

Institute for International Urban Development

News from the Field

November 2008

UN-HABITAT - The State of African Cities Report 2008

UN-HABITAT has just released The State of the African Cities Report 2008, a companion piece to their flagship State of the World's Cities Report released biennially. The State of the African Cities Report was launched at the World Urban Forum in Nanjing China in November, 2008. Mona Serageldin, François Vigier, Erick Guerra and Christa Lee-Chuvala wrote Chapter 2, The State of North African Cities, covering trends and initiatives in the countries of Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Sudan and Mauritania. The full document can be downloaded at <http://www.unhabitat.org/pmss/getPage.asp?page=bookView&book=2574>.

Strategies for Sustainable Development, Kars Province, Turkey

At the end of November the Institute submitted its final narrative report to the Christensen Fund at the end of the two-year project to develop strategies for sustainable regional development in Kars Province, Northeast Anatolia, Turkey. Kars Province and its surrounding region of Northeast Anatolia is one of the most biodiverse areas in the world and is home to an array of cultural heritage assets, from prehistoric cave drawings to the medieval ruins of Ani. It also has a strategic location particularly in light of the Kars-Tbilisi-Baku railway currently under construction.

Agriculture, and particularly animal husbandry, provides employment and income for at least 70% of the Province's residents. National policies fostering the development of stockbreeding have led to a severe problem of overgrazing, while cropping practices have led to soil erosion and degradation, poor water use and decreased yields. In addition, the Province needs to create opportunities for rural-based non-agricultural jobs to improve incomes, provide employment opportunities, and reduce the substantial outmigration from the region.

The report focused on our work at two levels:

1. At the Provincial Government level particularly with the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Tourism in formulating sustainable regional development strategies.
2. At the village level to assist them in establishing legal village associations and to change detrimental practices.

In conjunction with international agricultural experts from the International Centre for Agriculture in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), the IIUD team developed a set of interlinked

pilot projects designed to demonstrate and promote improved agricultural practices to be carried out in selected villages. The team also developed an eco-tourism strategy for the Province, and complementary pilot projects intended to allow rural residents to play a central role in village development and open up opportunities for the marketing of local products, including food and handicrafts.

Chrisa Lee-Chuvale

Fort Devens Case Study

In 1996, Frank Vigier and other members of the Center for Urban Development Studies released a report, *Reuse Strategies for Military Base Conversions*. Financed by the Economic Development Administration of the Department of Defense, the report looked at the reuse of four military bases in the United States, including Fort Devens in Massachusetts. Devens' reuse has been particularly interesting on account of a unique institutional framework, in which towns ceded control of zoning to a quasi-public authority, the Massachusetts Land Bank (now MassDevelopment). Much has happened in the last 12 years; Devens has become a State and even international model not only for military base reuse but also as a center for economic growth and sustainable practices. Yet the unique institutional framework shows signs of fraying and towns are set to take back land in Devens or perhaps to create a new town of Devens. At the heart of the discussion, is the desire of the State and residents of Devens to create housing and the reluctance of neighboring towns to bear the burdens of new school costs and congestion. A compromise, known as scenario 2B, would have given some land back to the towns while creating a new town and allowing 1,800 new housing units, but lost narrowly in a 2006 super town meeting vote. A new compromise is being hashed out and is due to be voted on in 2009. *A Case Study of Fort Devens: the Transition to Civilian Use* will be made available on our website and will be used by the Institute for training purposes.

Newry Dundalk Report

ICLRD is in the process of publishing a report entitled, [*Supporting the Implementation of Cross-Border Collaboration in the Newry-Dundalk Region*](#). Newry in North Ireland and Dundalk in the Republic of Ireland are located on the Dublin to Belfast corridor and have a combined regional population of 170,000. The ICLRDR research team, which included Frank Vigier, John Driscoll and Erick Guerra, conducted over 100 interviews with public, business, and civic leaders to identify key issues affecting the region and specific projects that would help achieve sustainable development based on social, economic, and environmental criteria for the benefit of both communities. The published report will be released at [ICLRD's Fourth Annual Conference in January, 2009](#).

