COP30 BRASIL AMAZÔNIA
BELÉM 2025

NO CLIMATE JUSTICE WITHOUT US, NO CITIES WITHOUT US!

Residents of informal settlements demand recognition, action, and resources at COP30

We are organising

We, the **SDI Climate Champions Group**, address this statement to leaders from national and subnational governments, to inter-governmental agencies and multilateral donors, to aid agencies and philanthropies, to big and small NGOs, to the bankers and lawyers and lobbyists, all gathered in Belém for COP30. We represent SDI federations of slum and shack dwellers in over 20 countries, standing in solidarity with the more than 1 billion people living and working in informality across the Global South.

We stand in solidarity with those living in favelas and quilombos in Brazil, and support their calls for the Brazilian COP30 to prioritize the most vulnerable to climate change in the negotiations and to centre justice and equity in delivering on the many pledges, frameworks, and plans.

Every year we are asked to share our stories of climate impact at COP. Yet negotiations exclude us from decision-making, planning, and budgeting. Our federations continue to find solutions, mobilize knowledge, and co-produce action with our allies, partners, and local governments. We are demonstrating that **informal settlements are legitimate sites for investment and climate action**. We are key to advancing the climate justice agenda for sustainable cities.

We are paying attention

In Belem at the "implementation COP" a number of priorities that directly affect us will be debated, including:

- Scaling up **climate finance**, increasing funding flows to vulnerable countries in the Global South, and closing the **adaptation financing gap**;

- Agreeing on metrics to track the **Global Goal on Adaptation**;

The Brazilian COP Presidency has established an **Action Agenda** meant to spur stronger connection and implementation cross initiatives, and has signalled support for greater inclusion of vulnerable populations. We welcome the increased focus on Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and traditional communities in Belém this November. Stronger alignment between global negotiations and locally led action by diverse and vulnerable communities is key to delivering resilience and to holding governments to account.

But **this COP continues a legacy of ignoring urban informality**, despite the fact that favelas, self-built neighborhoods and slums, are the primary housing solution for the urban poor in the Majority World, and a dominant form of rapid urbanization. We are relegated to side events and asked to provide testimony of the real-life consequences of climate breakdown, while decision-makers continue to define our homes and settlements as illegal and debate funding streams that barely trickle down to the local level.

The persistent gap between negotiations and lived reality, between pledges and action, undermines the credibility of the COP process. We need action that recognizes and resources those who are already adapting on the frontlines.

We demand action

We demand recognition that slum dwellers are not marginal to climate policy, but central to its success.

1. Work with informality, not against it

Resilient cities, inclusive development and adaptation goals cannot be achieved without engaging the realities of informal settlements. Governing officials must recognize that slum dwellers are not a barrier to achieving adaptation goals—we are integral to its success. Agreed metrics to track the Global Goal on Adaptation must include informal settlements as priority sites of climate intervention and must respect the agency and leadership of local residents.

2. Slum upgrading is climate action

Upgrading informal settlements—through sustainable housing, resilient infrastructure, and tenure security—directly addresses structural conditions that make us disproportionately vulnerable to extreme heat, flooding, water scarcity and severe weather. In-situ upgrading avoids the harms of forced evictions and displacement, while providing affordable, context-specific solutions already being demonstrated across our networks. Climate resilience and local adaptation begins with secure tenure. Donors must educate themselves of our realities and recognize that upgrading is climate action, before prescribing solutions.

3. Institutionalize community knowledge and data

Our data and experience are valid and necessary inputs for better climate models and climate action planning, as well as scientific processes such as IPCC assessments. Our slum dweller federations gather detailed co-produced data and evidence on risks, vulnerabilities and solutions, mapping climate impacts while addressing critical data gaps overlooked by formal systems. This knowledge must be institutionalised in adaptation planning, early warning systems and global monitoring processes.

4. Channel climate finance directly to the ground

Climate finance must be flexible, accessible to community led organizations and aligned with local development priorities. Current restrictions and top-down mechanisms prevent resources from reaching marginalised communities such as women, the youth and people living with disabilities who are already taking action with their own scarce resources. International actors also overlook the impact of local savings and loans schemes, such as SDI's Urban Poor Funds and savings groups, and other community-managed funds which play a critical role in supporting resilience and climate action in informal settlements. Finance must support fundamentals—dignified housing, basic services, and tenure security—while applying the principles of locally led adaptation to scale solutions and strengthen resilience. The costs of inaction are far higher than the costs of proactive investment.

We deliver on our promises

Since COP29, the SDI network has made good on our public commitments to strengthen our capacity to respond to climate change in our communities, encouraging leadership from women, youth, and other vulnerable groups. Our women-led savings groups and Urban Poor Funds, grounded in decades of experience, provide revolving funds to retrofit homes and upgrade settlements with increasing emphasis on climate resilience.

Our board president, Mr Joseph Muturi, is co-chair of the UNFCCC High Level Champions Working Group on Climate and Informality. The SDI Climate Champions Network is facilitating peer-to-peer learning exchanges and leveraging expertise from civil society to strengthen partnerships. We are developing state-of-the-art, co-produced methodologies to measure the risks of extreme heat and floods, while exploring and documenting affordable innovations and solutions.

We are working with city and national offices to integrate our data into climate planning and models; engaging with scientists to document and learn from our experiences, and showing up to global spaces as strategic partners.

We are placing justice, equity, and inclusion at the center of our agenda and delivering on our commitments. Now it is time for governments, donors, and global institutions to do the same.

We want COP30 to matter

We call on the COP30 to respond to our and our allies demands to place the urban peripheries at the centre of the debate.

As governments advance indicators to track the Global Goal on Adaptation; as the financiers and lawyers and donor agencies discuss how to deliver US$ 1.3 trillion per year by 2035 and close the adaptation finance gap, as governments pledge to move from target-setting to implementation, we challenge you to answer a simple question:

How will your decisions and actions serve the over 1 billion people living in informal settlements?

www.sdinet.org

SLUM UPGRADING IS CLIMATE ACTION!