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**Evaluation of Habitat International Coalition - HIC**



**FINAL EVALUATION REPORT**

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commissioned by MISEREOR - Aachen

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**List of Acronyms and Abbreviations**

ADB Asian Development Bank

ACHR Asian Coalition for Housing Rights

CA Cities Alliance  
 COHRE Centre On Housing Rights and Evictions  
 CORDAID Netherlands Catholic Development Organization  
 CSD Commission on Sustainable Development  
 ECLAC Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean  
 EC Executive Committee  
 ECT Evaluation Core Team  
 EED *Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst* (German Protestant Development Service)  
 ESF European Social Forum  
 GA General Assembly  
 GS General Secretary / Secretariat  
 HEC Habitat and Environment Committee  
 HIC Habitat International Coalition  
 HIC-AA HIC Anglophone Africa  
 HIC-AF HIC Afrique Francophone  
 HIC-AL HIC *América Latina*  
 HIC-MENA HIC Middle East and North Africa  
 HLRN Housing and Land Rights Network  
 HPZ Housing People of Zimbabwe  
 HSEN Housing and Sustainable Environment Network  
 IAI International Alliance of Inhabitants  
 ICCO Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation  
 IDB Interamerican Development Bank  
 inWentCapacity Building International Germany  
 MENA Middle East and North Africa  
 MISEREOR German Catholic Bishop's Organization for Development Cooperation  
 NACHU National Cooperative Housing Union  
 NGO Nongovernmental Organization  
 Novib *Nederlandse Organisatie voor Internationale Bijstand* (OXFAM-Novib)  
 OVAF *Observatoire des Villes et Village d'Afrique*  
 REIT(s) Real Estate Investment Trust(s)  
 RFP Regional Focal Point  
 SARP South Asia Regional Program  
 SDI Shack Dwellers International  
 SINA Settlements Information Network Africa  
 SPH Social Production of Habitat  
 TN Thematic Network

UN United Nations  
UNDP United Nations Development Program  
UNIFEM United Nations Development Fund for Women  
UNCHS-Habitat United Nations Commission for Human Settlements  
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization  
WAS Women and Shelter Network  
WASHWater, Sanitation and Hygiene for All  
WAT Women Advancement Trust (Tanzania)  
WB World Bank  
WG Working Group  
WSF World Social Forum  
WSSD World Summit on Sustainable Development  
WTO World Trade Organization  
WUF World Urban Forum  
YMA Young Muslims Association (Kenya)

## **Executive Summary**

### **1. Introduction**

Background and Context: Habitat International Coalition is an independent, non-profit coalition of a wide range of civil society groups in almost all regions of the world, which has been working in the area of housing and human settlements at an international level for more than 30 years. The Coalition aims to ensure secure housing and a livable planet for all. Its efforts are based on advocacy for the urban poor, the respect, guarantee and fulfillment of housing rights, and on solidarity, networking and popular mobilization.

The Coalition has a General Secretariat in Santiago (Chile), and seven Regional Focal Points (five in the South, i.e. in Asia, Latin America and Africa and two in the North, in Europe and North America), which coordinate projects, communications, exchanges, campaigns and membership.

HIC's international, regional and thematic activities have been supported by diverse international funding agencies, most recently MISEREOR, InWent, the Ford Foundation and *ICCO*.

Evaluation Objectives and Approach: To better respond to the challenges of a quickly changing environment in the age of globalization, HIC proposed an evaluation of its working approaches, functioning and overall experience to MISEREOR as one of its main funders and the sole funding source for the international General Secretariat.

Three external consultants, jointly selected by HIC and Misereor, evaluated HIC from July 2006 and March 2007. The team consisted of Mr Frank Samol as overall coordinator, Ms Lake Sagaris as co-evaluator for HIC bodies in Latin America, and Ms Wakio Seaforth as co-evaluator for HIC bodies in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The evaluation's objective was to facilitate a participatory reflection process on the mission, objectives, strategies, impacts and relevance of HIC as a global coalition of civil society organizations, focussing on HIC's international bodies, specifically the General Secretariat, the Regional Focal Points and the Thematic Networks. For this purpose, the evaluation had to assess HIC's internal organization and functioning, and its impacts on its external environment, with particular view to improvements in living and housing conditions of the poor. Based on past experience and lessons learnt, recommendations for HIC's future strategic focus, and for improvements of its organizational structure and internal working procedures were to be developed.

The process-oriented evaluation involved three main phases: first, development of the evaluation approach and appropriate tools (for a member survey, external and internal interviews, field visits, etc.). Second, an overview assessment of all international HIC bodies and field visits to selected regional centers and thematic networks (in Latin America, Francophone Africa and the Middle East / North Africa). In the concluding third phase, the evaluators reported their findings and workshopped them with a broader selection of HIC members during the World Social Forum 2007 in Nairobi, and subsequently with a core evaluation team appointed by HIC.

### **2. Overview Assessment of HIC**

Membership: In its long history since its establishment 30 years ago, HIC's membership has undergone many changes and developments. Initially founded by a just a few, mainly European NGOs and professionals, by 1998 it had grown to an estimated total of almost 900 members, most from the South.

During the 1990s, many new, globally active NGO networks and organizations emerged, attracting growing attention internationally. At the same time, internal conflicts deepened with changes to HIC's Presidency and the transfer of its General Secretariat from Mexico to Capetown, producing a serious crisis between 1999 and 2003. Since, then, to recover from almost complete collapse and the loss of many members, HIC has focused on internal consolidation and the rebuilding its membership base.

Although HIC's current membership officially stands at 360 members, the evaluation findings point to an active nucleus of around 60 to 110 members, who really take an interest in HIC and actively participate in the coalition, i.e. regularly attend General Assemblies, make use of their voting rights and pay their membership fees.

Overall Organizational Structure: Over the years, HIC's organizational structure evolved into a rather complex structure, consisting of regional bodies (Regional Focal Points - RFPs), global Thematic Networks (TNs) and several issue-specific Working Groups (WGs) in a matrix-like set-up. The HIC website describes seven Regional Focal Points, three Global Thematic Networks and five issue-specific Working Groups.

The RFPs, TNs and WGs define the operational bodies, which are supposed to run all programs, projects and other content-related activities (e.g. training courses).

HIC's main governing bodies are the General Assembly (GA) of its members and the Board. The Board is composed of elected representatives from the different HIC bodies (i.e. the RFPs and TNs), and the President, Vice-President and Treasurer elected by all HIC-members, plus representative(s) from Social Movements who are selected and appointed by the Board itself. Due to the limitations to convene all members of a global organization in a General Assembly, the Board makes the main strategic decisions for HIC.

The General Secretariat (GS), presently based in Santiago de Chile, and the Executive Committee (composed of the President, the Vice-President, the Treasurer, the General Secretary and 3 further Board Representatives) can be described as HIC's "executing bodies" at the global level. In practice, the General Secretary, who also represents HIC in all legal matters and in its formal interactions with the outside world, is responsible for monitoring and coordinating implementation and follow-up of coalition initiatives. The GS is also the only body within HIC that is dedicated exclusively to HIC's global activities.

Given its huge workload and responsibilities, the present GS can be assessed as very efficient and performance-oriented. Moreover, the personal initiative and commitment of the present General Secretary were highly instrumental in the efforts to rebuild HIC after its deep institutional crisis of the early 2000s.

The President is the other, high-profile HIC representative for the outside world. He represents HIC in high-profile international events and conferences, actively participates in negotiations and deliberations with international institutions, funding agencies and other external stakeholders, and is also intensively involved in interacting and communicating with HIC members. The President also plays an important role in defining strategy and approaches to key thematic issues and internal procedures.

Regional Bodies, Thematic Networks and Working Groups: The evaluation found that in practice HIC's official organizational set-up is not really functional and inconsistently implemented:



- Of the seven Regional Focal Points, only Latin America (HIC-AL) is effectively coordinating HIC activities in the region, while the others play a more ambiguous role:
  - The two Regional Focal Points in Africa (Anglophone and Francophone Africa) are hosted by local NGOs (the Mazingira Institute for Anglophone Africa and ENDA-RUP for Francophone Africa), which have their own agendas, programs and resources independent from HIC.
  - The Focal Point for the MENA region is more a regional sub-program of "Housing and Land Rights Network - HLRN" than a fully functional RFP.
  - The nature of the RFP for Asia is not really defined, since the "Asian Coalition on Housing Rights - ACHR", a separate and powerful regional organization, which officially stills features as HIC's Asian RFP, has defined itself as independent, although interested in cooperating with HIC, but not as the RFP.
  - The two northern Focal Points in Europe and North America are suffering from a lack of resources and difficulties to relate their activities to the general HIC agenda, which focuses on issues relevant for the South.
- The only functional cross-regional Thematic Network is HLRN, which has a strong presence in the MENA region and in South Asia, and to a lesser extent in Africa and Latin America. In contrast, the "Women and Shelter Network - WAS" and the "Housing and Sustainable Environment Network - HSEN" are limited to regional initiatives (Latin America in the case of WAS and Francophone West Africa in the case of HSEN).
- The different "Working Groups" seem to be largely dysfunctional. At the time of the evaluation, none of the working groups was really operational, and it was not possible to obtain more information on their actual composition and assigned tasks.

In summary, HIC-AL and HLRN can be assessed as HIC's "powerhouses", which are making HIC really visible in their activities and campaigns:

- HIC-AL with active members in most Latin American Countries and a coordinating office in Mexico is working on a wide range of issues around human rights, emergency services, and the social production of housing. It has a comfortable and attractive documentation centre, well-used by a wide range of students, local activists and others from all over the world. It also runs several major projects, thus providing ample opportunity for collective meetings, planning, coordinated actions and reflection at the regional level.
- HLRN with its two strong regional sub-programs in the Middle East and South Asia is implementing a wide range of projects, providing training and capacity building to the members, and is also trying to develop tools and instruments for supporting and facilitating member initiatives around housing and land-related issues. Moreover, HLRN has a strong presence in lobbying and advocacy for land and housing rights within the UN-system.

All other bodies do not run their own programs or projects under the HIC-umbrella, and are thus participating on a more ad-hoc or "event" basis in overall HIC activities.

### **3. Main Achievements and Impacts**

In its long history, HIC has contributed significantly to anchoring the rights to decent shelter, and of access to land and basic services in international resolutions and covenants, namely in interaction with UN human rights bodies and technical agencies like UNCHS-Habitat. It was instrumental in establishing or

promoting them as basic human rights. Moreover, by making public numerous cases of evictions, demolitions and displacement, and by bringing them to the attention of international human rights bodies, HIC has influenced both the formulation of legal standards and norms, and their translation into policies and conceptual approaches at the international level. As a consequence, HIC has achieved international recognition and continues to enjoy a good reputation.

In contrast to its achievements internationally, HIC's contributions to concrete improvements of housing and living conditions of the poor at the local level, and its influence on national policy formulation and concept development have been far more limited. Only in a few countries (e.g. Mexico, Colombia or the Philippines), have individual HIC members contributed to improvements in national housing policies or practices.

By promoting an exchange of information and experience, and by its training activities, HIC has also substantially contributed to strengthening the professional qualifications and capacities of its members, who in many countries, in particular in Latin America, are among the best-known and most capable civil society organizations in the field of habitat and housing.

Having been the only globally active coalition of NGOs, academic institutions and individual experts on housing issues for a long time, more recently, i.e. over the past 10-15 years, a broad spectrum of other global or regional civil society organizations working in a wide range of thematic issues and with different conceptual approaches has developed. Many of them began as HIC offshoots. HIC has therefore, largely unintentionally, helped to diversify and disseminate civil society initiatives in the housing sector.

Most of the above impacts were achieved in the first 25 years of HIC's existence. In the past five years, in contrast, HIC's impact on its external environment has been more limited and less visible, and its international influence seems to have suffered significantly. This most likely reflects the emergence of other globally active NGO networks and organizations, competing for attention at the international stage, and HIC's serious institutional crisis between 1999 to 2003.

#### **4. Conclusions and Recommendations**

Key challenges in a changing environment: Its future positioning and profile in an increasingly diverse environment of internationally active civil society organizations, who are working in similar fields, namely in advocacy for housing and land rights of the poor, and who are competing for attention and resources, must be considered a key challenge for HIC's further development and survival. So far, HIC has responded to this challenge by broadening its thematic scope and trying to address additional issues, e.g. the reconstruction of shelter demolished by natural catastrophes like the Tsunami, fighting privatization of public housing, or, even broader, trying to address the impacts of globalization on habitat and housing issues, or promoting the "Right to the City". However, with scarce resources and professional capacities to adequately address such complex issues, HIC runs the risk of diluting its activities and impacts. If it focuses too much on an "event-driven approach", restricted to achieving resolutions, declarations and statements at prominent international conferences or dates (such as International Habitat Day) without accomplishing tangible results on the ground, it risks losing both credibility and influence.

Moreover, HIC's rights-based approach focusing on the UN-system, was justified in the past, but today a substantial body of legal standards, policies and conceptual approaches are enshrined in international resolutions, covenants and policy papers. Today's main challenges therefore increasingly involve translat-

ing these international standards and resolutions into practice at the national and local level, requiring the skills and presence necessary to influence national legal standards and housing policies, and to get more involved in improving local legal practices, resource allocation and institutional development.

HIC should also address the fact that other international key actors and stakeholders outside the UN-system, such as the World Bank, the regional development banks and the EU, through their policies and funding practices have much more influence on national housing policies than the resource-strapped UN agencies.

Strategic profile and focus: The evaluators therefore recommend that HIC reviews its present very broad and diffuse range of activities, and its strong focus on UN-organizations at the international level, to identify key strategic priorities, which can be adequately addressed with the resources and capacities available, and which would help to communicate HIC's distinct profile amongst the increasingly diverse environment of civil society organizations functioning worldwide. It should also explore options for improved collaboration and synergies with other networks and organizations.

Strategic planning and impact orientation: To move away from the present largely "event-driven" mode of action and to develop a more strategic perspective, it is further recommended that HIC prepare a medium-term strategic plan (over 3-5 years, or the President's term of office). The development of such a plan would also be instrumental for improving communications and cohesion within HIC, and for future fund-raising initiatives.

For both purposes, it will be important to clearly define priorities for action, their expected outputs and impacts, and appropriate indicators for monitoring and evaluation.

Organizational structure and set-up: HIC's complex structure and the gap between its theoretical components and real practices (see above) needs to be confronted, since this affects both its ability to function well and the transparency and legitimacy of HIC's internal decision-making processes. It must be clarified and simplified to make it easier to communicate to members, potential funders and the general public.

The evaluators therefore strongly recommend a review of the present structure to bring it in line with reality. This review should take into account available resources and necessary costs (for example, for representatives to travel to key meetings) and should focus on simplifying the organization to focus on functioning regional bodies and on finding practical solutions for the largely inactive ones in Africa and Asia. Depending on real interest and contributions of members, the regional structures could be amended or complemented by thematic working groups.

In this context, and given the few genuinely global or cross-regional initiatives that HIC is currently involved in, leaders and members must analyze and define what kind of global coordinating functions are really needed, and how they could or should be shared between HIC's present only functional cross-regional structure, the Housing and Land Rights Network - HLRN, and the General Secretariat.

Internal planning and decision-making: In general, HIC's governance and internal decision-making procedures are poorly defined. In particular, HIC's constitution is rather ambiguous with regard to functions, responsibilities and powers of its different bodies, which seem to be mainly defined by a number of scattered by-laws and policy documents. Moreover, internal planning and decision-making seems to be done by a relatively small group of key actors and stake-

holders, often in a rather pragmatic way without necessarily following defined procedures and rules. Although there is no obvious indication of misuse, there is a clear lack of transparency and clarity, which leaves HIC vulnerable to questioning and even crises, as events in the early 2000s revealed.

The evaluators therefore recommend streamlining the constitution, the main by-laws and other procedural rules in one single document, which clarifies and clearly communicates HIC's internal governance procedures.

We also recommend that based on overall strategic planning (see above), that HIC introduce annual coordinated and consolidated annual work plans / operational plans for all global and/or cross-regional activities, which include clearly defined expected outputs that can serve as the basis for internal monitoring and evaluation. These should be complemented by regular annual reports to the membership, including consolidated financial reports and statements.

Membership: At present, membership in HIC means neither real commitment nor tangible benefits. As a result, most members do not actively participate in joint initiatives, but rather remain silent as only nominal members.

It is therefore recommended to continue HIC's efforts to consolidate and activate its membership, focusing on quality over quantity, a strategy that would optimize resource use and maximize results. It will be particularly important to establish clear and transparent rules for members' participation in voting and decision-making processes through-out all of HIC's bodies, and the corresponding spaces for deliberation, be they virtual (via electronic means) or tangible (local, national and, less often, international, meetings). For this purpose, both members' commitments and obligations, and their rights and benefits should be clearly defined and communicated. All members should participate in formulating and receive a guide to participation in HIC that outlines their rights and responsibilities.

At the same time, to improve members' sense of ownership of HIC and to move it toward becoming a more membership-based organization, we recommend exploring options for including tangible member contributions, either in kind or financial, in all major program or project activities at regional or global levels. These contributions can be encouraged by requiring budgeting for joint activities as a condition for membership, and by encouraging members to include resources for joint activities in their applications to external funders.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background and Context

Habitat International Coalition is an independent, non-profit coalition of more than 300<sup>1</sup> organizations and individuals, which has been working in the area of housing and human settlements for 30 years. The Coalition is based on its worldwide membership and the fact that it brings together a range of civil society groups. HIC aims to unite civil society and governments in a shared commitment to ensure secure housing and a livable planet for all. These efforts are based on advocacy for the urban poor, on advocacy for the respect, guarantee and fulfillment of Housing Rights, on solidarity, networking and popular mobilization.