As part of its evolving publication strategy, ICLRD plans to launch its first annual journal on the theme of 'Collaborative Spatial Planning', following the model of the *Journal of Cross Border Studies in Ireland*. To assist ICLRD in gathering the articles for such a journal and to further raise the profile of the Centre, two-to-three e-journals will be published on an annual basis beginning this winter. Each issue of ICLRD's e-journal will be theme-specific. The first, due to be published in early January, 2009, addresses the theme of 'Evidence-Informed Spatial Planning'.

The second to be published in May, 2009 will focus on 'Sustainable Communities' – thus building on the work of the sustainable communities report. The *Journal of Collaborative Spatial Planning in Ireland* will be an amalgamation of a number of the articles from the e-journals; with contributors given the opportunity to update articles where appropriate. The Journal will also include other information / news items which (a) relate to ICLRD activities and (b) are of relevance to the core workings of ICLRD. The journal is being produced and published at our office in Cambridge. John Driscoll is preparing the forward to the journal and Erick Guerra is co-authoring an article with Karen Keaveney, a lecturer at Queens University Belfast, who spent last spring as a visiting Research Fellow at IIUD.

Erick Guerra

ICLRD Small Connected Town Study

The ICLRD Small Connected Town Study was Launched on November 21, 2008

The launch of the report at the Blacklion golf course was a great success; we received very positive feedback and requests for the report. Please see the following press clipping and others on the ICLRD website.

<http://www.nwipp-newspapers.com/FH/free/295940537562307.php>

The launch was attended by about 60 people from the cross-border region and ICLRD members--*John Cusack* of AIT, *Rob Kitchin* of NIRSA/NUIM, *Greg Lloyd* the new head of School of Built Environment at UU and the ICLRD research team for the Small Connected Town Study. *John Driscoll* chaired the event.

It was an interesting morning that combined: a briefing on the study by *Caroline Creamer* and *Neale Blair* of ICLRD; a panel which endorsed the study as well as their own views on cross-border cooperation; IFI Board member *Ms. Deirdre Ryan* commented on the study and the role of IFI's role in cross-border planning; the political viewpoint was presented by *Jim Wells* MLA, South Down and *Eamon Scanlon* T.D., Sligo-North Leitrim; *Niall Holohan*, provided a North South Ministerial Council perspective. We had a terrific closing by *Colm Toibin*, a noted Irish author short listed for the **Man Booker Prize 2004** and the New York Times: **The 10 Best Books of 2004** and who wrote a book in 1998 on walking the border. He started out his talk with 'I just came back from visiting the Kurdish region in Iraq.....'

Caroline is pulling together all of the material from the launch including photo and the PDFs of the study for the ICLRD web site.

ICLRD Conference January 22/23

We have put together an exciting conference in January, you are very welcome. The program and booking information is available on the ICLRD website www.iclrd.org
John Driscoll

September 2008

Development of Qassioun in Damascus, Syria

Mona Serageldin and the IIUD team of Alejandra Mortarini, Daniel Tsai, Carolina Morgan and Christa Lee-Chuvala have recently completed the improvement strategy and plan for the development of Qassioun in Damascus, Syria. This project is part of the Municipal Administration Modernization Program funded by the European Union and managed by the Ministry of Local Administration and the Environment. The prime contractor is London-based WYG, a large consulting firm. Mona and Frank are urban planning experts on key projects. Qassioun includes one of the largest informal settlements in Damascus, housing about 250,000 persons on the steep hill overlooking central Damascus. The site is crossed horizontally by two fault lines and has severe geotechnic problems which have been investigated and documented by the project team. Mona is the team leader working with the Ministry and Governorate officials as well as community groups whose participation is critical as households in hazardous areas will have to be relocated.

Qassioun is a strategic project. On August 2, 2008, Mona presented the Improvement Strategy to the Prime Minister, four ministers, the Governors of Damascus City and Damascus Province and many General Directors within the concerned ministries. The presentation was made using the excellent interactive planning and presentation tool developed for the Institute by Daniel Tsai. The project was extremely well-received, and all aspects of it were approved. A relocation site has been secured to provide housing for the families that will need to be moved from high-risk zones. The multidisciplinary approach to the complex problems of the site is a major contribution and was particularly appreciated by the Prime Minister.

