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Innovative urban housing programmes receive UN awards



8 September 2010 – The United Nations agency tasked with promoting environmentally and socially sustainable cities and towns has declared the winners of this year's [Scroll of Honour](#), the UN awards for excellence in human settlements development.

The awards, announced on Monday, go to institutions instrumental in improving living conditions in towns and cities, the UN Human Settlements Programme ([UN-HABITAT](#)) said in a statement. The awards will be presented on [World Habitat Day](#) on 4 October.

The Vienna municipality's Sustainable Urban Renewal Programme was honoured for putting people and their views first in a model programme it is imparting to other cities in Eastern Europe. Under its so-called "soft urban renewal" drive that started in 1984, the Austrian capital has been careful to consult residents on changes and take their views into account rather than opt for the demolition of run-down neighbourhoods and the compulsory relocation of residents.

More than 300,000 dwellings without toilets or water and sanitation and which make some 40 per cent of Vienna's housing stock were targeted for renovation under the scheme. But the percentage of sub-standard stock has been reduced to below 9 per cent following improvements to thousands of buildings containing nearly a quarter of a million apartments.

In China, the Kunshan Municipal People's Government was recognized for an innovative approach to granting migrants the right to essential services in the city.

Drawing some 800,000 job-seekers every year, Kunshan holds five employment fairs every week. In the past two years, it has helped more than 200,000 people get work in a city where modern, new accommodation has increased per capita living space from 12 square metres in 1999 to 40 square metres. The city also ensures that migrants have full access to pension, health and other social security schemes, as well as equal education opportunities, and the same rights to public services as locals.

The Colombian city of Medellín was rewarded for its successful implementation of three programmes to reduce urban poverty, provide health care for children and give citizens a say in urban services. The anti-poverty programme targeted 40,000 households, while the health initiative ensures that all children aged five and below have better care and the urban services scheme seeks to consistently survey the impact of city services to ensure that decisions taken have the right impact.

Morocco's Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and its agency, the Al Omrane Group, won for delivering one of the world's most successful and comprehensive slum reduction and improvement programmes.

In 2004 the ministry had set a target of humanely clearing the slums in 85 cities by 2012. Working with Al Omrane, it has improved or eliminated 45.8 per cent of the country's slums, which are home to 1.6 million people. The cost of the programme so far is 25 million dirhams (\$6.86 million).

Singapore's Housing and Development Board (HDB) will receive the award for providing one of Asia's greenest, cleanest and most socially conscious housing programmes. For over half a century, HDB has housed a large slice of Singapore's growing population. Currently, more than eight in 10 Singaporeans live in HDB apartments and more than nine in 10 own the apartment in which they live.

In South Africa, Johannesburg's Social Housing Company (JOSHCO) will receive the award for providing tens of thousands of affordable housing units, improved living conditions and basic services to poor families.

As part of an exemplary project based on community development since 2004, it has converted former male-only mine hostels, derelict inner-city buildings and some slum districts into liveable homes.

Organizing youth days, sports programmes, clean-up campaigns and other activities as part of its development plan, JOSHCO focuses on priorities such as violence against women and children; youth; the family; early childhood development; and measures to reduce crime within communities.

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