Since 1984, the Coalition is registered as an Association at the Chamber of Commerce of The Hague, and thus operates as an NGO based in the Netherlands.

The Coalition has a General Secretariat in Santiago (Chile), and seven Regional Focal Points (five in the South, i.e. in Asia, Latin America and Africa and two in the North, Europe and North America), which coordinate projects, communications, exchanges, campaigns and membership management. Much of the Coalition's work is on particular themes and organized by groups or networks – such as the Housing and Land Rights Network, the Women and Shelter Network, the Habitat and Sustainable Environment Network, the Working Group on Globalization and Privatization of Habitat and groups on Social Production of Habitat and the charter to the Right to the City.

Throughout its lifetime HIC has worked together with diverse agencies that have been supporting its international, regional and thematic programmes, i.e. Misereor, Cordaid, EED, Novib, InWent, *Fondation Charles Léopold Meyer pour le Progrès de l'Homme* (FPH). Due to the challenges of a new phase of HIC and the election of a new President (for the period 2007 - 2011) an evaluation was seen as a positive means to analyze the strategy, structure and operative levels serving for a growing self awareness and confidence of HIC, that could enhance the performance of the network and attract new members and potential donors.

The evaluation had been proposed by Habitat International Coalition to MISEREOR as one of its most important funders as an important input for HIC's own strategic planning and organizational development. It was realized by a team of three external evaluators who had been jointly selected by HIC and MISEREOR.

The team comprised Mr Frank Samol as overall coordinator, Ms Lake Sagaris as co-evaluator for HIC bodies in Latin America and Ms Wakio Seaforth as co-evaluator for HIC bodies in Sub-Saharan Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> It is very difficult to establish accurate information on HIC's membership. Its own register varies between 325 and 359 active members, while the findings of the evaluation point at a much smaller number of active members (see also 2.1.2)

The team worked in close coordination and collaboration with MISEREOR and a HIC Evaluation Core Team (ECT) established by the HIC Board at the World Urban Forum 3 in Vancouver in June 2007.

## 1.2 Overall Objectives of the Evaluation and TOR

The evaluation was conceived to facilitate a participatory reflection process on the mission, objectives, strategies, impacts and relevance of HIC as a global coalition of civil society organizations, focussing on HIC's international bodies as the General Secretariat, the Regional Focal Points and the Thematic Networks.

An analysis of the main objectives, results and activities of HIC's international bodies, as well as a reflection on their structural and operative functioning shall help to identify the coalition's strengths and weaknesses as well as the main lessons learned from HIC's long-standing experience.

This analysis and an assessment of the overall global political and economic framework conditions for HIC's activities shall be used to identify future challenges at the strategic, organizational and operational level.

Based on the lessons learned from past experience and the identification of future challenges, conclusions and recommendations for HIC's future strategic focus, and for enhancing its organizational structures, core activities and operations were to be developed.

## 1.3 Evaluation Approach and Methodology

To achieve its objectives, the evaluation had to address both internal and external aspects of HIC's activities and actions, and develop corresponding conclusions and recommendations:

- With a view to HIC's internal structures and functioning, the evaluation had to assess the benefits of HIC's global and regional activities for its members and partners. In doing this, it was supposed to help to deepen the awareness and confidence amongst Coalition members with regard to the value-added of HIC's international bodies.

For this purpose, the evaluation had to analyze the interaction and collaboration between the different international bodies themselves, and between the international bodies and the individual members.

- With a view to HIC's impacts on its external environment, it had to assess HIC's role and contributions for improving the living conditions of the urban poor, for the defense of housing rights and the advancement of housing solutions for and by the poor, thus clarifying the significance and relevance of a global coalition on habitat issues.

In this context, the evaluation was supposed to assess the interaction and cooperation of HIC's international bodies with external actors and stake holders, namely with UN-system i.e. UN-Habitat, Council of Human Rights, UNIFEM, UNESCO, PNUD, ECLAC and CSD, with partners of World Social Forum, with multilateral donor agencies (World Bank, ADB, IDB) and other NGO networks and coalitions.

Moreover, the evaluation had to assess HIC's role and contributions in influencing housing and land rights policies and issues at national level i.e. in individual countries.

With a view to ensuring a maximum of process-orientation and ownership on the side of HIC, the evaluation was done in 3 main phases, thus allowing for ample coordination and discussion of intermediate results and findings.

- Phase 1 involved the development and coordination of the overall evaluation concept, and of tools and procedures to be used in the different steps of analysis (e.g. detailing of TOR for the evaluators and work plans, questionnaires for surveys of internal and external stake holders, formats for information collection, generic programs for coordination workshops, etc.). The approach developed in this stage between June and September 2007 was coordinated between the HIC ECT, MISEREOR and the external evaluators in a joint workshop in Aachen, Germany on 26 September 2006.
- Phase 2 comprised three main steps which were largely conducted between October 2006 and January 2007:
  - an overview assessment of the Coalition focussing on HIC's internal set-up, functioning and procedures, including all Regional Focal Points and Thematic Networks based on desk studies and analysis of documents, a survey of selected members, and interviews and meetings with selected members;
  - an assessment of HIC's impact on the global environment focusing on HIC's interaction at international level based on a survey of external stake holders and HIC partners, and on more in-depths interviews with a few selected key stake holders;
  - a more detailed assessment of selected HIC bodies, i.e. HIC Latin America (HIC-AL), HIC Francophone Africa (HIC-AF) and the global Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN) based on field visits to the office seats of the bodies to be analyzed (Mexico City, Dakar and Cairo), and on discussions and workshops with members of the selected bodies from other countries and regions.
- Phase 3 involved the following main steps, which were performed between January 2007 and April 2007:
  - a presentation, discussion and coordination of preliminary findings of evaluation phase 2 at the WSF in Nairobi;
  - an analysis of the results of the complete membership survey;
  - the preparation of an integrated evaluation report outlining the main conclusions and recommendations;
  - a final presentation and coordination of evaluation results at a workshop in Aachen on 21 March 2007;
  - the integration of the workshop results into the final evaluation report.

## 2. General Overview Assessment of HIC

### 2.1 Overall Structure and Characteristics of HIC

#### 2.1.1 Historic Background and Development

Established 30 years ago at the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in Vancouver in 1976, HIC has undergone many changes and developments in its long history. From a committee of NGOs involved in the preparation of the first UN-Habitat conference over a „Habitat International Council“ largely dominated by NGOs and Academics from the North it has grown into its present form of a global coalition with a rather diverse membership, the majority of them from the South.

Not surprisingly in such a long history, HIC has also experienced major crises and problems. Most recently and seriously, in the early years of the new millenium (2000-2003), internal conflicts around the move of the General Secretariat from Mexico City to Cape Town in South Africa and efforts to expand from its old (previous 1987) mainly shelter-oriented towards a more comprehensive framework for rights approach, gendered focus and sustainable development almost led to a complete collapse of the organization accompanied by a heavy loss of members.

With the selection of a new General Secretary and the transfer of the Secretariat to Santiago, Chile in late 2003, HIC has been virtually „re-started“. Subsequently, it has undertaken considerable efforts both to consolidate its organizational structures and procedures, to rekindle membership, to attract new members and to build new partnerships with other international networks, especially in the context of the World Social Forums (WSF) .

#### 2.1.2 Membership

HIC's membership had significantly grown over time from only a few, mainly European NGOs in the beginning in 1976 to an estimated total number of almost 900 members as defined by a membership poll in 1998.<sup>2</sup>

However, in practice large part of the membership was usually "silent", and only a small part of the members really actively participated in HIC. According to figures provided by the GS, about 130 members were defined as being active after overcoming HIC's organizational crisis in 2004.

With the „restart“ of HIC, it was thus tried to define membership in a more operational and pragmatic way, distinguishing between „active“ and „inactive“ members. In addition, a distinction is being made between members representing organizations, groups or movements), and individual members who are given the status of „friends“.

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<sup>2</sup> Most information in this section is taken from the HIC-document „Characterization of Membership - Quantative Analysis“, 2006



Members, in contrast to friends, have the right to vote in elections to HIC bodies (Board, President and the General Assembly) provided they have paid their membership dues and are „active“. Activeness is defined as having been in „direct contact with HIC (through letter, mail, publication, phone call, visits and attendance in events or conferences), with its Regional Focal Point, the GS or Thematic Network“<sup>3</sup> within a calendar year.

However, this concept of membership and voting rights seems to be rather ambiguous, since the criteria for assessing the „activeness“ of a member are dealt with in a rather flexible way: It is up to the Focal Point or Thematic Network to define whether they vouch for a member's status, and they are held responsible for a member's financial obligations to the GS. In a move to establish clearer criteria, it was decided recently, at the Board meeting in Vancouver in June 2006, that the GS reviews and approves all new membership applications. Only in case of doubts or other concerns, the RFP or TN is consulted.

Moreover, the criterion of paying membership fees to be entitled to vote is not consistently followed-up, in favor of a more on activity-based membership, since only few members actually pay their fees. This is a source of contention with new members from the United States and elsewhere, who are accustomed to building strong membership-based organizations based on fees.

Based on this definition, presently (in 2006) 359 active members and 65 friends have been registered by the GS. After a steep decline of membership in the wake of the crisis between 2000 and 2003, large numbers of new members could be enlisted in 2004 (133 new members) and 2005 (186 new members)<sup>4</sup>.

However, a preliminary assessment based on the evaluation findings so far raises some doubts with regard to this definition of active membership:

- The participation of members in HIC General Assemblies in the past 3 years has remained somehow stable (ranging from 70 to 88 members participating, and 27 to 42 with a right to vote).
- In total, 107 members participated in the last round of elections for RFPs and TNs (if only RFPs are taken into consideration 81 members<sup>5</sup>).
- A total of 74 members and friends responded to the internal membership survey.

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<sup>3</sup> HIC-document „Characterization of Membership - Quantative Analysis“, 2006, p.2

<sup>4</sup> There is some inconsistency in the figures provided by HIC: starting with 132 active members in 2003, there should have been 451 active members in 2006, not 351 as indicated. The GS explains this difference with the "dynamic character of membership that is not based on mathematic logic. Moreover, the membership database distinguishes between "active", "passive" and "inactive" members.

<sup>5</sup> Does not include figures for Asia and Francophone Africa, which are not available.

- The total number of members paying their membership dues has decreased over the past years: from 56 members in 2003 to only 32 in 2006.

All these figures <sup>6</sup> point more to a nucleus of around 60 to 110 members, who really take an interest in HIC and actively participate in the coalition. This was also confirmed by the personal interviews held in the context of evaluation phase 2 with selected HIC members in Egypt and Palestine, who are registered as active in the GS database: A considerable share of them (around 30%) stated only loose contacts to HIC and did not regularly participate in elections or other HIC activities.

### 2.1.3 Organizational Structure

HIC has adopted a rather complex structure overlaying a regional organization (Regional Focal Points -RFPs) with global Thematic Networks (TNs) and a number of additional thematic Working Groups (WGs) in a matrix-like set-up. According to HIC's presentation on its overall website it presently comprises 7 Regional Focal Points, 3 Global Thematic Networks and 5 Thematic Working Groups.

The RFPs, TNs and WGs define the operational bodies, which basically run all programs, projects and other content-related activities (e.g. training courses). Social movements<sup>7</sup>, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions and individuals are all represented among the HIC membership, a considerable triumph in and of itself. At the same time, any question about what is HIC, or how is HIC structured, tends to receive the answer, "it's complicated", and while this may be understandable, it is not conducive to understanding or an easily recognizable system of democratic governance.

While members of a TN would usually be also members of a Regional Focal Point (according to their location) and thus have voting rights in Board elections both as RFP and TN member, this is not necessarily the case for RFP members unless a RFP member is also affiliated to a TN with resulting double voting rights.

HIC's main governing bodies are the General Assembly, which is open to the General Public, but specifically to members and friends (while voting rights are reserved to those who have paid membership fees), and the Board, which is composed of elected representatives from the different HIC bodies, the President, Vice-President and Treasurer, and of representatives of Social Movements who are appointed by the other HIC Board members. While the President is elected by the members, the

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<sup>6</sup> Most of these figures are based on HIC's own written documentation, mainly the GS's Annual Report 2006 and the progress reports on the MISEREOR funded-project "Communicational Strategy Empowering HIC Regional Bodies". However, according to the comments of the GS on the draft evaluation report, the voter turn-out for the last Board elections was 192 members. Correspondingly, the GS assesses 64 to 192 members as HIC's active core.

<sup>7</sup> Social movements are defined by HIC emergent and local expressions of civil society, which are seldom structured in global organizations. HIC shares the efforts of the WSF to articulate their expressions.

Vice-President, Treasurer and General Secretary are appointed by the Board<sup>8</sup>.

To facilitate implementation, follow-up and coordination of the coalition's activities and initiatives, the General Secretariat and the Executive Committee can be described as HIC's „executing bodies“ at global level.

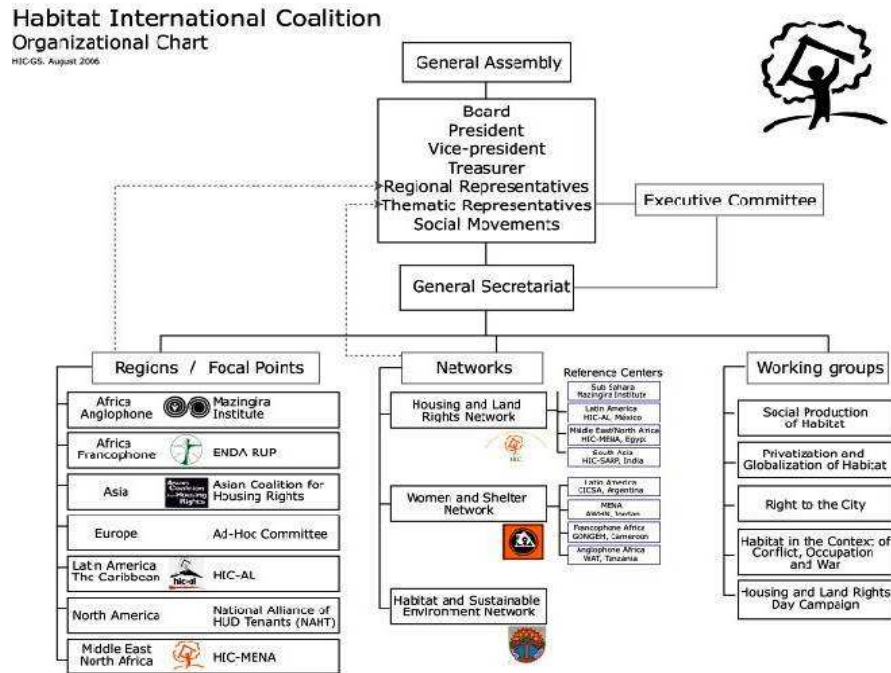


Figure 1: HIC Organizational Chart. HIC-GS, August 2006. (From *Characterization of HIC Membership, Quantitative Analysis*, 18-VIII-06).

## 2.2 Governing Bodies

### 2.2.1 General Assembly

The nature of the General Assembly as a governing body is not specified very clearly by HIC's constitution. Article 12 of the Constitution points out two basic retrospective supervisory functions only:

- the approval of annual reports and financial statements prepared by the Board;
- the appointment of auditors for verifying the financial statements submitted by the Board and the Treasurer.

Otherwise the constitution only refers to voting rights of the members of the General Assembly, and its right to change the constitution. In particular, no reference at all is made to a role of the General Assembly to discuss and decide on future strategic issues, work plans or the allocation of resources.<sup>9</sup> In general, it is surprisingly left very open in the constitution

<sup>8</sup> The Vice-President and the Treasurer are selected and appointed from the circle of elected Board members, while the General Secretary can also be selected and appointed externally.

<sup>9</sup> Only implicitly, in article 10 (related to the Board), it is stated that the Board should manage HIC's affairs in accordance with the guidelines of the General Assembly.

where in the different bodies such strategic decision should actually been taken and how they should be communicated to the membership.

The General Assembly should convene at least once a year to comply with the above functions. This schedule seems to be generally followed, usually making use of prominent international events, which would be attended by a number of HIC members (such as World Social Forums or World Urban Forums). However, the constitutional functions/stipulations do not seem to be applied consistently:

- According to the minutes of General Assemblies consulted, the last voting on an annual report and financial statement (for the year 2004) took place in the General Assembly in Cairo in September 2005.
- No such reporting or voting took place at the GA in Vancouver in June 2006. The only vote was on approving the minutes of the past assembly in Cairo.
- Albeit foreseeably the only General Assembly in 2007, the GA in Nairobi in January was declared an "irregular" GA without the need to comply with reporting requirements. As there is no other major international event suitable to convene a GA in 2007<sup>10</sup>, it was envisaged that the next "regular" GA could probably only be held in 2008.

It thus seems that there will be no formal reporting and accounting for the years 2005 and 2006.

The functioning of GAs is also hindered by generally low member participation: Since 2003 attendance of members with voting rights has decreased from a max. of 42 (in Barcelona 2004: although the minutes do not state the members with voting rights) to 27 in Vancouver in 2006<sup>11</sup>.

Moreover, due to the fact that they are linked to challenging international events, which require a lot of attention and involvement of participating HIC members, GAs tend to take place under extreme time pressure. There is therefore little room and time for real strategic and content-related discussion/discourse.

In practice, HIC's GA thus seems to be more informal forum for an exchange of views and opinions than a real decision-taking and supervising body.

