

## 2.8 Responding to the challenges of urban growth in developing countries

### How can living conditions for the urban poor be improved?

Urban areas are often the driving force for development in poorer countries, providing a large supply of cheap labour and an ever-growing market for industrial products. Mumbai, in India, creates nearly a quarter of the country's wealth yet half of the city's population live in slums. In Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, slum dwellers provide most of the labour force for the construction industry across the city. In recent years, progress has been made in improving living conditions in many urban areas. This has been achieved with the help of government schemes, **self-help schemes** and **non-government organisation (NGO)** projects. The following examples look at a number of ways that conditions for the urban poor are being improved in developing countries.

#### Curitiba – Brazil

In Curitiba, COHAB, the city's public housing programme, maintains that residents should have 'homes – not just shelters'. They have introduced a housing policy that will provide 50,000 homes for the urban poor.

The city council has:

- bought a large area of land and supplied it with basic services such as water and electricity
- divided up the land into small housing plots. Each plot comes with two trees and the promise of 'an hour with an architect' to help plan each home. The architect draws the building plans.
- provided small loans to get people started on building, often done a room at a time once the shell of the house is built
- built 24 show homes using a wide range of techniques to give people ideas about what they can do.

A visiting planner said:

*'This scheme encourages people to build their own homes. Many slum dwellers work in the construction industry so they know what to do; this scheme gives them the opportunity.'*

A fully integrated bus service links the area to the rest of the city (see page 47) and each area of housing has a school, health centre and local shops.



**B** New housing plots in Curitiba

#### In this section you will learn:

that improving living conditions in urban areas requires a range of strategies

how improvement schemes are helping to manage urban poverty.



#### Rio de Janeiro – Brazil

In Rocinha, one of the poorest parts of Rio de Janeiro, the city council, working with the local people, has introduced a number of self-help schemes. These have:

- improved housing quality in some parts of the shanty town
- introduced schools and health centres
- encouraged the development of small businesses, including hotels where visitors can stay and experience life in a shanty town.

**A** Improvements for the urban poor in Brazil

#### AQA Examiner's tip

Know a case study of a slum area that has been improved to give residents a better quality of life.

### Improving the lives of the urban poor in Africa

The following example describes urban improvement schemes in a number of African cities.

#### Dalifont – Senegal

A settlement upgrading scheme has been introduced to improve basic conditions. Five hundred homes have been given water and sanitation systems, electricity and a rubbish collection and recycling facility.

#### Addis Ababa – Ethiopia

The city government is giving small loans to families for self-help housing construction schemes. Individual families can construct their own homes or work with others as a cooperative. A small number of dwellings are being built by the government. These have running water, electricity and sanitation systems.

#### Kibera – Kenya

A scheme of slum upgrading has been introduced, jointly run by the government and an international charity. It is trying to respond to the most important problem – lack of clean water and proper toilets. It is hoped that this will reduce rates of disease and mean that slum dwellers do not have to buy expensive bottled water.

#### Cape Town – South Africa

The South African Homeless People's Federation (SAHPF) has formed a partnership with the government's housing department, which has agreed to transfer land to the poor and provide nearly a million pounds for housing projects. Their aim is to 'encourage self-help and self-reliance'. One project that has benefited is the Gugulelo Women's Cooperative ('Gugulelo' means pride). Working as a cooperative they have started a savings scheme and have taught local families basic financial management and building skills. Helped by SAHPF they have built a small community of new houses (Photo **D**).

#### Dar es Salaam – Tanzania

The city council has introduced a waste collection system. Rubbish is collected from the streets and taken to recycling points or burnt. This has:

- created 2,000 jobs for slum dwellers
- reduced the amount of rubbish rotting in the streets
- reduced disease
- generated money from recycling that can be spent on urban improvements.



**C** Some improvement schemes in Africa

#### Key terms

**Self-help schemes:** people take responsibility for improving their own living conditions.

**Non-government organisation (NGO):** organisation that is independent of government control, usually charitable organisations such as WaterAid, Oxfam, Save the Children.

#### Activities

- 1 What does COHAB (Curitiba) mean when it says that residents 'should have homes – not just shelters'?
- 2 Improvement schemes are often called 'self-help schemes'. Why is this?
- 3 How might urban improvement schemes:
  - encourage people to take pride in their homes
  - improve the health of residents
  - help to develop a 'community spirit'?

**extension** NGO projects have helped to improve living conditions in many urban areas. Use the internet to investigate urban projects being carried out by WaterAid. For each project:

- describe what is being done
- suggest how it will improve the living conditions for urban dwellers.



**D** A new home in Cape Town

#### Did you know ????????

Access to clean water and sanitation systems would make a big difference to many slum dwellers.

In Bangladesh, water-related diseases are responsible for 24 per cent of all deaths.