our global home must fully embrace the equality, yet complimentary nature, of men and women. Such equality is not an end in itself, but brings new dynamics to leadership and consultative processes. The education of girls and young women must be a priority, particularly given the role of the mother as the first educator of the child. While providing full access to equal education for young women, communities must also remain sensitive to cultural differences. The contribution that many women make to societies through work at home or elsewhere must be given the respect and recognition it deserves. Forced prostitution, violence against women, child abuse, and the need for quality childcare must be addressed.

Street Children

Rapid urbanisation and vicious poverty cycles have combined to increase the number of street children. Programmes, conducted by and through civil society, aimed at addressing this potential crisis, must be supported jointly by international agencies, governments, and the private sector.

Health

Unsustainable growth and poverty in cities are just two factors which contribute to poor physical health among youth. Health care provisions in our cities must not only increase in efficiency and outreach, but also focus on preventive and educational initiatives within schools. It is intolerable that millions of children and young people throughout the world's cities die each year from illnesses caused by poor sanitation, pollution, lack of cleanliness, or through inadequate inoculation programmes. Investment in urban health programmes by governments, international organisations and the corporate sector must increase, with the recognition that a healthy youth population represents a productive, reliable, and prosperous work-force, and decreases the costs incurred by enduring health problems in adult populations. Rehabilitation programmes, coordinated with educational initiatives, must address the specific problems of substance abuse and sexually-transmitted diseases. Ways of measuring the impact of the city on the health of its population must be investigated and supported.

Racism and Discrimination

The more cosmopolitan and diverse the city, the richer its social and cultural fabric. However, for many young people in urban and rural settlements, race, gender, tribe, language, religion, sexual orientation, economic status, and culture continue to act as sources of division. An end to all forms of prejudice is essential to the viability of sustainable and successful communities. To create cities in which young people are not merely tolerant of each other, but appreciate and learn from their differences, we suggest educational initiatives promoting the concepts of world citizenship and cross-cultural understanding. Thus, emphasis is placed not on uniformity, but on unity in diversity.

Community Development

We affirm the role of families as the fundamental units of social cohesion. In all their diverse forms, they are the principle vehicles for the promotion of the values of love, justice, equality, peace, and unity, which are essential to the successful implementation of the goals of Habitat II. The moral and spiritual well-being of families contributes significantly to the development of responsible citizens, and therefore cannot be ignored in community planning.

Security needs to be redefined by incorporating the concept of peace as more than the absence of war. The global proliferation of arms sales, arms technology transfers and the militarisation of economies only help to fuel conflicts and divert critical resources away from investments in basic social programmes such as education and health. Young people are particularly affected by war and should not be forced into military service.

Structural adjustment programmes applied in many countries have not achieved the goals of increasing the standards of living and decreasing unemployment, but instead have widened the socio-economic gap and created exclusionary societies. These policies often serve to aggravate human settlements issues because they divert resources from essential social investment in order to service an unsustainable and unjust level of debt. Young people are often the most vulnerable to the negative effects of such policies. The corporate sector is not only an economic agent, it also has a responsibility to preserve the global values of social justice, especially when product markets are so often targeted at youth.

CONCLUSION

Progress in meeting the fundamental needs of people must be based upon eternal human values. Concrete action should be based upon unity in diversity. With this vision in mind, we can, together, build our global home.