### 2.2.2 Board

Apart from the general statement that the Board manages the affairs of the Association in accordance with the guidelines of the General Assembly, the Constitution's section on the Board (art. 8 to 10) does not really specify its functions and responsibilities. All other stipulations in this section basically relate to the Board's composition, election procedures

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<sup>10</sup> There will be no WSF in 2008, and the next bi-annual WUF will only be held in June 2008 in Nanjing in China.

<sup>11</sup> To a large extent this must probably be attributed to general difficulties to finance travel costs, but it could also be an indicator for lacking interest of the majority of HIC members. This might be confirmed by the obviously decreasing willingness to pay membership dues and a "hard core" of the same members usually attending the GA as indicated by the list of speakers of the various minutes of assemblies.

and meeting schedules. Like for the General Assembly, the key functions of the Board are defined by articles related to other bodies, namely:

- designating members of the Executive Committee from the elected Board Members (art. 11 on the Executive Committee);
- the right to convene General Assemblies when deemed necessary (art. 13 on the GA);
- appointing and dismissing the General Secretary, supervising the performance of the General Secretary, and decide on the seat of the Secretariat (art. 16 on the GA);
- approving the establishment of Committees, and the TOR and plans of actions of Committees.(art. 19).

The Constitution does not make any reference to what extent the above Board decisions are subject to approval by the General Assembly. With this left open, and election procedures of Regional Focal Points and Committees to the Board to be approved by the Board itself, it can be assessed as both the main governing and managing body, where most important strategic decisions for HIC are taken.

Like the General Assembly, the Board's functioning is hampered by the difficulties to meet physically and communicate across continents and time zones. With a few exceptions only, the Board usually convenes on the same occasions as the General Assembly, i.e. at important international events, adding to the time pressure and work load of the participants.

Based on observations in Board meetings attended and in the interaction with Board members over the evaluation process, it appears that the main workload is on just a few key persons (8-12 Board members out of 15 Board members and 13 alternates), who really follow-up decisions taken in Board meetings and communicate regularly with each other<sup>12</sup>.

### 2.2.3 President

The Constitution does not contain a special article on the Presidency, which is a honorary position. It only states that the President is a Member of the Board and the Executive Committee, and that he chairs the meetings of the Board, the Executive Committee and the General Assembly (art. 8,11 and 15). In particular, there is no reference to a function of representing HIC externally. This instead seems to be formally assigned to the General Secretary who, according to the Constitution, "represents the Association in legal and other matters" (art. 16).

In practice, however, the President seems to be the most visible representative of HIC to the outside world. He represents HIC in high-profile international events and conferences, actively participates in negotiations and deliberations with international institutions, funding agencies and other external stakeholders, and is also intensively involved in the interaction and communication with the HIC membership. Moreover, the

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<sup>12</sup> There also seem to be more informal ways of collaboration and discourse on strategic issues for HIC, namely with the HRLN Directors and some Regional Focal Point Coordinators, who are not actual Board members.

President seems to have an important role in providing strategic orientation on key issues like or on internal procedures.

To what extent these functions are expected by the President or are left to his own discretion and understanding of the office remains unclear from the available documentation. It seems, however, that all Presidents since 1987 have had a similar understanding of their office. Moreover, all Presidents were highly acknowledged professionals with an outstanding international reputation.

In particular, the present President, Enrique Ortíz, who had been General Secretary for more than 10 years from 1988 to 1999 and was elected President in 2003, has left his mark on the organization with important conceptual inputs, e.g. on the "Right to the City" or the "Social Production of Habitat". Moreover, he was instrumental in rebuilding HIC after its deep institutional crisis at the beginning of the new millennium.

### 2.3 Executive Bodies

#### 2.3.1 General Secretariat / General Secretary

HIC's main coordinating and executive body is the General Secretariat, which, in the person of the General Secretary, also represents HIC in all legal matters and in its formal interaction with the outside world.

The General Secretary is responsible for HIC's day-to-day operations and accountable to the Board, which also appoints (and dismisses) the General Secretary.

In practice, the General Secretary and her small professional team in Santiago de Chile seem to be the main driving force of HIC's present scope of activities, with some special support from the HLRN Global Program Office in Cairo and HIC Latin America (HIC-AL) in Mexico City.

Moreover, the General Secretariat also has a key role in mobilizing the membership, and to a large extent also in coordinating the cooperation and interaction of the different HIC bodies and the membership. It also seems to be the only body within HIC that is dedicated exclusively to HIC activities at global level.

Given its huge workload and responsibilities, the GS works can be assessed as very efficient and performance-oriented. The personal initiative and commitment of Ana Sugranyes as GS since 2003 were highly instrumental in the efforts to rebuild HIC after its deep institutional crisis of the early 2000s.

#### 2.3.2 Executive Committee

According to HIC's Constitution, the Executive Committee (EC) is supposed to be the second main operational structure, which is composed by the President, the Vice-President, the Treasurer, the General Secretary and 3 other Board Representatives seconded by the Board. It would be responsible for following-up the principal decisions of the Board, and for providing guidance to the GS between meetings of the Board.

In practice, however, the main guidance between Board meetings seems to be provided by the GS, who, to a large extent, seems to set and drive the HIC Agenda.<sup>13</sup>

To what extent the EC is really functional and a viable HIC body is thus difficult to assess. Based on observations during the evaluation process, working procedures between Board meetings seem to be rather flexible, involving other Board members more according to needs, interests and feed-back than within a clearly defined structure. This is also underlined by the fact that the EC is not being presented as a special HIC structure on HIC's main website<sup>14</sup>.

## 2.4 Regional Focal Points in the South

### 2.4.1 HIC Latin America

HIC-AL is one of the powerhouses of the international organization, with active members in Mexico (country level); staff working on human rights, emergency services, and the social production of housing; a comfortable and attractive documentation centre, which appears to be well-used by a wide range of students, local activists and others from all over the world; and several major projects, which have afforded ample opportunity for collective meetings, planning, coordinated actions and reflection, necessities for any organization of this nature.

Several lessons or strengths that can be summarized from HIC-AL's experience:

- HIC-AL seems to be the only Regional Focal Point, which really serves as a regional-level coordinator. It has its own office and personal resources, national and regional projects that bring together HIC members from different countries, and is viewed as a partner by UN and other regional bodies of relevance, participating actively in their events in other cities.
- The organization has a modest office and documentation centre in Mexico city, staffed by administrative, research and other staff, which received a wide range of visitors interested in resources, serves as a centre for meetings, and generally coordinates HIC and HIC member activities in the city, the country and the region.
- As such, HIC-AL seems to represent HIC at its best, with far-reaching activities at different scales (local, regional, nation, continental, international), with members working together toward common objectives and often common activities.
- Its members are on the whole long-standing (in the Mexico workshop, only one of the twelve people present was a new member, while in Chile all four members were long-standing HIC members), with a strong sense of identification with HIC as a locally-informed, interna-

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<sup>13</sup> However, in its self-perception, the GS's role is more seen in channelling the HIC Agenda defined by the members into action, provided that the starting point was a member need or suggestion. The "driving" should always be done by the membership.

<sup>14</sup> In the GS's practical day-to-day work, the EC is seen as a necessary management control instance. It is not really considered a formal structure, as it mainly brings together HIC's executive bodies to communicate and strategize the HIC Agenda, and to revise it, if needed.

tionally connected body that both strengthened their immediate work (at the local level, resolving housing problems, or at the national level, lobbying for better housing legislation), at the same time as it connected them to a wider vision, thanks to its experience in other countries within Latin America and around the world. Nonetheless, fee payment is a problem and not all members are paid up.

- HIC-AL seems to have achieved a good balance of claiming rights, documenting and denouncing violations, on one hand, and working on hands-on solutions and concrete proposals, on the other. In this region, HIC's theoretical work on the "social production of habitat" has found concrete expression in recognition, on the part of organizations and some governments, of the importance of people and communities in resolving not only housing, but community and territorial issues.
- In at least some countries and internationally, governmental and international agency partners viewed HIC-AL's presence as a substantial contribution to their work, including HIC representatives in key commissions and working closely with them on follow-up and implementation. Enrique Ortiz's presentation to the meeting of housing ministers in Montevideo (October 2006) was significant, as he was the only civil society representative there.
- HIC-AL has a researcher working extensively on human rights issues in Latin America, who coordinates with the Human and Land Rights Network.

*(A more detailed assessment of HIC-AL is presented in the separate annex 1a.)*

#### 2.4.2 HIC Francophone Africa - AF<sup>15</sup>

Background and description: HIC in Francophone Africa is hosted by ENDA RUP (Relay for Participatory Urban Development), in Dakar, Senegal. ENDA RUP is part of ENDA *Tiers Monde* (Third World Environment and Development)<sup>16</sup>, an international NGO, which is a member of several national and regional networks. It works with various actors, including local bodies, CBOs and other NGOs at the local, regional and international level. It also sources its own funding to implement its programs at all levels. ENDA RUP states that its activities stem from a "social demand," whether from the people themselves, from local authorities, etc., and have a common objective of putting in place innovative processes for more efficient and concrete management of cities, but with different entry points. These various activities are also linked—in varying degrees—from conception to implementation. ENDA RUP's principal activities include PADE (Urban Environment Sustainable Improvement Process), the Urban Observatories (implemented in six French-

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<sup>15</sup> N.B. : This section also includes some references to HIC-HSEN. This is because much of the activity for HIC-HSEN appears to be at the sub-regional level and much of the discussion of regional activities also referred to HSEN. For general information, see <http://www.hsen-hic.net/> (site temporarily blocked/closed); see also ENDA RUP – Relais Pour le Développement Urbain Participe [http://rup.enda.sn/index\\_fr.html](http://rup.enda.sn/index_fr.html); OVAf - Les Observatoires des Villes et Villages D'Afrique <http://www.ovaf.net/>

<sup>16</sup> The report refers mainly to ENDA-RUP, which serves as the regional focal point for HIC-AF.



speaking countries in Africa at the national and local level with support from UN-HABITAT), Local Agenda 21 (with local authorities), Health, Hygiene, Nutrition, Women and Environment (training for young women in particular); Women and Habitat (social production of housing and access to financing for women working in the urban informal sector) and IMAP (Instruments and Models for Participatory Planning). Most of these activities (except the Urban Observatories) seem to be localized to the Dakar area (Rufisque).

In addition to its functions as regional office of ENDA *Tiers Monde*, ENDA RUP also houses the focal point for HIC for francophone Africa. Its role is to coordinate HIC's activities and to push forward HIC's objectives through advocacy at the level of decision-makers, for which ENDA works with NGOs who are members of HIC or who, not being members of HIC are active on the themes developed by HIC.

Campaigns, Advocacy and Other Core Activities: ENDA RUP does not function exclusively under the HIC umbrella (unlike HIC-AL or HIC-MENA), but rather houses the focal point for HIC activities at the sub-regional level, and in accordance with activities carried out within the sub-region (SPH, local urban observatories, etc.) ENDA RUP serves as the focal point for HIC in two respects, namely as the regional focal point for HIC-AF and as the global focal point for HIC-HSEN. ENDA RUP also serves as the regional partner institution and regional center for two UN-HABITAT programmes, namely, the Global Urban Observatory (GUO) and the Best Practices and Local Leadership program respectively. With respect to the latter two programmes, there appears to be some overlap, where for example, the local observatories, are also conceptualized as HSEN projects at least at the sub-regional level. Nevertheless, there is no mention of HIC or HSEN in the final project reports provided for the period 2004-2006 and the project under review included countries where HIC does not even have members (e.g., Cape Verde, Djibouti, Mauritania)<sup>17</sup>. There is also no mention of HIC on the local observatories website at <http://www.ovaf.net>. The website for ENDA RUP contains a reference and link to HIC, but the link is outdated. The website also contains a link to HSEN, whose website is currently unavailable, and references to HSEN appear to be out of date as well.

Implementation of HIC global agenda: ENDA RUP's work on the local urban observatories relates closely to monitoring of international commitments on Habitat II and Local Agenda 21 from a rights-based approach. The strategic approach for HSEN (as elaborated in documentation presented during the field visit) also seeks to "share the African experience on local, national and international observatories." Other areas mentioned in the strategic approach include improving access to water sanitation and waste management through institutional development and

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<sup>17</sup> See Final Project Audit Report for Local Development Observatories, Capacity-Building for Implementation and Evaluation of Urban Poverty Reduction Policies in Africa (self-translation – Rapport Final Audit Project: Renforcement des Capacites Pour l'Elaboration, La Mise en Oeuvre et L'Evaluation des Politiques Urbaines de Reduction de la Pauvrete en Afrique) – Sept 2004-June 2006 (funded by SIDA). The report also covered some activities in Kenya. The point being made here is that the project does not appear on its face to be a HIC-related project, at least not exclusively.

new social relationships with key actors; and integrating the scope of action in disaster mitigation by involving social actors in local governance and prevention. It is not clear what the status of HSEN at the global level is. It appears to be active mainly at the sub-regional (i.e., francophone Africa) and national levels in relation to the local urban observatories. It is not, however, clear what the relationship of the urban observatories is to HIC and the global HIC agenda. The documentation provided makes few if any references to HIC, but also seems to be closely linked to UN-HABITAT's global campaigns on secure tenure and good governance<sup>18</sup>.

Support from HIC international bodies: The responses to the membership questionnaire indicated that support from HIC international bodies was instrumental in establishing or improving national policies on housing and land rights in relation to the Global WASH Forum (Dakar, 2004) and Housing and Land Rights Day activities in Dakar in the same year. It was also stated that HIC support was instrumental for OVAF in 2002 and 2005.

Collaboration with HIC international bodies: ENDA RUP has hosted training on human rights both within the regional context and within the context of HSEN. ENDA RUP also contributes perspectives to HLRN. There was also some mention of human rights sensitization activities in Mali under the auspices of HIC-HLRN<sup>19</sup>. The link from the HLRN website for sub-saharan Africa goes directly to the Mazingira website, on which there is no reference to HIC. There is also no reference to HIC activities in the region on the ENDA website.

Development of membership<sup>20</sup>: Some questions remain regarding membership within HIC-AF. Both HIC-AF and HIC-HSEN include members registered on the website, as well as others who are not officially registered. This includes Jocelyn Ahoga (DCAM-Benin) and Roy Bunker (Barefoot College) who have not been officially registered as members. Nevertheless, Jocelyn Ahoga participated as a member during the evaluation workshop in Dakar. Roy Bunker was also listed as a regional focal point/reference person for HSEN in Asia. However, he did not respond to the notice of the evaluation, nor did he respond to the questionnaire. Most members contacted for follow-up did not respond to requests to participate, and in many cases, e-mail messages were returned as undeliverable. In addition, responses to the questionnaire were extremely low from the region as a whole (a total of 7 members, including the 4 who were present at the evaluation workshop and 2 HIC Board members).

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<sup>18</sup> N.B.: one HIC member in an interview referred to the UN-HABITAT program on secure tenure as a "watering down" of HIC's achievement in standard-setting on housing rights.

<sup>19</sup> N.B.: There was no response to the question regarding HLRN activities in the region, therefore, I am summarizing based on my own recollection.

<sup>20</sup> "In the HIC Constitution, only non-profit structures can be members of HIC. Therefore, we try at the level of Francophone Africa to respect this rule. It is for this reason that on the list, it is not only NGOs and CBOs that are HIC members. All the structures mentioned on the list are NGOs. The Economic Interest Group (GIE), which are small enterprises are not part of HIC-AF. As is common, the CBOs generally work at the local and national level."

Although there are some programs and projects managed by ENDA RUP that potentially bring together different HIC members within the region, it is not clear how many HIC members participate in these activities. ENDA RUP runs several programs and activities and (at least some) members within the region appear to be active and in fairly regular contact with the RFP. The field visit to Dakar was in fact timed to coincide with an event hosted by ENDA RUP, which included several organizations from the sub-region, and which was also attended by some HIC members. Nevertheless, only 5 members attended the meeting and only 4 participated in the evaluation workshop.

Member participation in HIC-AF bodies and use of HIC-AF products: In relation to membership participation in general, there appears to be a fair amount of participation and use of products at the sub-regional level in terms of contact with members by the RFP and participation in listservs. However, it is not clear that members regularly use HIC products in a broader sense. Participation in general seems to be limited to a few active members on a regular basis, however, there seems to be additional activity around certain HIC events, including sub-regional elections and calls for participation in regional and international conferences. (*A more detailed assessment of HIC-AF is presented in the separate annex 1b.*)

#### 2.4.3 HIC Anglophone Africa - AA

Background and description: The regional focal point for HIC in Anglophone Africa is hosted by Mazingira Institute, an NGO with a national, regional and international profile both within and outside HIC. Of the programs that do not fall exclusively under the HIC umbrella, SINA (Settlements Information Network Africa) is perhaps the most notable<sup>21</sup>.

SINA nonetheless serves as a means of dissemination of HIC activities (via the SINA newsletter) to membership within the region<sup>22</sup>. SINA also provides a forum for activities in which HIC members can and do participate (e.g., workshops hosted by SINA and follow-on activities such as human rights training in collaboration with HLRN). In addition to workshops and training activities, Mazingira also manages HIC sub-regional elections, including covering costs for logistical support (e.g., mailing).

HIC does not provide funding for regional focal points except in the case where funding is provided for project-related activities (e.g., SPH). Therefore, RFPs have to spend their own resources or raise funds to finance HIC-related activities. Mazingira has nonetheless received some

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<sup>21</sup> SINA promotes the sharing of experiences and information among those working towards improving the quality of life and the living environment of people- particularly the poor- in the villages, towns and cities in Africa. SINA also promotes awareness and recognition of the human right to housing and campaigns against forced eviction of people.

