



Are the Cities â€œEngines of Rural Developmentâ€œ?

On Monday, October 4, the theme chosen by the UN to mark World Habitat Day 2004 is Cities - Engines of Rural Development. Looking at the world as it is now because of the unequal development model, we feel that the cities still are machines that suck in the rural population and its economic surplus. The good intentions expressed by the International Organizations are not sufficient to give solution to the social, economic, cultural and housing problems of nearly half the worldâ€™s population living in rural areas in increasing abandonment.

The main issues that raise deep concern and lead to proposals between the social organisations and movements, NGOâ€™s and other members of Habitat International Coalition (HIC) are:

Â§the massive scale of evictions in Asia,

Â§the lack of basic services and of womenâ€™s rights to land tenure in Africa,

Â§the need of legal and financial instruments to facilitate the housing production and management for and by the people in Latin America,

Â§fighting against the increasing privatisation of social housing and equipment in Europe and North America,

Â§denouncing of the social impacts inflicted by war and violence in the Middle East.

Taking vantage of the diversity of HIC members, we denounce the violation of the right to land and housing; we denounce the negative social impacts of the neo liberal housing policies; and we propose alternatives to the peopleâ€™s process of housing production in the countryside and in the cities.

To celebrate NOW the Right to Land and Housing, the members of HIC are calling to 41 events in 24 countries.