



WORLD HABITAT DAY

World Habitat Day is celebrated on the first Monday in October annually. The day is recognised by the United Nations to reflect on the state or condition of towns and cities and promote the basic right to adequate shelter or housing for all. High population density, coupled with poor building techniques only results in a chaotic situation and enormous loss of lives.

World Habitat Day aims to remind people across the world that they have the power and the responsibility to shape the future of towns and cities. The basic idea is to remind the world of the effects of urbanization, and its collective responsibility for the future of human habitat.

For this year's celebration on October 4, the United Nations General Assembly will continue its focus on our habitat with the theme, "***Accelerating urban action for a carbon-free world***". This focus is timely, given the rapid increase in urban cities. Attention must also be given to the increase in slums often found on the outskirts of these urban cities. In comparison to the cities, basic necessities such as housing, shelter, potable water and food, etc. are nonexistent in these slums. Moreover, in this new paradigm of COVID-19, the living standards are seen as even more deplorable, with limited access to health care and even basic medical drugs. The effect of the COVID -19 pandemic on these communities cannot be fully comprehended.

Environmental impacts of overcrowding in cities

- Concentrated energy use leads to greater air pollution with significant impact on human health.

- Automobile exhaust produces elevated lead levels in urban air; the world has since moved to phase out lead in gasoline, with Algeria being the last country to report empty reserves of leaded gasoline.
- Large volumes of uncollected waste create multiple health hazards, particularly during periods of flooding.
- Urban development can magnify the risk of environmental hazards such as flash flooding.
- Pollution and physical barriers to root growth promote loss of urban tree cover.
- Animal populations are inhibited by toxic substances, vehicles, and the loss of habitat and food sources.

Solutions

- Reduce air pollution by upgrading energy use and alternative transport systems.
- Create private-public partnerships to provide services such as waste disposal and housing.
- Plant trees and incorporate the care of city green spaces as a key element in urban planning.

The approach taken by the UN really spelt out in this year's theme, aligns with its Sustainable Developments Goal 11- Sustainable Cities and Communities. However, this can only be achieved when people from all facets of life begin to take responsibility for their own area which they inhabit. These include national, regional and local governments and organizations, communities, academic institutions, the private sector and all relevant stakeholders working together to create sustainable, carbon-neutral, inclusive cities and towns upon which the future of our planet depends.

Sources

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/urban-threats>

<https://unhabitat.org/events/world-habitat-day-2021>

You can share your ideas and questions by sending letters to: “Our Earth, Our Environment”, C/O ECEA Programme, Environmental Protection Agency, Ganges Street, Sophia, GEORGETOWN, or email us at: eit.epaguyana@gmail.com. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram and subscribe to our YouTube channel.