SINA network links several hundred members in African countries and outside Africa. The members are engaged in a wide range of activities such as self-help construction, health, nutrition, employment projects and so on. If your work has something to do with improving human settlements through community self-help, you may wish to join SINA. In this way you can regularly exchange ideas with other people doing the same kind of work, through exchange visits and a newsletters. Source: <http://www.mazinst.org/sinahomepage.htm>

<sup>22</sup> The SINA newsletter is distributed to SINA members via regular mail and is also available online on the Mazingira website. It was not possible to access the newsletter online (download error). The Mazingira website has also not been updated.

funding at various times to host training events and provide accommodation for participants (e.g., HLRN training)

Membership Development: Information on membership in the region, including updating of the membership database, communication and coordination with membership, particularly new members, and member participation, was difficult to obtain. The lists provided by the regional focal point did not fully coincide with the list provided on the HIC website. In addition, some contact information was out of date, therefore, it remains unclear what the status is of current membership within the region. Most of the members who participated in the evaluation survey (a total of 10 members) indicated that they had not had any contact with the regional focal point and that most if not all contact was via HIC-GS or with the focal point for the thematic network, where applicable. Information regarding previous elections was also difficult to obtain, although it is presumably housed with the electoral committee, whose contact person in Nairobi was unavailable to participate in the evaluation after numerous attempts to contact him. HIC members in the region, however, do not appear to be very active, except for a few who participate regularly in both SINA and HIC-related activities. Participation in the HIC General Assembly is low, even in the case of the WSF in Nairobi, which featured few if any members from Kenya, notwithstanding that many were present and participated in other activities at the WSF. Participation in the evaluation was also low. Some members nonetheless stated that they contributed substantively to products such as case studies and in workshops, international conferences, and other activities where applicable.

Mazingira conducts several workshops and seminars, under the auspices of SINA, to which HIC members are invited (although the participants are not exclusively HIC members). Based on the reporting of activities in the SINA newsletter, it appears that there is a core group of HIC members who participate (e.g., NACHU, YMA, WAT, HPZ, Development Workshop Angola). In addition to workshops that it sponsors as part of its own program, Mazingira also coordinates activities under the umbrella of the HIC regional focal point. Mazingira's role includes conceptualizing, planning and looking for sponsors for HIC projects ("projects" being defined as having a beginning, ending, milestones and demands e.g., SPH); coordination of both substantive and process-related matters (e.g., getting reports, handling financial issues, processing and synthesizing case studies, conducting cross analyses and generally technical substantive work, production of regional reports and individual cases)<sup>23</sup>; hosting HIC whenever it is in Nairobi (e.g., WSF, 1987, UN meetings, etc.); and "covering" for HIC at UN-HABITAT.

Collaboration with HIC international bodies: In addition to hosting the HIC regional focal point for Anglophone Africa, Mazingira also serves

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<sup>23</sup> See relationship of SPH to housing cooperatives in relation to community-driven processes. HIC's activities towards building social movements in Africa has been assessed as weak. To the extent that SPH is generated by social movements, does the weakness of social movements in Africa hinder application of SPH in Africa? Nevertheless, the interest in SPH within the region points to a need to further to explore opportunities and requirements in the region. SPH Source: <http://www.hic-net.org/indepth.asp?PID=5>.

as the focal point for HLRN sub-Saharan Africa regional program<sup>24</sup> and the HSEN sub-regional focal point for Anglophone Africa. Activities conducted jointly with HLRN included a human rights monitoring workshop, which was conducted just before a SINA workshop on Democratization, Civic Strengthening and Human Development. Mazingira also participated in a fact-finding mission to Kenya by the UN Special Rapporteur (Miloon Kothari) in February 2004. These and other activities were reported in the SINA newsletter, including HIC activities at the World Urban and Social Forums, and HIC General Assembly meetings. There is a direct link from the HLRN website to the Mazingira website as regional focal point for sub-Saharan Africa, however, there is no corresponding reference on the Mazingira website and no reference to HLRN activities except via the SINA newsletter in relation to human rights training activities.

As the regional focal point for HIC in Anglophone Africa, Mazingira has also been instrumental in the development of HIC substantive products, although some of this work took place during the time period preceding the current scope of the evaluation. These include conceptualization and development of training activities for the HLRN Toolkit<sup>25</sup> and HSEN initiative<sup>26</sup>. Mazingira also serves as the sub-regional focal point for HSEN in Anglophone Africa and activities include fundraising for events and facilitating participation of HIC members during the WSSD in Johannesburg in 2002<sup>27</sup>. Other activities, which pre-date the evaluation period include hosting the first Secretariat for HIC-WAS network for a period of 5 years from 1990-1995 and strategic human rights work in Geneva relating to standard-setting and putting housing on the international human rights agenda (e.g., General Comments 4 and 7)<sup>28</sup>.

#### 2.4.4 HIC-MENA (Middle East and North Africa)

HIC-MENA is the most recently established HIC Region with a Focal Point. In contrast to all other focal points, it is a regional sub-program of the „Housing and Land Rights Network - HLRN“. As such it has not developed activities, projects or programs outside the focus of HLRN.

HIC-MENA has been promoted after HLRN had already been active in the region since the year 1991. Although a formal protocol on its estab-

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<sup>24</sup> N.B.: Davinder Lamba, the Director of Mazingira Institute is one of the HLRN Directors.

<sup>25</sup> “Housing and Land Rights Monitoring Toolkit.” There is no mention of or link to the toolkit from the Mazingira website. The toolkit and human rights monitoring seminar have been reported in the SINA newsletter. See also acknowledgements at <http://toolkit.hlm.org/English/explore/Intro.htm> acknowledging support of Mazingira Institute for development of toolkit.

<sup>26</sup> Initially, HSEN was to be hosted by Mazingira, but this task was eventually given to ENDA.

<sup>27</sup> See <http://www.hsen-hic.net/> (temporarily blocked/closed); See generally “About HIC”

<sup>28</sup> Notwithstanding the comment that HIC’s achievements in international standard-setting on housing rights have been “watered down” by UN-HABITAT with introduction of secure tenure and governance (as opposed to rights?), both these concepts feature in work by HIC-AF and that there is also a close relationship with UN-HABITAT in the region in the implementation of the Urban Observatories and Best Practices programs (See OVAF Campagne pour la securite immobiliere et la gouvernance at [http://www.ovaf.net/campagne\\_frm.htm](http://www.ovaf.net/campagne_frm.htm))

lishment was signed with the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an official registration in Egypt as a regionally active NGO is still pending. First elections of regional representatives to the HIC global Board took place in 2006, after it had been officially approved by HIC Board as a new region in Cairo 2005.

Against the background of its origin around HLRN, there still seems to be a confusion among the members to which HIC body they are actually affiliated: the common notion is that HIC-MENA is largely synonymous with HRLN. On the other hand, most members have only participated in the elections of board members for HIC-MENA, while participation in HLRN elections was very low (see also separate annex 1.c).

Moreover, information and figures on HIC-MENA membership are ambiguous and inconsistent: while the general perception within HIC is that there are around 90-100 members in the region, the HIC membership database actually records 57 active members, and 61 members were assessed as eligible for voting in 2006<sup>29</sup>. With low rates of membership fee payment, the activeness of members and their voting rights are assessed by HLRN and HIC-MENA, and respective recommendations forwarded to the General Secretariat and the Board.

In line with its status as a regional program of HLRN, HIC-MENA is hosted by the HLRN Global Coordination Office in Cairo, on whose resources it can draw. HIC-MENA has its own program budget with past funding mainly from the Ford Foundation, ICCO and InWent. Its day-to-day operations are managed by a full-time program officer who is supervised by the Global HLRN coordinator and supported by other HLRN staff at the Cairo office as needed.

Over the past 3 years, HIC-MENA has operated on the basis of a plan of action (Operational Plan 2004-2006), which basically translated the overall global strategy for HLRN into a regional approach along 3 main goals:

- Network, Coalition and Alliance Building, Development and Maintenance;
- Empowerment and Capacity Building to ensure the Right to Adequate Housing and Housing and Land Rights;
- Advocacy at United Nations Political and Legal Bodies, Factual Mechanisms and at the Regional Level.

In a self-assessment in the context of the evaluation field visit, the HIC-MENA program officer stated as the most significant achievements of the past years:

- A more active membership: members have become more responsive to Urgent Action Appeals, and in documenting housing and land rights violations;

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<sup>29</sup> According to the HIC GS, the regional membership was subject to changes. Some countries (Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria) switched from the Francophone Africa region to MENA. Moreover, due to the "great complexity" of the MENA region, some members disappeared and others changed from "active" to "passive" status.

- An improved scope of advocacy vis-à-vis UN political and legal bodies with members supporting the preparation of parallel reports and fact finding mission of the UN Special Rapporteur on Housing, as well as participating in regular hearings.

A large part of HIC-MENA's resources and activities has been and still is dedicated to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (roughly estimated about 30% of the resources), and to other complex conflict and crisis situations in the region with high political profile, e.g. the Iraq war, the Lebanon conflict or the Southern Sudan. As a result, HIC-MENA might be better described as a broader political lobbying and advocacy initiative than a regional network working on specific thematic issues.

With regard to future activities, the HIC-MENA core team, i.e. the program officer with support from the global HLRN team, has already developed a new operational plan 2007-2009. Based on a previous consultative process with the membership, it shall address the following issues:

- continued attention to land and tenure issues with the objective to codify the right to land as a human right;
- further capacity building for members with a view to strengthen their interaction with UN bodies and committees;
- women's rights to housing and land, with particular emphasis on Islamic inheritance laws;
- developing new tools for monitoring Millenium Development Goals (MDGs);
- further promotion of the concept of Social Production of Habitat in the region.

According to feed-back from members in the evaluation process and findings during the field visit to Cairo, HIC-MENA can be described as a rather „self-contained“ region with relatively few permanent working contacts of members to other HIC bodies or members outside the region. HIC seems to be seen mainly as a network, providing information and a framework for exchange of experience, rather than a real membership-based coalition working jointly on specific activities or initiatives towards common objectives.

On parallel lines, relationships between HIC members in the region seem to be little developed, too. They basically relate to the participation in conferences, events or workshops in particular countries, e.g. in Egypt. Real joint activities or longer-term working relationships within the region could not really be identified.

In comparison to the interaction with HIC members at regional and global level, contacts to other HIC members at national level are more intensive. There seem to be a larger number of both formal and informal (working) contacts, not necessarily under the HIC umbrella, but around issues of common interest. On a case-by-case-basis some members have joined forces to work on a joint initiative. However, longer-term working relationships in the sense of a coalition remain the exception.

In general, membership relationships within the Region seem to be largely built between the individual members and the Regional Office (HIC-MENA) in a kind of centralized server-client model (or center-

satellite), while a real more decentralized network (more a spider's net model) has yet to develop.

#### 2.4.5 Asian Coalition for Housing Rights - ACHR

In HIC's internet presentation and official reporting, the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights - ACHR is still featuring as a Regional Focal Point. In practice, however, it seems to have gradually moved away from HIC and lost this function over time. Its present status and relationship to HIC can be outlined by the following facts:

- ACHR describes and perceives itself in a rather flexible way as „a regional network of grassroots community organizations, NGO's and professionals actively involved with urban poor development processes in Asian cities“, which today comprises 62 so called „national focal points“ (key contacts for the ACHR Secretariat) and some looser 600 contact members and in 21 countries of South, Southeast and East Asia ([www.achr.net](http://www.achr.net)).

Compared to HIC, ACHR has a wider scope of functions<sup>30</sup> and does not charge membership fees. It is also more oriented towards practical solutions and interaction with government and development agencies.

- In contrast, HIC's membership in Asia seems to be not very clearly defined: HIC's membership database states 42 members, while 90 Asian members were considered eligible for voting in elections to the HIC Board (no information is available on the actual number of votes casts, according to the elected Board Member some 50 Asian HIC members participated in the elections).

Moreover, membership in HIC and ACHR is clearly not congruent: not all Asian HIC members are necessarily members of ACHR (particularly not those belonging to HLRN), and definitely not all ACHR members are members of HIC.

- According to both HIC's General Secretariat and the ACHR Secretariat in Bangkok the interaction with HIC has been delegated to the Philippine „ACHR focal point“ and „HIC member“ „Urban Poor Associates“, which is supposed to act as a liaison office to HIC, but does not really seem to cope with this function.<sup>31</sup>
- On the ACHR website, HIC is presented as a „close contact“ of ACHR comparable to organizations like „Slum Dwellers International“, COHRE, etc.

Moreover, in the internal survey performed as part of the evaluation process, ACHR participated as a „member“ describing its character as a „network“, i.e. perceiving itself as a regional network participating / subscribing to a global network (in contrast, none of the other HIC Regional Focal Points participated in the survey as a „member“).

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<sup>30</sup> It comprises the following main functional areas: Regional Eviction Watch Program, Asian Women and Shelter Network (AWAS), Young Professionals Program (YPP), Savings-and-Credit Activities, Community Organizing and Strengthening

<sup>31</sup> In the course of the evaluation process it was not possible to get into touch with the liaison point in the Philippines and to obtain the basic information requested.



As a consequence, it could be stated that ACHR both in its self-perception and in the view of HIC does not constitute a „Regional Focal Point“ of HIC anymore.

This also corresponds to statements of the Asian HIC Board Member interviewed in the evaluation that the activities of Asian HIC members develop mainly outside ACHR organizational structures or procedures. They focus on anti-eviction, anti-displacement and anti-globalization campaigns and events (some of them in cooperation or under the umbrella of ACHR's "Eviction Watch Asia" activities). Most active HIC members participating in such activities are found in the Philippines, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Korea.

Apart from these campaigns and events, and some other training and information events, there seem to be very few other joint activities, and almost no longer-term projects or programs. A rare exception was a regional sub-project (as part of a global HIC project financed by InWent) on „Social Production of Habitat“ in Asia. However, this project seems to have failed and could not be completed, partly because of difficulties to develop a common understanding of „Social Production of Habitat“ in the Asian context (e.g. to what extent does this approach differ from what ACHR is promoting in its “solution-based“ approaches), partly because of personal rivalries and sensitivities.

There also seem to be few linkages of Asian HIC members to the subregional HLRN-Program SARP (South Asia Regional Program), which, with its existing office infrastructure and personal resources, could potentially serve as an alternative RFP.

In a summary, HIC in Asia can be described rather like a loose network of like minded NGOs than a coalition working around a distinctive and organized „Regional Focal Point“. This is confirmed by the fact that there are no budgets and personal resources available for regional activities in Asia.

## 2.5 Regional Focal Points in the North

### 2.5.1 HIC North America

In recent years, HIC has recruited new members within Canada and the United States that have extensive experience in building coalitions and particularly the kind of broad, member-based organizations that were vital to the building of committed, effective and powerful unions in the 1930s and 1940s, or the civil rights and other movements in the 1960s and early 1970s. This experience is one of the great sources of innovation, renovation and “popular” (in the sense of “people’s”) participation in the key movements that have, indeed, changed our world. Bringing this experience together with that of European organizations – another rich vein, particularly in light of efforts to build a genuine European Union and Community, using a model that is strikingly different and more humane than the American model – and those of Latin American, African and Asian civil societies.

Being able to tap into this knowledge, however, is a major challenge for HIC, in that it must find ways to generate exchange and debates, across

languages and cultures that vary enormously in almost every sense. The overweening idea that we live in the globalized world cannot substitute for the sensitivity and depth of knowledge required to communicate across cultures and indeed individual and national worlds that notwithstanding continue to exist.

HIC, and particularly its longstanding leadership, will have to be more open to suggestions of new and seemingly unorthodox (or too orthodox!) communications methods, such as conference calls, being willing to experiment, to exchange and above all to change in this respect. Americans and Canadians, of course, will have to exercise an equivalent sensitivity and willingness to adjust discourse and patterns of actions to the rest of the world.

This is a challenge for HIC for also, and above all, an opportunity, since the different experiences can undoubtedly contribute to each others' progress toward HIC's common goals, often because of these very differences. HIC is a unique opportunity for facilitating this exchange. It is likely that it will be much easier to foster the opportunities necessary for this kind of exchange and interchange to occur within specific regions or bilateral frameworks, rather than trying to do everything at a massive, and extremely expensive, international level.

This process will also challenge some of the dearly held "truths" that sustain movements, whether in the north or the south. These challenges, if they can be carefully and considerately managed, offer the opportunity for significant breakthroughs in both north and south.

### 2.5.2 HIC Europe

Having been the nucleus of HIC's activities in the beginning of the coalition and the seat of the Presidency until 1999, HIC Europe seems to have experienced a constant process of decay over the past couple of years.

A major blow, which has largely disrupted the European network, was the breakaway of the previous European "Regional Focal Point" in Padova, Italy, to the newly established "International Alliance of Inhabitant - IAI" in the wake of the general HIC-crisis in 2003.

Since then, HIC Europe has been struggling with agreeing on a joint agenda and platform, and a corresponding functional organizational set-up. This is exacerbated by the fact that HIC Europe, like HIC in North America, has no access to funding available to HIC structures in the South, and that it has not been able to tap other potential funding sources from the European Union or individual European countries.

At present, HIC Europe is mainly driven by the initiative of a few member representatives, namely of those elected as Board member and Board alternate (Katherine Coit and Knut Unger), while other members only participate in special events or activities like the European Social Forum (ESF), or in other issue-specific conferences. Moreover, such initiatives like the fight against the privatization of public housing and the emergence of REITs (Real Estate Investment Trusts), and an even more general campaign against privatization and globalization of public goods and services, in particular the privatization of utilities, are hampered by a

lack of focus and the scarcity of resources to adequately address such complex issues. They also seem to be difficult to communicate within HIC's other regional and/or thematic structures that are dealing with other issues considerably different from the specific European context and experience.

