



WEST AFRICAN MOVEMENTS OF THE URBAN POOR CALL FOR INCLUSIVE CITIES IN THE REGION

For the last week, grassroots movements of the urban poor from eight countries in West Africa (Senegal, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Burkina Faso) have been sharing our experiences and strategizing together how to build inclusive cities across our region. Bearing witness to the resilience of the urban poor in the face of numerous challenges, we jointly call on our governments to partner with us, the organized urban poor, to build inclusive and resilient cities.

In recent months and years, we have seen an increase in government policies and practices that effectively exclude the urban poor from many of the cities across our region. These include large-scale forced evictions, attacks on the livelihoods of the urban poor, especially those working in the informal sector, restrictions on accessible/affordable mass transportation systems, among others.

Some of our city governments seemingly wish to “leapfrog” to build cities that are inconsistent with our national realities. Lagos, Nigeria, for instance, dreams of becoming a “new Dubai,” while 67% of the population lives in slums. Cotonou, Benin, plans to demolish waterfront communities within the city while investing in the development of similar communities as tourist centers in far-flung areas.

Across the region, the urban poor consistently live in the areas most vulnerable to climate change-related natural disasters, yet government policies are ignoring and at times exacerbating the problems. For example, in Freetown, Sierra Leone, where thousands of people lost their lives in the August 14 mudslides and flooding, government policies on climate change and natural disasters have not been clear and therefore the urban poor are left highly vulnerable. In Lagos, the dramatic flooding in July has been linked to massive land reclamation projects in natural drainage areas.

Such practices run counter to important global commitments to build inclusive, resilient, sustainable cities, as has been articulated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in the New Urban Agenda adopted in Quito, Ecuador in 2016, in the Paris Agreement, among others.

The reality of all cities across our region is that the urban poor comprise the majority of the population; therefore, it is critical that the shelter, livelihoods, health, safety, education, access to basic services, and political participation of the urban poor is paramount in inclusive city planning.

We cannot achieve inclusive and resilient cities without:

1. Finding workable alternatives to forced evictions and demolitions;
2. Creating an enabling environment for the informal economy and livelihoods of the urban poor;
3. Building partnerships between the organized urban poor and government; and
4. Leveraging community-generated data to inform city policy and planning.

As the SDI West Africa Hub, we are determined to stand together to fight policies and practices that exclude the urban poor from our cities, while making every effort through our movements to build proactive partnerships with government, advocate pro-poor policies, and hold the government accountable locally for commitments made at international forums.

Signed this 8th of October 2017 in Lagos, Nigeria by:



Ghana:

Ghana Federation of the Urban and Rural Poor (GHAFUP)
People's Dialogue on Human Settlements



Nigeria:

Nigerian Slum/Informal Settlement Federation
Justice & Empowerment Initiatives - Nigeria



Sierra Leone:

Federation of the Urban and Rural Poor (FEDURP)
Centre Of Dialogue On Human Settlement and Poverty Alleviation (CODOHSA)



Liberia:

Federation of Liberian Urban Poor Savers (FOLUPS)
YMCA Liberia



Senegal:

Senegalese Federation of Inhabitants
urbaSen



Togo:

Federation Togolaise des Habitants des Bidonvilles
YMCA Togo



Burkina Faso:

Federation Lagme-Manegre (FELAM)
Laboratoire Citoyennetés

Benin:

Slum/Informal Settlement Federation of the Republic of Benin
Justice & Empowerment Initiatives – Benin