

### Urban Poor

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While Asian cities have dynamic and growing economies urban poverty is severe in the Asia Pacific region. In most of developing Asia urbanization has been accompanied by slums and shelter deprivation, informality, worsening of living conditions and increasing risks due to climate change and exclusionary urban forms. Landlessness and the lack of agricultural development in rural areas lead to greater rural to urban migration further driving millions into city slums.

Urban inequality is rising in the Asia Pacific region. Decades of adherence to neoliberal policies of trade and investment liberalization, privatization, deregulation have resulted in widening inequalities on wealth, power and resources between a very few richest corporations and families and the majority of the toiling Asian people. Economic growth has not benefitted the poor in the region despite its productive role in the economy.

Instead of strengthening domestic economies and expanding productive employment, liberalization gave birth to large informal sectors defined by sweatshops production, home-workers, contract workers, part-time workers, and unregistered workers. Labor flexibility and reduction of labor costs depress wages and income. Informal workers face lack of security of tenure, eroded workers' welfare, and worst conditions of employment. As feminization of labor is noted in Asia with globalization, women are largely employed in low-skill jobs, suffer from adverse working conditions like low wages and long working hours, while unpaid work is not reduced by more female paid work.



The Asia Pacific region remains host to over half of the world's slum population, according to UN Habitat. In 2010, this amounted to an estimated 505.5 million, distributed as follows: 190.7 million (or 35 percent of urban population) in South Asia; 189.6 million (28.2%) in East Asia; 88.9 million (31%) in Southeast Asia; 35.7 million (24.6%) in Western Asia; and 0.6 million (24.1%) in Oceania/Pacific .



The Asia Pacific Regional Civil Society Engagement Mechanism (RCEM) promotes stronger, coordinated, and more effective civil society contribution in regional and global UN processes. It consists of 427 civil society organisations working in the Asia Pacific region within 17 different constituencies and five sub regions. It ensures stronger cross constituency coordination and that voices of all sub-regions in the Asia Pacific are heard in intergovernmental processes.

For more information please go to: <http://www.asiapacificrcem.org/>

The deplorable living condition in urban areas put the urban poor especially among the most vulnerable to climate change in urban areas. Informal settlements in hazardous areas risk health and sanitation problems.

To cut back on social spending, governments relegate their responsibilities for social protection to public-private partnerships while they pursue privatization of services and deregulation. With no regular employment and low incomes, the urban poor are deprived of access to decent and secure shelter, health services, quality education and energy.

The urban poor constituency engages with Post-2015 and SDGs as it continues to fight for basic services and human rights that should not be undermined by world leaders and development actors.

While Goal 11 on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements is included in the 2030 Agenda and a number of other goals including ending poverty, addressing hunger, providing decent work and others are linked to it, the urban poor from grassroots communities and social movements remain critical.

This vision of sustainable urban development dubbed the New Urban Agenda shared between World Bank and UN-Habitat will rely heavily on public-private partnerships (PPP). It uses the same neoliberal logic currently being espoused by governments. Financing urban development through PPP would only mean more foreign borrowing, privatization of urban infrastructure and services and higher taxes from the people.

Concretely for the urban poor, it means massive displacements, forced evictions and the relocation of urban poor to far-flung, dangerous areas.



## Position on Development Justice

The urban poor pursue Development Justice as a framework that challenges the prevailing neoliberal economic model. Development justice cements the principle of non-regression, and promotes a holistic, rights-based approach to development, and ensures that the human rights principles of right to development, equality, equity, nondiscrimination and inclusive participation and decision making underpin all policies and practices.

1. Redistributive justice aims for equitable sharing of wealth and resources and provide the most basic human needs. It means increasing people's incomes to sufficient levels, decent and secure jobs and livelihood for all, people's access to land and resources in rural areas. Policies on genuine agrarian reform and domestic industrialization must be implemented.
2. Economic justice aims for production and consumption based on social needs and not for private profit. Economic growth under this framework fosters equitable distribution of wealth, well being of individuals and human rights such as access to decent and secure shelter, health services, quality education, energy, information and technology.
3. Social and gender justice aims to eliminate all forms of discrimination, marginalization and exclusion against the urban poor. It challenges existing social structures that discriminate and guarantees the human rights of the urban poor, especially the women urban poor.
4. Environmental justice takes into account the role of MNCs in the contamination of water, air and land and the destruction of ecology. The urban poor call on the society to take collective control of resources against the monopoly, overproduction and overconsumption of a few.
5. Accountability to the people means that the urban poor are empowered to be part of a free, prior and informed decision-making that will determine their development priorities.

**The approach to urban development must consider the urban poor as central, not just as stakeholders, in the discourse. States and governments must heed our call and take action.**

**We will build a better world—a world where urban poor have no reason to exist.**