In general, the HIC agenda in Europe seems to suffer from an uncertainty whether it should focus more on Habitat issues in the South or on issues specific for the European context.<sup>32</sup> Against this background, HIC Europe must be assessed as experiencing a deep crisis with regard to its self-perception, its mission and vision, and its organizational structure.

## 2.6 Thematic Networks and Committees

### 2.6.1 Housing and Land Rights Network - HLRN

The Housing and Land Rights Network is the only former "thematic committee" established by HIC that has developed into a fully-fledged Thematic Network (TN) with largely global coverage. Set up initially as a working committee in 1991 with a strong focus on the MENA region, it was transformed into a separate organization with its own legal status in 2001, and registered as an international nonprofit and charitable association at Geneva according to Swiss law. HLRN has its own statute and board of Directors.

In addition to a Global Program, HLRN operates regional programs in the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) and South Asia (South Asia Regional Program - SARP), as well as more limited regional initiatives in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa.

With the objective "to reach the fuller realization of human dignity and human development toward respect, defense, promotion and fulfillment of the human right to adequate housing and land"<sup>33</sup>, HLRN addresses a great variety of issues: they range from forced evictions, housing demolitions, housing reconstruction after natural disasters, housing destruction and land confiscations in armed and/or ethnic conflicts, displacement and refugee problems, rural-urban migration, resettlement caused by major infrastructure projects, women's heritage rights, and more. Particular attention with considerable resource allocation is given to complex international or regional political conflicts like the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, China and Tibet, Iraq, Sudan, etc..

The broad scope of issues covered by HLRN raises the questions whether all these complex issues can be dealt with adequately and professionally with the scarce resources available to the network, and whether it does not overextend its possibilities, with the danger of watering down

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<sup>32</sup> This might be illustrated by the fact that out of 167 registered HIC Europe members in the HIC membership database, 47 are "friends" with a clear interest in Habitat issues in the South, and another 12 members that have a clear focus on international issues. Another indication of the weakness of HIC Europe is the fact that only 32 members were considered active, and only 11 participated in recent Board elections (Moreover, the membership database only states 2 HIC Europe members as eligible for voting.)

<sup>33</sup> Mission statement from HLRN's website

its core messages and possible impact. It also points at difficulties to find some basic common denominators for the members.

HLRN's activities and initiatives involving members across regions mainly related to training courses or events on the interaction with UN human rights bodies, and on specific tools and instruments developed by the network (see below). They also included exchange programs and field visits exposing HLRN members to specific country experiences. Another cross-regional initiative to establish a "Solidarity Net" of members in countries affected by occupation and ethnic conflicts (Palestine, Kurdistan, Tibet), however, has proven difficult to maintain due to political sensitivities, but also because of the complex nature of the underlying conflicts. Otherwise global network activities primarily focus on contributions to specific events at the international level, like the "Caucus on Human Rights in the Struggles for Land, Habitat and Environment" at the WSF in Nairobi or HLRN workshops at the "World Urban Forum 3" in Vancouver.

Through its lobbying and advocacy efforts, HLRN has successfully managed to establish good working relationships with the political, factual, legal and implementation bodies of the UN Human Rights System. It has contributed to improving normative human rights standards related to housing and land, and to assessing compliance with and violations of these standards in a wide range of countries. In particular, the appointment of the Regional Director of SARP as Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing in 2000 must be considered a special asset of the network, which has further improved its already high leverage within the UN system.

In addition to capacity building and training of members, HLRN has put considerable resources into developing tools and instruments for a professional monitoring of housing and land rights. These comprise the "Housing and Land Rights Toolkit", the Violation Database, and the "Urgent Action Appeals" system, all of which feature prominently among HIC's core products and services<sup>34</sup>. While they were generally assessed as potentially useful by members interviewed in the evaluation, a common notion was that they were too complicated to use and not sufficiently practice-oriented. This might be confirmed by the fact that the violations database has not yet really been fed by members, and that the "Urgent Action Appeals" system is hardly used by members.

In contrast to its activities at global level and its efforts in developing tools and instruments, broader joint activities at regional or national level in the sense of working on common objectives and initiatives are rare. At country level they mainly refer to enlisting members to participate in the preparation of "Parallel Reports" to the UN Human Rights bodies, and in "Fact-Finding Missions" on the status of housing and land rights. To a lesser extent, HLRN supports individual members to develop and improve their own programs and activities, and to enhance self-representation skills and public relations activities.

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<sup>34</sup> E.g. dissemination and practical application of these tools and instrument was integral part of the MISEREOR funded project with for the GS "Communicational Strategy Empowering HIC Regional Bodies"

In general, HLRN focuses more on "whistle blowing", documenting human rights violations and denouncing government failures in complying with international covenants and treaties, than on embarking on more dialogue-oriented interaction at country level. Like generally in HIC, this is seen more as the role and responsibility of the members than of the network itself. On the other hand, many members met in the evaluation have stated that they see a need for more initiatives at country level and have expressed a strong interest in more collaboration with other members on this.

HLRN's initiatives and activities appear to be mainly driven by a small group of key actors from its global and regional programs, while active involvement and participation of individual members is more limited. The relatively limited active member participation in the network<sup>35</sup>, is also reflected by extremely low voter turn-outs in the elections for HLRN's board representatives.

In summary, HLRN is a network structure, which clearly stands out in comparison to the other networks and working groups of HIC. On parallel lines to HIC-AL, it has become another "powerhouse" within HIC, a success that must be attributed to a high level of personal commitment and dedication of its core staff and key stakeholders.

With its relatively broad global coverage, HLRN's structure in a way "mirrors" HIC's overall global set-up of "Regional Focal Points". Moreover, office infrastructure, personal and financial resources available to HLRN seem to exceed the resources available to the other HIC bodies. HLRN could thus be described as a rather powerful "HIC inside HIC", which provides important services and support to HIC as a whole<sup>36</sup>. This overlay of HIC and HLRN structures appears also to be confirmed by an increasing usage of the name "HIC-HLRN" in the public, like e.g. for the booth and events at the WSF at Nairobi. On parallel lines, but more content-related, HLRN has also taken on other issues, which had originally been addressed by other HIC bodies, like the "Social Production of Habitat", or networking activities of women around land issues. (*A more detailed assessment of HLRN is presented in the separate annex 1c.*)

#### 2.6.2 Women and Shelter Network - WAS

At this stage in its existence, the Women and Shelter Network seems to be primarily a loosely-knit network of individual researchers at NGOs and academic instances, primarily in Latin America, with some activity in Africa, and efforts to rekindle and strengthen participation in some parts of Asia. On one hand, the international structure and expectations that arise from the description of HIC and WAS, seem too big for the role it is capable of playing, at least for the time being. On the other

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<sup>35</sup> There also seems to be some confusion about actual membership in HLRN: HIC's web-based membership database for instance states 29 active HLRN members, while 104 members were considered eligible for voting for representatives at the HIC Board in the last elections. However, only 14 valid votes were received.

<sup>36</sup> These comprise for example the hosting of all HIC websites on servers financed by HLRN, support of accounting and financial management, or the paying of travel costs of representatives of other HIC bodies to international events.

hand, women's issues, and perhaps women's organizations themselves, seem to be only weakly integrated into HIC's other structures. The fact that HIC has never had a woman president – in 30 years of existence – certainly raises a swarm of questions about women's participation. During the interviews and workshops in Latin America and Nairobi many fine women leaders participating in HIC and other related instances were noted, but this is not the same as having a conscious, effective gender-informed perspective on the issues at hand, whether these be housing, water, transportation, safety in the city.

However, in this day and age simply defining a “network” does not resolve the key question about how civil society activists organize themselves to work together more effectively, in this case through and within HIC. If HIC's current leaders and members identify women's issues as crucial within the general HIC agenda, as presumably they would do, they need to sit down and work out concrete ways of integrating the (often fragmented) work going on around the continent, in the case of Latin America, and the world in general, into HIC's functioning. The fact that HIC has just elected a new board suggests this would be a very good time for this reflection to take place.

Again, both interviews and research in HIC/WAS documentation and websites seem to clearly indicate that when women's issues were higher on the global agenda – were the subject of major international meetings sponsored essentially by the UN system, for example – it was easier to find funding, meet and attempt some semblance of cooperative work internationally. The Women and Shelter website, which seems to correspond to this stage, is quite impressive, although clearly it has not been kept up to date (the most recent actualizations seem to have been early in the 2000s). At this stage, the world has turned on its axis, other issues have come to the fore, and conditions have changed. Many UN and other bodies have small, but permanent units dedicated to women's issues / studies / voices. This raises the question how can HIC strengthen their input into HIC's work, and the participation of grassroots women's groups involved in these issues.

Attempting to function on a smaller rather than a larger scale could be a better strategy here, given the limitations on funds and other resources. Given the network's durability and the value of other non-HIC work related to women in Latin America (women and public spaces, building safer cities, etc. being done by Sur, Unifem and others), it might make more sense to attempt a small working group, of even just three to five key people, with some chance of sitting down every few months, comparing notes, making proposals, and then making this approach/work more widely known. If this could be done in other regions, and then linked, this could perhaps go a long way to overcoming some of the current limitations, that also reflect the eternal postponement of women's issues, for a battery of reasons that aren't worth listing here.

### 2.6.3 Habitat and Sustainable Environment Network - HSEN <sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The bulk of the information relating to HSEN was obtained during the field visit to Dakar and in the context of the coordination of HSEN, which is carried out by ENDA RUP. No response

In theory and in HIC's official presentation, HSEN is a network which should function at the global level; however, this does not appear to be the case. Instead, HSEN's activities appear to be limited to the sub-region of Francophone Africa, and to the Urban Observatories which ENDA implements as the regional center for the UN-HABITAT program on Global Urban Observatories. A significant amount of work has been done in the region in this regard, with funding from SIDA and other partners. The project has so far been implemented in several countries in the region. The observatories are, however, limited to Africa (French-speaking Africa, in particular), in part because of funding constraints, although it seems that there is some interest in scaling up these activities.

The main activities mentioned in relation to HSEN include the Urban Observatories, which operate mainly at the sub-regional level in Francophone Africa, and activities around the WSSD in Johannesburg in 2002. Funding has been received for both these activities and they appear to be (or were) successful. However, the urban observatories are also closely linked with the UN-HABITAT program in which ENDA-RUP is a partner and regional focal point. The WSSD, though often mentioned, both as a key activity and rallying point for membership participation, took place 5 years ago.

HSEN (as a network) has participated in major global conferences and events (WSF, WUF, CSD, etc.), however, it is not clear how many of those participating in these events are members of the thematic network. In some instances, it would appear to be largely the thematic focal point and a few members who are able to attend. Other notable conferences and activities include the Global WASH Forum (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All) in Dakar (2004), the World Water Forum in Mexico (2006) and the Africities Conference in Nairobi (2006).

Other HSEN activities, most of which relate to the local urban observatories, include:

- mobilization (including financial) for member participation in network activities;
- methodological support for documentation (including methodological guides);
- development of tools for training;
- financial support to membership for case studies (e.g., for data collection);
- support for meetings/consultations within the context of the observatories;
- meeting with HIC-GS on evictions;
- liaison for members who want to contact (e.g., Housing Rapporteur).

These activities are largely limited to membership within the sub-region and ENDA RUP provides the same types of support (in theory) to its regional membership. This raises the questions to what extent these are

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has been received from other members of the network who were contacted, namely in the regional and thematic reference centers.

truly thematic activities and what is the level of thematic integration of habitat and environment issues into the HIC agenda.

Funding was the major constraint for scaling-up HSEN activities beyond the West Africa region mentioned during the field visit and subsequent correspondence with the TFP. HSEN received funding from the Netherlands in 2002 and was able to carry out several activities at the level of the regional resource centers and thematic centers, and was also able to organize several workshops at the WSSD in Johannesburg. HSEN has submitted a proposal to the Netherlands, which is still being followed up and is in the process of looking for additional funding to revitalize the network. In the meantime, HSEN engages in smaller activities in accordance with the available budget.

Membership data for HSEN is out of date and although the background information sheets indicate 20 active members, the lists provided by the focal point still indicated that there were many times more (113). Reference persons for HSEN who were contacted for the evaluation did not respond. The evaluation focused mainly on HSEN's activities in franco-phone Africa, via discussions with the focal point and resource persons in Dakar.

The HSEN website is still unavailable and has been unavailable for some months now. The information contained in this report is taken mostly from the website of ENDA RUP and materials collected during the field visit. However, the information contained on the ENDA RUP site is largely out of date. For example, it still refers to HSEN as HEC (Habitat and Environment Committee) and contains other discrepancies, including a link to the HIC website that no longer functions and seems to relate to a site dating back to the time when the HIC secretariat was based in South Africa.

Comprehensive information on the objectives, focus and proposed activities of HSEN has not been revised and updated. There is some somewhat extensive information relating to HEC (in French) covering its establishment and initial phase (1996 and 1998), which is available on the ENDA RUP website. A summary of HSEN's main objectives is also included on the HIC website under "HIC initiatives."

Notwithstanding notable successes during the Rio Conference (1992), Istanbul (1996) and Johannesburg (2002), there does not appear to be much mention of activities related to habitat and environment initiated or implemented on any large scale by HSEN since 2002. The Johannesburg conference was also mentioned as a significant watershed in terms of recruitment of new members and interest in HIC around the themes of habitat and environment. However, without the draw of a large, global thematic conference, HSEN seems to have had limited impact in terms of activities, member participation and funding resources.

## 2.7 Other Working Groups

While HIC's organizational chart as presented in 2.1.3 states the working groups as outlined in this section, they do not appear on HIC's website.



Instead they are presented as „campaigns“, a fact which may indicate a certain confusion with regard to the role, mandates and functions of working groups.

#### 2.7.1 Working Group on „Privatization and Globalization of Habitat“

This working group had been established after the Strategic Planning Workshop and the General Assembly held in Cairo in September 2005. From the documentation and information available, it remains unclear to what extent it had been given a clear mandate and task description. According to the HIC-website it aims to:

- exchange experience on struggles against globalization and privatization, and on means of organization for such struggles both in the North and the South;
- map information on organizations working in the countries with HIC presence and define a working agenda.
- identify and target specific transnational companies and issues in different countries<sup>38</sup>.

The working group seems to have never really become operational, and appears to be limited to a mailing list with about 50 subscribers both from HIC members and other organizations outside HIC that is managed by a German HIC-member.

In addition to establishing and maintaining this mailing list, about 20 case studies on a wide range of privatization and globalization issues, ranging from fights against the privatization of specific housing estates over threats of privatizing utilities and basic infrastructure to country-wide anti-globalization campaigns, have been compiled and documented on the website.

The wide range of very complex issues targeted by this working group seems to clearly exceed the personal resources and, even more important, the professional capacities of HIC. Each issue in itself, be it privatization of housing/real estate, deregulation of housing markets, privatization of utilities, invasion of local markets by global enterprises, etc., would require a major effort and specific know-how to be adequately addressed.

Without a better and clearer defined focus for its work, e.g. focussing only on real estate privatization, it remains doubtful whether this initiative will ever be able to live up to expectations.

#### 2.7.2 Working Group "Social Production of Habitat"

At the time of the evaluation, this working group was not operational anymore. It seems to have ceased its work with the termination of the previous global project on „Social Production of Habitat“. To what extent it could or should be revived to work on HIC's continued focus on SPH remains unclear at present. However, the SPH approach has led to significant progress in Latin America, particularly Mexico. This seems like an ongoing theme that should form part of a communications strat-

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<sup>38</sup> This is a summary of the WG's own statement of objectives which is very difficult to understand.

egy. How do specific efforts in specific places get commented on and spread throughout the HIC network, so they are available to other groups who may find them useful in their particular work?

#### 2.7.3 Working Group "Charter to the Right of the City"

The same holds true for the working on the „Right to the City“, which was not operational at the time of the evaluation. With the documentation and information available, it is also difficult to assess to what extent this working group has really been functional and what results it may have produced.

#### 2.7.4 Working Group "Habitat in the Context of Conflict, Occupation and War"

On parallel lines to the working group on privatization, this working group seems to have never been established (it does not even appear under „Campaigns“ on the HIC website). In contrast to the privatization working group there does not even seem to be a mailing list or similar structure which would point to some concerted effort in this regard.

#### 2.7.5 Housing and Land Rights Day Campaign

Although the need to have a special working group to prepare for the recurrent annual HIC campaign on the „Housing and Land Rights Day“ (called „World Habitat Day“ by the UN) has been repeatedly discussed in HIC (it was an issue in both General Assembly and Board Meetings attended during the evaluation), it does not seem to have been established yet.

At the Board Meeting in Nairobi it was only decided to establish a committee to prepare for the HIC campaign around the next World Habitat Day, while a more long-term or permanent approach or solution has not been on the agenda. Again, there seem to be too limited capacities and resources in HIC to address such important strategic issues adequately.

### **3. Assessment of HIC in the Global Environment**

#### 3.1 Objectives and Approach

To assess HIC's impact in its global external environment, it was envisaged to obtain feed-back from a number of most relevant external stakeholders and partners of HIC. For this purpose, a simple questionnaire had been designed, which was sent out to about 60 external stakeholders identified by HIC in form of a long list.

Based on the feed-back from this survey, it was foreseen to conduct more in-depths interviews with about 30 selected key interlocutors named by HIC as those people most familiar with its history and activities, and to analyze/group their feed-back according to their background and organizational affiliation, i.e assessing the view of UN-organizations and multilateral programs, of HIC supporters and funders, of other NGO networks and of the general public.