The next phase of the project, in which Mona will also play a pivotal role, will involve implementation of the strategy and plan by the related ministries, NGOs and community groups. A major objective of the upcoming phase will be to introduce solid waste management, landscaping appropriate to arid zones, water conservation and renewable energy use as key components of sustainable urbanization in the upgrading projects. A large commercial and touristic development is planned on the plateau above the settlement with magnificent views of the city.

Research Proposal:

IIUD is submitting a research paper proposal for the World Bank's 5th Urban Research Symposium, Cities and Climate Change: Responding to an Urgent Agenda. Our paper, to be researched and written by Mona Serageldin, Erick Guerra and Christa Lee-Chauvale, will focus on developing resilience to the impacts of climate change in Alexandria Egypt, and Cotonou Benin. Despite their many differences, both cities are in low elevation coastal zones and are vulnerable to the early impacts of climate change, albeit in different ways. **Alexandria**, where widely quoted scenarios estimate that if nothing is done to respond to climate change, a 50 cm rise in sea levels would displace 1.5 million people, destroy 195,000 jobs and cost \$30 billion in lost property and tourism. The more immediate threat, however, may come from rising water tables. **Cotonou**, where the steady erosion of the shore line since 1964 has removed 400m of coastline (112 ha of land), and has destroyed housing, businesses, and tourist resorts. The predicted impacts of climate change include riverbank erosion, flooding, coastal erosion, salinization of the lagoon and increase in tsetse fly and malaria mosquitoes. The port of Cotonou, the airport and the main road to Lagos (part of a larger West African urban corridor linking Abidjan to Lagos) are at risk.

Outside of budget constraints, two factors underpin the low priority given to building resilience to climate change:

- ***The time frame of threats*** reduces the interest of both individuals and governments from responding aggressively to threats not in the immediate future. Politicians and local decision makers are faced with pressing issues such as high rates of poverty and unemployment, insufficient basic infrastructure, inadequate urban services, dangerous levels of local pollutants, and crippling traffic congestion in the larger cities.
- ***The dynamics of land markets*** relegate the more vulnerable population to settle on the periphery, far from jobs and services, or in risk prone areas exposed to natural and man-made hazards. Even when hazards must be urgently addressed, resettlement has proven difficult due to the lack of suitable and affordable land, lagging infrastructure, and inadequate public transportation.

Erick Guerra

Since receiving a Google Grants award, web traffic to the IIUD site has increased. We had 186 visits last month, up over 33 percent from the previous month. Although the majority of visitors continue to come from the United States, particularly Massachusetts, we have also received hits throughout the globe. More detailed graphics concerning website statistics are attached.

An updated version of the IIUD mission statement has been added to the website. To view it, please visit <http://www.i2ud.org/Pages/mission.html>

Erick Guerra

Research projects needing funding to proceed:

1. Prepare a professional quality audiovisual and an article on women migrants and remittances in Latin America in order to present our work to a broad audience and publicize the Institute in appropriate publications in the US and Latin American countries. Our report is considered a leading work on the topic. It is field-based covering five Latin American countries and deserves to be better publicized.
Estimated cost: \$60,000
2. Finance a trip by a IIUD staff member to West Africa to undertake field research on urban strategies to mitigate the impacts of climate change in Cotonou, Benin.
Estimated cost: \$10,000
3. Organize a lecture by an IIUD staff member at an appropriate venue in the US or abroad.
Estimated cost: \$8000
4. Prepare and send out a targeted e-mail to selected planning agencies, professional associations and potential partners to assess the market for and the feasibility of offering web-based, practice-oriented seminars.
Estimated cost: \$7000
5. Preparing posters and one-page brochures to display IIUD projects and publicize IIUD at special events like UN and World Bank conferences and conferences in countries where we work.
Estimated cost: \$1000 per poster and \$1000 per brochure
6. Write a paper for the 2009 World Bank Urban Research Symposium on Cities and Climate Change. The focus of the symposium is on developing countries.
Estimated cost: \$15,000

Editor:

Mary Shia

