

Plan for urban population boom says report

Urban populations of Africa and Asia growing by one million people a week.

By [Carole Kimutai](#) 5 Jul 2007

Nairobi - Governments in Africa, Asia and Latin America have been encouraged to plan for a massive increase in urban populations.

A report released last week by UNFPR, the UN Population Fund - *The State of World Population 2007* report says policies that deter urban expansion are often based on false assumptions and that a growing urban population could be positive, but only if it is planned for now.

Governments in developing countries often discourage migration to cities, for instance by limiting the availability of homes for the poor. The report says this just leads to the growth of slums, which are now home to a billion people, mostly in developing countries.

“The report recognizes that debating whether cities should grow faster or slower is a waste of time, and that working with the urban poor, and planning for our urban future, is critical,” says Gordon McGranahan, head of the human settlements group at the International Institute for Environment and Development, which was a major contributor to the report.

The urban populations of Africa and Asia are growing by one million people a week and will have doubled by 2030 to include an additional 1.7 billion people. This is the same as the combined populations of China and the United States. Though mega-cities of more than 10 million people will continue to grow, most people will be living in cities of 500,000 or fewer.

The report warns that the urban poor - already extremely vulnerable people - will suffer greatly as climate change takes hold, and that governments need to be proactive about urban planning instead of waiting for major problems to react to.

“What happens in the cities of Africa and Asia and other regions will shape our common future,” says Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, UN Population Fund's executive director.

The State of World Population 2007 report is available at <http://www.unfpa.org/swp>

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