In total, only 13 responses with filled-in questionnaires were received within the deadline set until the beginning of January, i.e. the time of the evaluation workshop at Nairobi WSF 2007.

Using the opportunity to meet some of the key external interlocutors at the WSF and with additional contacts through phone or email, it was possible to get more in-depth feed-back in form of personal interviews with 9 persons. The total feed-back from sent-back survey forms and personally interviewed interlocutors thus summed up to 22 persons, i.e. much less than anticipated and not really suitable for an assessment according to the organizational affiliation of respondents.

Given this relatively low response, which, in addition, was basically limited to close partners of HIC, it is very difficult to come to a really meaningful assessment of HIC's impact on its external environment. Moreover, the questionnaire was not very specific with regard to the time horizon for the feed-back, and it was obvious that most respondents and interview partners looked more at HIC's whole history than on the past 3-4 years, on which the evaluation was focused.

The following summary of the results should therefore be rather understood as a snapshot of HIC's external impacts over its long history than as an in-depth impact assessment for the more recent past.

### 3.2 Survey Results

From the 22 responses and interviews, 10 came from other NGO networks working in similar or complementary fields as HIC, 8 referred to representatives of UN-agencies or bodies, and 3 came from funding agencies, and one from a governmental agency.

In general, the feed-back, both by filled-in forms and personal interviews was rather positive. All Respondents saw more strengths than weaknesses in HIC, and a majority stated basic agreement (full or partial) with the positive statements of the questionnaire. In more detail, the thrust of the feed-back and its highlights can be summarized as follows:

- Almost all respondents agreed fully or partially that HIC is a well-known political force and pressure group with a clear profile, and that its overall objectives are well-communicated and easily understood.

However, in the personal interviews held it became quite clear that this assessment in most cases referred to HIC's more distant past until the end of the 90s. Moreover, some respondents, namely with UN-background, stated that HIC's profile and focus is less clear today than it was 10 years ago, and that it faces increasing competition from other networks and organizations that have emerged in the late 90s.

As a consequence, some respondents stated that HIC might increasingly be threatened by losing influence and becoming irrelevant, and that it might be negatively affected by its hesitation to interact and collaborate more closely with both some of its competing organizations (namely SDI) and with international organizations outside the UN-system (namely the WB and regional development banks): while lobbying with UN-organizations is fine, they do not have the re-

sources for actual implementation. Other networks are here more active and better positioned, and HIC could lose these opportunities (as it has already lost importance with UN-agencies where it has become one player among many).

- Most respondents confirmed that HIC has contributed and continues to contribute to improving living and housing conditions of the poor. Again, however, the emphasis was more on past contributions, while there were more doubts concerning its present role and contribution in an increasingly more challenging environment. At any rate, it was quite obvious that HIC's contribution referred more to promoting the case of the poor and anchoring it in international covenants and resolutions than in concrete and measurable improvements of housing and living conditions at the local level.

In general, HIC's strengths were more seen in the fields of analysis and advocacy at international level than in direct action and assistance at national, local or grass-root level.

- In line with this assessment, HIC's influence on policy-making at national and regional level, as well as its capacity to support community-based efforts were generally considered a weaker aspect in HIC's profile.

At the same time, many interview partners stated this as a major future challenge to overcome the limitations of advocacy and lobbying within the UN-system, and to come to more tangible and concrete solutions on the ground by better bridging the gaps between civil society organizations, local and national governments and professionals in a multi-stakeholder and multi-level approach.

- Closely related to the issue of strategic focus and profile are HIC's main conceptual approaches. While its rights-based approach seems to be generally well-established, communicated and understood, other key conceptual elements of HIC's work seem to be less clear and more difficult to communicate in its external environment.

This holds partially true for the concept of "Social Production of Habitat", which has featured prominently in HIC's activities for a number of years now, but still seems to face difficulties to be fully understood and subscribed to outside the Latin American context, where it was developed and "coined".

Generally more critically assessed was the concept of the "Right to the City" and its suitability for dissemination and campaigning at a larger scale. Encompassing basically "everything" (all aspects of local government, infrastructure and services provision, cultural and social issues, etc.) it was often assessed as too broad and vague, and too difficult to understand and communicate. Some interview partners expressed their concern about a correspondingly growing "lack of focus" in HIC, while previously its focus on housing and land was much clearer and more transparent. *(A more detailed documentation of the external survey is included in the separate annex 3.)*



## 4. Lessons-Learnt and Conclusions

### 4.1 Repercussions and Challenges from Changes and Trends in the Global Environment

Over the past 30 years, HIC has been a major player and driving force in forwarding and promoting housing and land right issues in the international development agenda. Starting with the first UN Human Settlements Conference in Vancouver 1976, it has participated in and contributed to most important international events on urban development, habitat and housing, and environmental and social issues such as the UN Earth Summit (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), the second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Istanbul, 1996), URBAN 21 (Berlin 2000)<sup>39</sup>, and the World Urban Forums (Nairobi, 2002; Barcelona, 2004; Vancouver, 2006). It has significantly contributed to the international discourse on appropriate policies, approaches and concepts to address the growing challenges resulting from dramatically increasing urbanization and the growing need to provide adequate housing and habitat for the poor.

For a long time, HIC was practically the only global NGO association in the field of habitat and urban development, and it has also contributed, more or less consciously, to the growing diversity of civil society networks, forums and other organizations active on these issues apparent at the international level today. After the major international conferences in Rio 1992 and Istanbul 1996, many new players and stakeholders emerged, some of them "offspring" of HIC and sharing membership with it (for example, Shack Dwellers International, SDI), while others were created or have attracted individual HIC members (COHRE and IAI) or are completely independent of HIC.

At the same time, the growing practical experience of international development agencies, national urban development and housing institutions, and the wide range of NGOs and CBOs active in this field, policies, conceptual approaches, project and program types, tools and instruments for addressing urban challenges have diversified and multiplied. Despite all these efforts, failure to solve the global housing crisis, has led to a growing realization among many working in this field at the international, national and local levels, amongst NGOs and CBOs, that providing "housing for all" may be a noble, but unrealistic objective. Instead, slums and informal areas may be with us for some time, making it worth focusing some efforts on the challenge of finding more incremental improvements that can be applied as broadly as possible.

Against this background, HIC's rights-based approach to housing and land issues affecting the poor necessarily involves combining a focus on denouncing violations and non-compliance, but also proposing solutions requires constant renewal to adjust to changing global agendas and lessen the risk of gradually losing influence and stature in a world where such rights are already basically acknowledged and enshrined in international conventions and treaties, but remain difficult to implement

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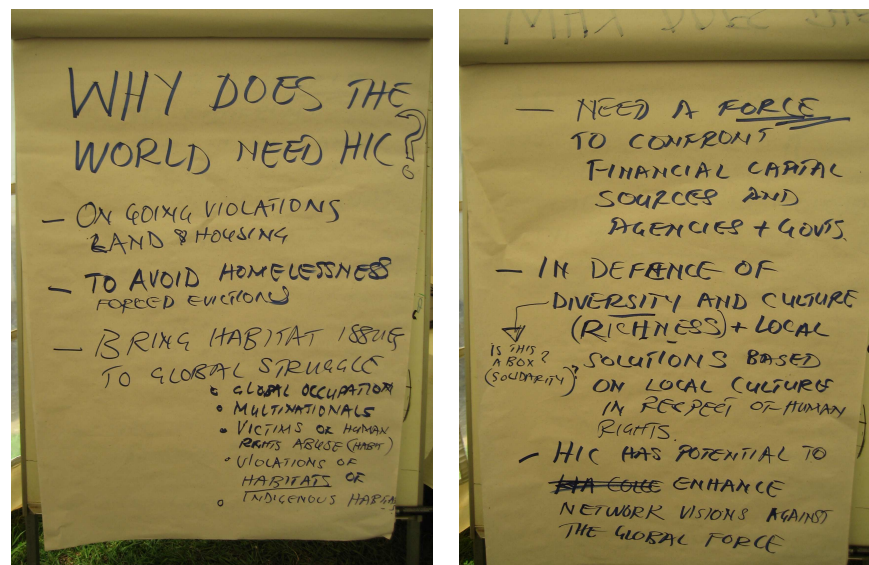
<sup>39</sup> At the Berlin URBAN 21 conference, the internal conflict within HIC that paralyzed the organization for a couple of years became public for the first time.

due to the scale of the problem, limited resources or priorities, and often national governments' limited awareness or willingness to fully address these issues.

The membership surveys revealed strong support for rights-based approaches and that members found this approach useful in their own work. It is important for HIC to look ahead to ways of highlighting successful efforts to apply these rights through projects that offer solutions that illustrate how people at local, national and regional levels can take the initiative and deal effectively with their own problems. Much of this knowledge and experience already exists within the HIC network, in organizations such as the cooperatives of Montevideo or neighborhood associations in Santiago and elsewhere in Latin America. Focusing more on managing this knowledge, ensuring that it flows through the HIC network, reaching those most in need of it, could be a helpful way of keeping these tasks manageable.

HIC must be alert to changing priorities worldwide, sensitive to new agendas, at the same time as it battles to maintain issues it considers key high on international and – given the achievement of a broad consensus on housing rights amongst international bodies today – increasingly the national level, where its efforts have been weak to date. This also means adapting to new priorities, for example, treating climate change, which has soared on the public agenda worldwide in recent months, as the “question” and habitat as the “answer”, that is, rephrasing its key concerns to keep them current and in the public eye.

After so many years of being virtually the only key global civil society player on these issues, it is hard for HIC to adjust to its new role as one among many, and to be very clear about what its own specific “value-added” is. With a growing number of other sometimes more specialized and focused organizations, HIC has thus to confront increasing challenges and indeed, uncomfortable as the word may be, “competition” for attention, members and resources.



HIC's own assessment at the evaluation workshop in Nairobi, January 2007

So far, HIC seems to have responded to these changes primarily by broadening its own agenda and trying to address habitat issues in the context of the fight against globalization or privatization, which has come with a shift toward greater participation in World Social Forums, both regionally and internationally. It is important for HIC to place urban and other habitat issues on the agenda of instances such as these. At the same time, the value of these efforts must be weighed against the costs.

Here too, there has been a significant shift since the first WSF meetings (2001), when the emphasis was defensive. Growing numbers of participants denounced the defects of the Washington consensus, the World Trade Organization's efforts to impose neo-liberalism, International Monetary Fund pressures to privatize everywhere and open borders to free capital flows, and the US' aggressive posturing toward Iraq and elsewhere. Today, however, these global powers are more on the defensive, with the US under attack, the WTO deadlocked and basically impotent, and the IMF almost forgotten. Reporting on this year's World Economic Forum at Davos, the New York Times underlined a "shifting power equation" in the world, with nobody "really in charge" anymore. And it argued that "the very foundations of the multilateral system" have been shaken, "leaving the world short on leadership at a time when it is increasingly vulnerable to catastrophic shocks."

In these new conditions, the WSF offers an alternative with growing political clout, which requires meeting the challenge of moving from "opposition to proposition", from the what, of specific rights, to the how they are being – or could be – achieved around the world.

In shifting its attention to the WSF, HIC is entering into an even more competitive<sup>40</sup> environment with even larger numbers of other civil society organizations and networks, many of them highly professional and focused, such as Civicus, Transparency International and Amnesty International. Moreover, habitat, housing and land rights are just one issue among many other issues of the WSF's far more global and general agenda, thus posing additional challenges to HIC to have its voice heard in this diverse and sometimes "cacophonous" ambience. All this makes it essential for HIC to offer a clear, concise focus on these issues that both connects them to current international agendas and debates but also, increasingly, brings them into effect as part of specific national debates and implementable policies. Without this, HIC risks spreading itself and its ideas too thinly, blurring its profile so potential members, partners and policy-makers find it hard to grasp HIC's essential mission.

Moreover, participation in the World Social Forum, particularly in a place such as Nairobi, which is extremely expensive for the majority of HIC members, even those located in the same continent. This suggests HIC should reconsider its focus on the WSF, perhaps concentrating more

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<sup>40</sup> The evaluators appreciate resistance to the concept of competition in a civil society context expressed during the Aachen meeting (21 March 07), but nonetheless consider this one factor in the current global environment. HIC can choose to deal with this competition in creative, out-of-the-box and primarily cooperative ways, but neo-liberal rhetoric aside, good ideas have always had to compete for attention, support and public resources. As evaluators we would be doing HIC a disservice to ignore this aspect of the environment HIC faces today. Moreover, we think HIC is in a good position to compete, honestly and loyally and to great, positive effect.



on the national social forums that have been developed, so it can impact more at that policy level, still extremely important in today's globalized world.

It is clear that HIC as it stands today cannot absorb or take on these new tasks. This is what makes bringing in, orienting and integrating new members so important and HIC's current weakness in this area requires a concentrated effort to confront and respond to membership dissatisfaction expressed in the Nairobi workshop and some surveys.

#### 4.2 Focus and Profile

With its long history and its track record in influencing policy formulation and standard setting at the international level, namely vis-à-vis the UN system, HIC's work advocating on behalf of human rights around housing and land has won it a solid profile.

HIC's present profile in a more diverse environment, however, seems harder to define and communicate both to members and the outside world. Moreover, the large number of complex issues and objectives HIC tries to address, encompassing continued advocacy for housing and land rights, fighting against eviction and displacement, promoting the concept of "Social Production of Habitat" and the "Right to the City", gender aspects related to land and housing, environmental issues, fighting against globalization and privatization, etc., seems to exceed the resources and capacities available. By taking on too many issues at the same time there is a clear risk of watering down such initiatives and of failure to achieve really tangible impacts (see also 4.3).

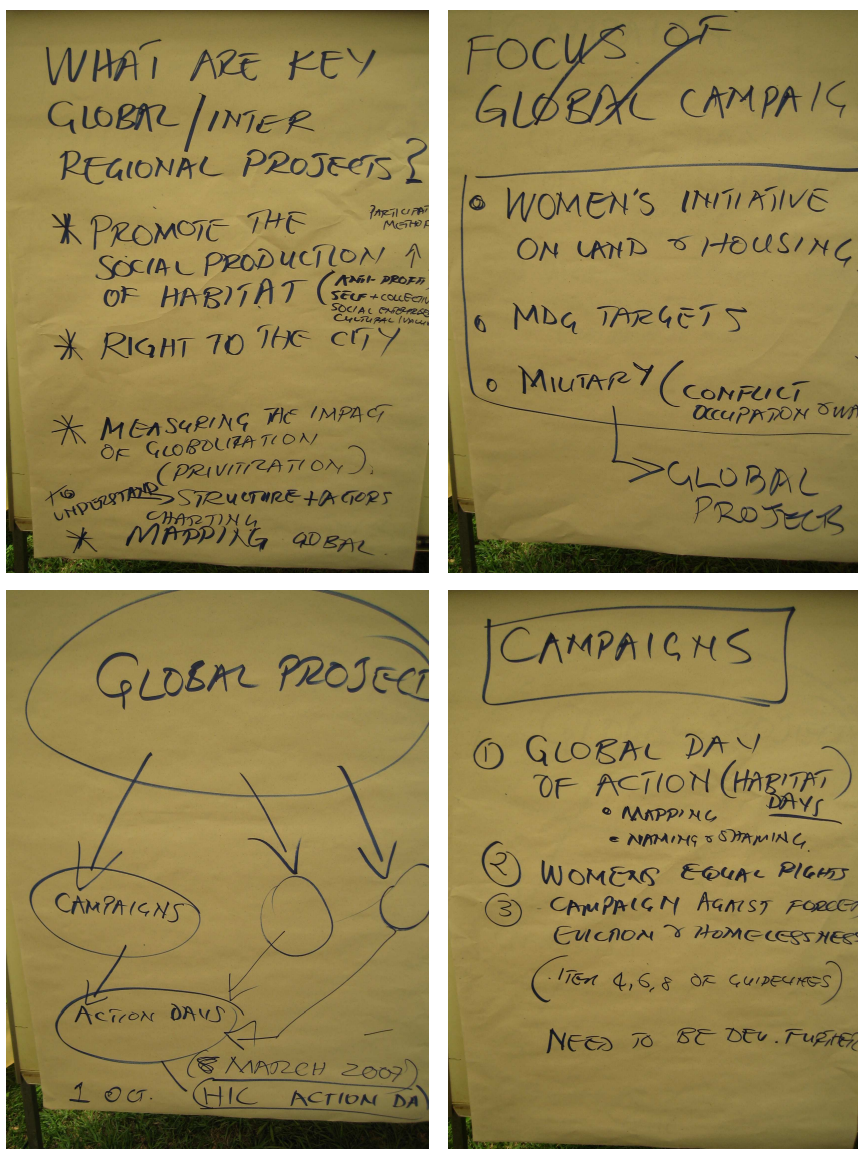
At present, HIC seems to be largely "event-driven", concentrating on participation and visibility in prominent international events (like the World Urban Forums or the WSFs), and on specific campaigns such as the annual "UN Habitat Day" (or "Housing and Land Rights Day" as understood by HIC). In contrast, longer-term strategic planning and priority setting is being neglected, or limited only to a few HIC bodies, particularly HIC-AL and HLRN. Moreover, individual HIC bodies mainly define longer-term activities and projects (e.g. on post-Tsunami reconstruction) mainly in response to the availability of funding, rather than a general and coordinated plan by the organization as a whole. One striking sign of this was that the "Strategic Guidelines 2005-2007", developed with considerable effort and resources at a workshop in Cairo in 2005, have not really been followed up, and were unknown to many members.

HIC's leaders, particularly its president, Enrique Ortíz, have undertaken to fulfill this gap, but today, with all the advances toward increasing democracy in countries and internationally, the organization's main thrust, plans and goals for the years to come must be widely discussed and appropriated by the membership for HIC to maximize its effectiveness. In this sense, it would be helpful to recognize the enormous diversity (in every sense) of the members of this coalition, but also to recognize the vital need for a core organization or motor to sustain, nourish, manage and push the coalition forward toward specific goals. Undoubtedly, there is much art to this process, as HIC leaders have pointed out, but there is

also some science to ensuring the quality communications, motivation and deliberation essential to HIC's future.

This lack of overall strategic planning seems to reflect the difficulties of defining HIC's profile against the background of the many diverse issues and objectives that it is trying to address. It also responds to the limited opportunities of a global organization, facing high travel and other costs with very limited resources, that make it extremely difficult to create quality opportunities for meetings and interactions at a direct personal level.

This highlights the importance of treating electronic means of communication as an important support, but not the main means of propagating ideas and the collective deliberation that could enable HIC to fully realize its strengths.



Global initiatives defined as by HIC at the evaluation workshop in Nairobi, January 2007

### 4.3 Achievements and Impacts

As clearly stated in other parts of this report, HIC's contributions to bringing the issues of housing and land for the world's poor to the fore and in anchoring them in the international agenda cannot be underestimated. This is confirmed by both the statements of many of its external partners, namely in the UN-system and in other like-minded networks and alliances, and by the ample documentation available on this period.

However, this holds mainly true to the more distant past, in particular to the years between 1980 and 2000, which in a certain way seem to have been HIC's "heydays", when everything seem to have fallen much more easily into place for HIC. In contrast, its achievements and impacts since the beginning of the new century/millennium are much more difficult to assess. After its serious institutional and organizational crisis, HIC's main achievement of the recent past, i.e. the past 4 years which are subject to this evaluation, is probably to have survived as an organization and to have managed to re-enlist its membership.

Other more external achievements and tangible impacts on its external environment in the past 3-4 years, and in particular on improving the living conditions of the poor, somehow elude an assessment. Such assessment is rendered even more difficult since HIC itself does not clearly define its objectives with regard to the impacts expected from its activities, not to speak of measurable and verifiable indicators for the achievement of such impacts.

In an environment where both funding agencies and the general public financing these agencies by taxes or donations are increasingly asking for the impacts of their support, a clearer definition of outputs, expected impacts and corresponding indicators will therefore be a major future challenge for HIC.

### 4.4 HIC's Target Audience and Interaction with the External Environment

#### 4.4.1 International Level

To date, HIC's main target audience has consisted of international level organizations, with a strong focus on the UN-system. Both within the UN human rights bodies and commissions, and in more technical organizations such UN-Habitat, HIC has become a well-known stakeholder and partner. It also maintains close links to the professional community and academic institutions collaborating with UN organizations and bodies.

In contrast, its links to other key stakeholders in the fields of housing, habitat and urban development at the international level, namely the World Bank, the European Union and regional development banks are much less developed. This may well reflect HIC's perceptions of its own weakness at this point in time for dealing with such powerful bodies, without seeing its ideas diluted or used as window dressing rather than specific and powerful changes to these systems. Nonetheless, these bodies control substantial financial resources that are supposed to be benefiting those most in need. They often play a stronger role in defining policies and strategies at the international, and particularly the regional and

country levels and they should form part of HIC's strategies. The World Bank's urban transport policies, for example, have varied significantly in recent years, under the influence, for example, of Bogota's success in combining public transport, pro-bicycle and other measures with improving quality space and social services such as child care, libraries and other key services. These shifts can offer very specific opportunities for change that HIC should not be neglecting.

With broad recognition of rights within the largely powerless and resource-strapped UN-System, a strategy that reaches out to pressure other bodies can offer some practical and significant opportunities for progress on the ground.

Every serious, ethical civil society organization must be alert to co-optation, that is selling out the most vital components in its agenda in exchange for achieving less vital objectives. HIC is clearly aware of the pitfalls of these processes. At the same time, a strong, clear identity and more focused priorities could give HIC the self-confidence necessary to engage in dialogue with a more diverse group of stakeholders, without fearing that this could dilute its own principles or objectives.

As described in 4.1, HIC has more recently shifted its attention to the international anti-globalization movement around the WSFs with a much more amorphous target audience, mainly encompassing other NGO networks, alliances and coalitions working in similar or adjacent areas. Again, it is important that HIC clearly define what it wants to achieve in terms of this new target audience.

#### 4.4.2 Regional and Country-Level

Despite its profile among specific international bodies, HIC, with the exception of Latin America, has a much lower profile and less visibility at the national and regional levels. Few of its activities or initiatives directly address regional or national target audiences. HIC tends to see this as members', rather than HIC's role.

Many members, however, contacted during the evaluation process see this as a major deficit, and would like to see HIC paying more attention to local issues, and actively encouraging more national initiatives and campaigns. Often, policies to improve the poor's housing and living conditions are applied at this level, and it can also be an effective scale for achieving greater respect for housing and land rights, particularly when local governments are drawn into debate with national government institutions civil society and other stakeholders. While it is definitely important to "strategize globally", it is equally or even more important to "act locally". This requires HIC paying more attention to the national and local scale of activities in coming years.

Indeed, although in the surveys members scored HIC's overall performance reasonably well, they rated its impact on national level policy-making as very poor (1.6 out of a possible 4).

#### 4.4.3 The General Public

HIC also wants to reach the general public, at international and country levels, with campaigns and media-oriented activities, namely its yearly campaign for the "International Habitat Day", which it has "rebranded" as the "International Housing and Land Rights Day". Unfortunately, given the scarce attention paid to UN-proclaimed "International Days", HIC's scarce resources and weak membership base (see also 4.6), this major effort also involves a high risk of not achieving the expected impacts. As one of the main regular events that "drive" HIC, it seems to consume a lot of time and effort with questionable results and impacts. Also note that by shifting to a housing and land rights focus, which admittedly underlines HIC's rights-based approach, the day's activities seem to exclude serious mobilization around transport, public space and other habitat-related issues that can have as much, or more, impact on the quality of life as housing or the ownership of land itself.

HIC's low profile beyond the professional UN-system networks and anti-globalization NGOs also limit its access to broader media coverage or outreach. Even many professionals working on housing and land issues in the South would not have heard of HIC, unless by chance they've run into a HIC representative. This weakens HIC's ability to communicate its positions and influence debate.

Moreover, there are few genuinely international media capable of bringing HIC's message to a broad global public. Indeed, many analysts would question whether such a public exists. This makes national level work, which may offer many interesting opportunities for greater coverage, all the more important for HIC's work in the years to come. In fact, many HIC members are prominent and get significant media attention. The problem is that they do not feature as HIC members, and their press releases make no reference to their HIC membership or the relationship between their specific activity and the larger HIC framework<sup>41</sup>.

In this sense, current communications means and efforts seem insufficient to both enthuse members and bring the kind of media attention that HIC deserves, and that would be very useful to its several causes. The Nairobi workshop produced useful observations and several proposals, which we have considered among our recommendations.

#### 4.5 Organizational Structure

In its publications and on its website, HIC presents a complex organizational structure, overlaying a regional organization, the "Regional Focal Points", with cross-regional "Thematic Networks or Committees" and issue-specific "Working Groups". In practice, however, this does not work and is therefore misleading to members and friends alike. In fact:

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<sup>41</sup> This was quite obvious in Palestine, where organizations or initiatives like the "Campaign Against the Wall", PARC or Riwaq get a lot of media coverage, but without any references to their HIC membership. More seriously, many members would not even know the names of other members in the country. On parallel lines, in Israel newspapers would report on organizations like "Adalah" or the "Regional Council of the Unrecognized Villages (RCUV)" without any reference to HIC. Moreover, the websites of Mazingira Institute and ENDA-RUP, the HIC RFPs for Africa, do not make reference to HIC.

- Of the seven "Regional Focal Points (RFPs)", only the more recently created HIC-AL seems to be a genuine focal point, with a specifically HIC profile and a strong role in coordinating HIC member activities within the region.
- Other RFPs, developed on an earlier model, have played a more ambiguous role:
  - The two Regional Focal Points in Africa (Anglophone and Francophone Africa) are hosted by local NGOs (the Mazingira Institute for Anglophone Africa and ENDA-RUP for Francophone Africa), which have their own agendas, programs and resources independent from HIC. Members expressed frustration at the lack of a clear, membership-HIC-related agenda, indicating a serious gap between expectations and these organizations' abilities to respond.
  - The MENA region focal point is more a regional sub-program of HLRN than a fully functional RFP.
  - The "Asian Coalition on Housing Rights - ACHR" is a separate and powerful regional organization sharing some of the same members as HIC, but does not see itself as HIC's RFP.
  - The two northern focal points (Europe and North America) suffer from lack of resources and difficulties with relating their activities to the general HIC agenda, which focuses more on issues relevant for the South.
- The only functional cross-regional network is HLRN, which has a strong presence in the MENA region and in South Asia, and to a lesser extent in Africa and Latin America. In contrast, the "Women and Shelter Network - WAS" and the "Housing and Sustainable Environment Network - HSEN" are mainly limited to regional initiatives (Latin America in the case of WAS and Francophone West Africa in the case of HSEN). However, WAS at least, appears to be a loosely-knit network of primarily academics active in this field, with weak links to HIC's other structures, even in Latin America.
- The different working groups are largely dysfunctional and there was little information available to this evaluation on their current composition and tasks

In addition to these ambiguities/inconsistencies in HIC's overall organizational structure, there seems to be an overlay of HIC's global initiatives with HLRN's programs and projects (e.g. "Social Production of Habitat" or "Women and Shelter Issues"). In short, HLRN with the broad scope of its initiatives and access to ample resources and funding, could be considered a "HIC inside HIC" (see annex 1.c with detailed assessment of HLRN).

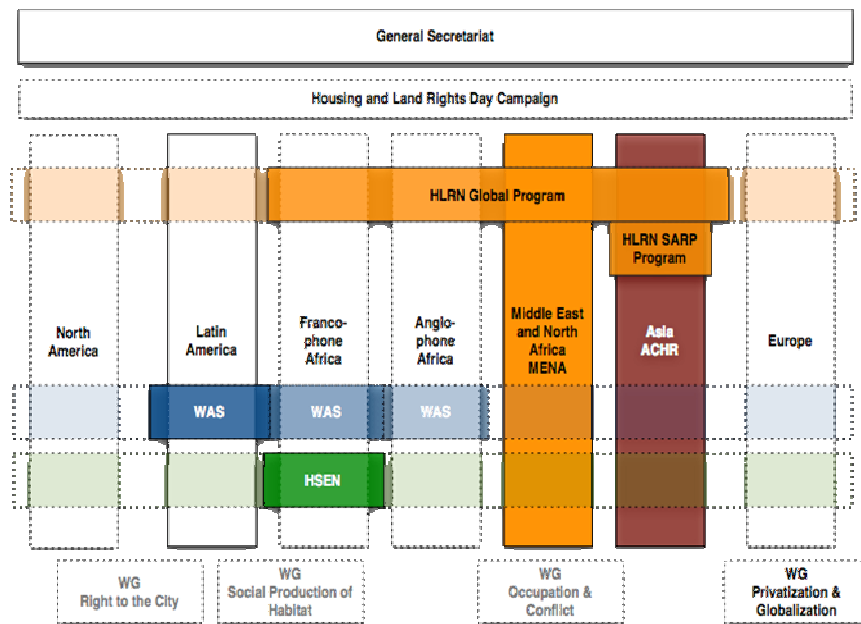
This complex organizational set-up is not understood by members or the outside world. It also makes it hard to understand how personnel and funding is allocated: while some of HIC bodies, mainly HIC-AL, HIC-MENA and HLRN, operate more or less exclusively under the HIC-Umbrella, others such as HIC-AA (Mazingira Institute) and HIC-AF (ENDA-RUP) run other projects and programs. Moreover, all main HIC bodies have their own funding sources and budgets. In the absence of more coordinated decision-making on strategic priorities (as described in 4.2) and the corresponding allocation of resources, as well as the lack of

consolidated financial reporting (see 4.9) the lack of transparency regarding how resources are distributed and used leaves HIC vulnerable to questioning.

Moreover, given the overall scarce resources available to HIC, this largely unreal, unwieldy and complex organizational structure should be considered a kind of luxury, resulting in high "transaction costs" within the organization, e.g. for communications, coordination, election processes, travel, etc. It is even more problematic as it also negatively affects transparency and accountability.

**Graph: HIC's Organisational Structure in Practice**

(Solid lines indicating really functional structures with their own projects and programs; dotted lines indicating structures without adequate resources and activities within HIC. ACHR should be considered a separate organization.)



**4.6 Membership, Internal Interaction and Procedures**

**4.6.1 Membership**

As stated in section 2.1.2, HIC and its General Secretariat have made a major effort to rebuild membership after the recent (2000-2003) crisis. It has focused on building a sound web-based membership database and membership management system, in effect since 2005. Throughout, many new members signed up, indicating that HIC's good reputation and international visibility has kept membership in HIC attractive.

In spite of these impressive figures, HIC still suffers from a largely inactive membership as documented by low voter turn out in recent Board Elections, declining numbers of members paying their fees, and the slow response to the internal membership survey used in this evaluation.

Members seem to join HIC more to become part of a globally known network of like-minded organizations than to really engage in joint activities or initiatives, which may often be beyond their capacities.

Every civil society organization has an active core group that may be relatively small, but this is the group that keeps the balls in the air and the organization moving ahead. In HIC's case, our perception is there is a strong, but relatively small group of around 60 to 110 members, which interacts as regularly as possible at HIC meetings, events, elections or other joint activities that go beyond mere contacts or requests for information. This is a major resource for the organization, especially given the seniority of many of the core group's members, but it does raise the question of both continuity and effective ways of meeting the challenges of dealing with new issues and working innovatively. Moreover, both the Nairobi workshop and the surveys suggest indicate that members would like a much deeper, more satisfying relationship with HIC, and are frustrated by limited contacts between member organizations and HIC global bodies, usually through just one or two key persons, while other staff or members of a HIC member organization are hardly aware of their HIC membership or HIC'S activities or services. This poses both an interesting challenge and a significant opportunity for HIC, which requires both communicational and deliberative initiatives, as discussed in more depth under recommendations.

Actual global or regional activities and initiatives of HIC seem to be mainly driven by an even smaller group of HIC members and key stakeholders, namely the coordinators of the RFPs and TNs and their employed staff, and to a lesser extent by the elected Board members. This real "nucleus" of HIC may in total comprise about 20-30 persons, who manage and direct the organization. While it is important for any organization to count on a solid body of serious, committed people who will ensure the work gets done no matter what the obstacles, in this day and age, it is increasingly important to ensure that members are constantly drawn into both decision-making and implementation phases of the organization's activities. Indeed, members are unlikely to participate in implementation of events or campaigns, if they do not feel they participated in the diagnosis and other processes that led to their development. This is a real challenge – often to overworked staff it seems easier or “more efficient” to do the work themselves than to have to coordinate volunteers or bring in “outsiders” who may not understand or grasp what has to be done quickly enough.

For civil society organizations, rich in ideas and innovation but poor in resources (such as funding or media access), the only way to widely propagate ideas and experiences is often through “contagion”, bringing in wider and wider circles of likeminded groups willing to take their messages to new audiences and, at the same time, innovate, change and appropriate them, thereby enriching them.

One way of describing HIC might be to say that rather than being a real membership-based network or coalition, it is a successful initiative of a core group of likeminded and committed individuals from different cultural and national backgrounds, who have managed to build-up and loosely hold together a much larger group of supporters and allies. People with personal commitments and loyalties to each other are always at the heart of any really successful civil society organization. At the same time, with democratization expanding and growing more profound, at



least in some corners of the world, it is vital that this core group become the backbone of much broader networks. It must resist the tendency (and we all have it!) of closing in on itself and preaching primarily to the converted. In this sense, again, new membership is vital, as is a concentrated effort to reinforce the participation of community-based organizations, despite their inherent instability, particularly compared to the well-established NGOs that seem to form the basic skeleton of HIC in most countries and to some extent internationally.

This openness to new organizations with different perspectives and modus operandis is particularly important given that the strong leadership exercised by these long-standing actors also means that HIC is also an "aging organization", with all the wisdom that involves, but also the growing urgency of finding concrete mechanisms for passing that wisdom along to a new generation of activists. It would be helpful for HIC to discuss this explicitly and make a very obvious effort to bring in, train and make the most of new leaders.

#### 4.6.2 Internal Interaction

As a result of its membership and organizational structure, internal interaction between HIC's global bodies and its membership, is also largely dominated by the same group of key persons and actors in the different bodies described above.

While there is obviously a lot of interaction and collaboration around key events or activities between these key actors across regions, continents and issues, similar direct interaction between "ordinary" HIC members in the sense of a real network is scarce. Instead, with a few exceptions, namely in Latin America, internal interaction within HIC can be characterized by a kind of hub-and-spoke relationship, where the different HIC bodies are the hub and the spokes are individual members. That is, communication flows between individual members and the hubs, but not necessarily among members.

This also tends to characterize HIC's contacts and interaction with external actors: at international or regional events, conferences or bodies, HIC's representatives tend to come from its organizational core, namely the President, the GS, the RFP or thematic network coordinators.

Members, if present at all, remain more in the background. HIC's representation to external bodies can therefore be described as rather "centralized". (Admittedly, scarce financial resources limit a broader participation of members in international events. However, there might be options to more delegate such representative functions beyond the "inner circle" of HIC.) This is not an effective way of training new leaders and empowering them to play a strong and growing role.

One of the main barriers to more efficient interaction within HIC is the organization's lack of suitable quality opportunities for collective deliberation, be this at the national, regional, thematic or, above all, at the international levels. In general, we found HIC's member organizations and individual leaders to be highly skilled, well-prepared, mostly experienced and very dedicated. However, we found that generally speaking HIC has not managed to become the sum of its parts (and more). We attribute this to the lack of suitable spaces for collective deliberations,

planning and decision-making, and are convinced that this is one of the most important issues that the organization needs to resolve.

#### 4.6.3 Internal Procedures

The ambiguous, very "personalized" nature of HIC outlined above is also reflected in its constitution, its practical application and overall internal decision-making procedures. The constitution surprisingly leaves open where actual decision-making takes place within HIC. While the functions of the General Assembly, which in most similar organizations would be the main decision-making body, are basically limited to supervising functions related to reporting and auditing, the main decision-taking powers seem to be left to Executive Board.

It is also confusing and critical that the definition of member's voting rights for the Board as HIC's obviously main governing body is not very well-defined and transparent: The decision on members voting rights for Board representatives seems to be basically left to "electoral committees" of the different bodies without clear guidelines how to define eligibility for voting, and seems to be only superficially supervised by the Board and the GS<sup>42</sup>.

Although the definition of voting rights seem to have been handled mostly in a rather transparent way, such practice devalues both the Constitution and the meaning of membership<sup>43</sup>. Moreover, it also entails the risk of arbitrariness and subsequent contestation of such decisions<sup>44</sup>.

Apart from the ambiguities of HIC's constitution, HIC's general internal decision-taking procedures are largely not transparent enough, an issue that has been raised by quite a number of members met in the evaluation. In the absence of clear rules and overall strategic planning, it remains unclear where, how and by whom important decisions on HIC's strategic directions, priorities and, most criticized by members, resource allocation are taken.

It's fine to be flexible and adapt to different needs and views. But HIC must provide some clarity about who makes decisions, where decisions are made, and how members can influence them. Ambiguity in this sense may have been a rational response to dictatorship, distortions and threats in the 1970s and 1980s, but today the challenge is for civil society organizations – most of them fighting for democracy at some level – to also lead with their example in this area.

Specifically, HIC's constitution and/or by-laws must clearly define voting rights and electoral procedures, offer a clear definition of membership, and a clear definition of regional bodies and their responsibilities.

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<sup>42</sup> It was not possible in the evaluation to find out what defines eligibility for voting. It definitely is not the payment of membership fees which would limit the number of voting members for all HIC bodies to only 30-40. It can also not be the "activeness" of members (whatever this means), since the no. of members eligible for voting in most cases (HIC bodies) clearly exceeds the number of "active" members according to the HIC membership database.

<sup>43</sup> Lack of clarity on voting rights may also be a reason for the generally low voter turn-out across all HIC bodies. It also raises the question on what basis board representatives are elected for bodies that do not really exist, e.g. HSEN, WAS or Asia.

<sup>44</sup> Obviously, there have been cases of such contestation in the past, most recently around the election of HSEN Board Representatives.

They must also define members' rights and responsibilities, and how decisions regarding the allocation of resources are made.

These definitions must be the product of discussion, debate and decisions that involve and seriously consider members' perspectives on these crucial issues. Regional bodies should also play a stronger role in securing financing for HIC activities.

#### 4.6.4 Working Groups and Forms of Collaboration

In general, it seems to be difficult for HIC to establish and maintain functioning working groups with real participation and support from its membership. Given the fact that only very few HIC members are able and willing to dedicate time and effort to a longer-term commitment in a working group (of course this is also a communications issue) the question arises how many working groups really make sense? In the end, the work seems to be mainly done by the Board members, namely by those who are formally employed within HIC (as coordinators or staff).

HIC members work at a variety of scales or "levels" and there are times when they seem to leap back and forth between these levels without being all that aware that that is what they are doing. Sometimes key reference points, that should be mutually understood if genuine communication is to occur, are subject to widely divergent interpretations. During the general assembly at Nairobi in January 2007, references to "the water campaign" clearly meant very different things to the different people present, but they did not seem to be aware of this. These attempts to produce order by stuffing a lot of widely different issues into apparently similar sacks can help improve understanding, or simply obfuscate it. It is our sense that these working groups may reflect this lack of distinction between widely different scales. It is hard for someone in the US or Europe, for example, where social housing is usually rented from either large corporate or large government bodies, to understand realities in Latin America or elsewhere, where the issue hinges on people's battles to build their own homes, communities, territories within towns and cities. This kind of leaping between levels and realities seems particularly apparent in the functioning, or non-functioning, of working groups.

The existence of the working groups and how they work (or fail to work) reflects a crucial weakness that HIC faces and therefore, potentially, a powerful opportunity. As an international civil society organization fighting for better habitats for all, based on rights (rather than charity or other approaches less conducive to building basic human dignity), HIC is in a unique position to connect, to articulate (in the sense of associating organizations and expressing ideas). Its own lack of resources and nature mean it will always be weak when it comes to empirical and particularly quantitative data and approaches based on it. Where it is strongest is in its ability to analyze, to conceptualize, and to organize and activate genuine, on-the-ground efforts to mobilize for change. When it attempts to mix quantitative and qualitative information / approaches, it tends to lose its way. Powerful unions in Europe and North America, for example, have done excellent studies of the internationalization of a handful of corporations that have taken over water and other utilities, not always to the benefit of the people "served". It would be

foolish for HIC to attempt to duplicate this, but it could certainly be working with and helping to spread that information around. Moreover, it could also be spreading that kind of strategy/ approach around too, in that some HIC members and friends, particularly those in academic positions or some study-oriented NGOs, could be well-placed to contribute to data collection from their corner of the world.

This requires a much stronger focus, oriented by the question – what can HIC add to this topic/issue/ effort that no one else in the world can contribute? Big issues are being addressed by lots of people and groups worldwide, but often these efforts lead to little concrete change, because everyone is trying to do everything. These large tasks need to be chipped into smaller pieces, and HIC could contribute to both the organization of these tasks, and coordinating the results when or if they can be completed. For example, recognizing that certain issues are higher priorities in certain regions, could lead to delegating work on these issues to specific regions or countries. This could simplify the logistics of meetings and coordination, and improve the quality of the work. Is this what has happened, somewhat spontaneously, with the HLRN? Is it harmful to try to push the whole world onto the shoulders of specific issues groups functioning in specific regions?

#### 4.7 Communications

HIC's communication strategy and practice was another crucial issue brought up by some external interviewees and many members, particularly in the evaluation workshop in Nairobi. Undoubtedly, communications both internal and external, are perceived as a weak spot on HIC's part. Despite their enormous strengths, experience and commitment, HIC's leadership is in general weak in their communications skills, and times and demands have changed considerably in the 30 years that HIC has existed. They have, like any organization worth its salt, put enormous effort into building a solid, knowledgeable international voice and enlisting grassroots organizations, NGOs, and academics. At the same time, and particularly in today's highly "mediatized" world, this nose-to-the-grindstone approach has meant that HIC has not developed the kind of broader recognition that could help it to achieve its many valuable ends.

In this sense, and based in particular on the opportunity to hear members' and board members' views during the Nairobi workshop, this seems to be one area where substantial innovation could greatly strengthen both members' own identification with HIC and its effectiveness on the world, regional and even national stages. This kind of change is easy to talk about, but hard to do well. Many organizations that have strong media profiles are basically facades – a strong face in the media for the 6 o'clock news, but nothing really happening behind the scenes and "down below", where real people live. HIC's great strength is that, while we may not be seeing as much of the tip as we would like, there is a substantial iceberg built by the collective efforts' of citizens down below. How to mobilize this and make more of it is one of the great challenges for HIC in the 21st century.

At some level and in different ways, HIC members and leaders alike have all commented on this need for improved communications both internally but also externally – a clearer HIC profile, a simpler more straightforward answer to the questions: What is HIC? What can HIC do for me/us? What can I/we do for HIC? These are the crucial questions for any member-based organization and HIC, despite all its layers of experience, structures, narratives, desires, proposals and shortcomings is no exception, far from it.

It is clear that the organization itself does not have sufficient expertise to resolve this dilemma and it will require sensitive, timely and ongoing work to develop the right public profile for this organization, using an appropriate, participatory methodology. This will require substantial membership participation, to fully mobilize the organization’s full potential communicationally-speaking, but also to enable members to become more effective in their own communications efforts, as they are undoubted crucial elements within any campaign of this nature.

#### 4.8 Services and Products

HIC members seem to have two sets of expectations regarding HIC and these are also reflected in the views and roles played by board members, staff and other members of the core participants. While some queried whether HIC should even be providing “services and products”, focusing on its “political” role of mobilizing for or against specific habitat-related measures, others clearly expected at least a minimum set of “services and products”. It would be useful for HIC members and leaders to sit down and establish what HIC services and products are or should be, how members would enhance and contribute to them, and how HIC structures could better produce and distribute them.

Undoubtedly, information is one of HIC’s most important services and products, particularly the accumulated wisdom of 30 years’ worth of civil society organizations working to solve crucial habitat issues using people-centred and rights-based approaches. In this sense, key products include:

- Regional and international newsletters;
- Membership lists and the ways that members communicate with and participate in HIC instances;
- Forums, seminars, workshops and other sessions, which may focus on issues or skills training, or, preferably, given the limited resources, both. This is a crucial service to membership that would greatly serve HIC’s purposes worldwide. Moreover, it is very likely that all the skills necessary exist in different locations across the HIC network. The crucial point is how the HIC network brings the skills together with the people who need them. All HIC leaders should have access to effective communications training, where they should learn to use a microphone, speak to the media, prepare a news release, publish a leaflet, prepare an effective power point presentation, organize an effective meeting, etc.

- Websites, blogs, e-groups and other electronic tools for exchanging information and improving coordination and cooperation among people / groups in different locations.
- Documentation and documentation centers, which in this day and age include leaflets, booklets, books, films, and the places where these elements are available to interested users. Participants in the communications group at the Nairobi workshop emphasized the importance of maintaining and expanding traditional technologies (books, printed materials, distribution points for same) given that not everyone has the same level or quality of access to newer electronic tools.

#### 4.9 Financial Management

While the focus of the evaluation was clearly not on HIC's financial management, accounting and reporting practices (this would have required a more audit-type of evaluation approach), there are few observations closely related to internal decision-taking and accountability vis-à-vis the membership, which are worthwhile to be stated here:

- Financial planning and resource allocation is mainly being done in a decentralized way by the HIC bodies, which run their own programs and projects. Moreover, there seems to be little coordination and communication of such planning across the different HIC bodies.

It seems likely that several of the individual branches of HIC actually have more funding than HIC overall, or the HIC GS. This reflects one of the difficulties with a civil society organization of this nature: most funding is for projects and not for building organizations. It therefore does not reflect the needs or requirements of the organization, but rather focuses on a specific aspect of the organization's activities, sometimes to the detriment of its other responsibilities.

While such decentralized planning might thus be necessary and justified in a diverse organization like HIC, it raises the question whether there should not be a minimum information on new programs and projects, and their budgets to the members, e.g. by publishing this on the websites or the electronic newsletters.

- Currently, each organization seems to present individual project reports and its corresponding accounting to the separate funders, an onerous task in and of itself, as accounting and reporting needs of funding agencies seem to differ considerably. Therefore they cannot always be complied with by standard accounting software features, resulting in additional work and hassle.

While it is beyond the scope of the evaluation to assess the quality of HIC's accounting, it generally seems to fulfill the requirements of the different funders. HLRN, in particular, seems to have established a rather professional accounting system, which has been continuously developed and improved over the past years.

While the functioning Regional Programs, i.e. MENA and SARP, do their own accounting, this is also aggregated by the HLRN Global Coordination Office. HLRN uses specialized accounting software allowing for cost-centre accounting in order to accommodate to the needs of project or program specific accounting.

In addition, the HLRN Global Office also offers advice and support to other HIC bodies in their financial management, and the HLRN Global Program Coordinator also serves as the HIC Treasurer.

- Transparency and accountability are increasingly issues with civil society organizations as they have been for many years for governments and the private sector. HIC's greatest weakness in this sense is probably the lack of specific financial reports from each regional focal point and the GS, and a consolidated report for HIC as a whole that could be communicated to the members.

## 5. Recommendations

### 5.1 Main Challenges for the Future

In a globalized world, civil society organizations need global voices more than ever. HIC could be positioned to provide one such voice on the issues that it addresses from the unique perspective of the people who are, or should be, protagonists in debates and decision-making about the future of human habitat. Organizing this voice or, more precisely, choir of voices, ensuring it expresses both diversity and sufficient harmony and clarity in its essential messages, would be a mammoth challenge for any organization. For civil society groups that are normally underfunded and discriminated against, this is particularly tough. However, these are groups accustomed to overcoming seemingly unbeatable odds, the Davids that have been defeating Goliaths since before human history officially began.

For HIC, this must involve simplifying its structure and being capable of expressing its message in one simple, distinctive phrase, capable of capturing people's imaginations and inspiring them to join in and become part of this worldwide effort. It requires taking the combination of people, political and technical skills that it uses so successfully in some corners of the world and spreading these abilities more evenly through different countries, organizations, regions.

Two key challenges are projecting HIC communicationally more effectively, and articulating the organization in such a way as to make regional and thematic voices more clearly heard, generating global coherency without opaquing the richness of diversity that is an essential part of HIC.

We refer to HIC as an "organization" in this day of "forums" and above all "networks", to distinguish its structure – and its structural needs – from what is undoubtedly an essential aspect of its methodology, that is networking. In fact, HIC became a networked and pioneered networking techniques long before the advent of the electronic technologies that have made this increasingly ubiquitous in our day and age. At this stage in its development, we are convinced that it is once again called upon to step up and ahead of the pack and experiment successfully with new structures for more effective and democratic governance amongst civil society organizations attempting to function and influence events globally, that is at local, national, regional and international levels.

### 5.2 Recommendations

Against this background, the recommendations developed in the following are given to address these challenges and to work towards a more efficient HIC. As far as possible, they are structured in a similar way as the previous section on lessons-learnt and conclusions.

#### Focus and Profile:

- **Developing a clearer profile and focus in an increasingly more competitive environment:** Against the background of a growing diversity of organizations and networks working in similar fields and increasing competition for funding, it will be important to sharpen



HIC's specific profile and to communicate its comparative advantages. Rather than trying to address all possible issues around housing and land rights, it might be better to focus on only a limited number of strategic issues and initiatives that can be appropriately addressed and followed-up with the resources available ("less is more"). However, what these strategic priorities should be cannot really be answered by an external evaluation, but would have to be defined by HIC itself.

On parallel lines, there is an increasing challenge to look for synergies, and to overcome reservations against more intensive interaction and collaboration with other like-minded organizations and networks working in similar areas as HIC. Instead of the present practice of more event-related shorter-term collaboration, it might thus be worthwhile to think of longer-term cooperation agreements with suitable partners to work jointly along common strategic issues.

#### Strategic Planning and Impact Orientation:

- **Providing more space for strategic thinking and planning:** Closely linked to the challenge of developing a clearer profile and defining strategic priorities, HIC should try to provide for more scope for internal discourse with a broader involvement of its members, and to explore options for:
  - promoting more active participation of members in strategic and operational planning of the general Global Program and the different Regional Programs;
  - and more active member involvement and/or consultation in the formulation of specific programs or projects submitted for funding to potential donors.

In more particular, to move away from the present largely “event-driven” mode of action and to develop a more strategic perspective, it is recommended that HIC prepare a medium-term strategic plan (over 3-5 years, or president’s term of office). The development of such a plan would also be instrumental for improving communications and cohesion within HIC, and for future fund-raising initiatives.

For both purposes, it will be important to clearly define priorities for action, their expected outputs and impacts, and appropriate indicators for monitoring and evaluation.

- **Introducing benchmarks and indicators for measuring achievements and impacts:** With a view to defining and communicating more clearly what HIC wants to achieve, it is further recommended to formulate in future some key indicators and benchmark criteria for HIC's overall strategic objectives and activities.

This would also considerably facilitate the assessment of HIC's impacts and achievements, and improve transparency and reporting both to its members and the outside world.

#### Target Audience and Interaction with the External Environment:

- **Overcoming the limitations of the UN-system:** Given the limited impacts of advocacy and lobbying for housing and land rights within the UN-system and at the international level, HIC should try to better

address the fact that other international key actors and stake-holders outside the UN-system, such as the World Bank, the regional development banks and the EU, through their policies and funding practices have much more influence on national housing policies than the resource-strapped UN agencies. In more particular and complementary to the following recommendation, it is proposed to explore options to influence policy-formulation and resource allocation of such international organizations at country or regional level.

- **Developing more "localized" country-specific initiatives:** On parallel lines, and also to respond to a certain "frustration" of many members with HIC's emphasis at the international stage, the translation of HIC's international initiatives into more country-specific approaches must be assessed a major challenge for HIC. Actual improvements and policy changes can only be achieved by embarking on more direct interaction and dialogue with governments, and by building stronger local, i.e. country-specific coalitions and alliances of HIC members.

Taking into consideration HIC's limited resources and capacities, it might be recommendable to strategically select only a few countries, where a sufficient number of members is working on similar objectives (e.g. fighting against forced evictions in urban areas), and where there is some basic scope for interaction and dialogue with governmental institutions. With a view to improving members' involvement in strategic decision-making, kind and scope of such country-specific interventions or initiatives, as well as their expected outputs and impacts, should be transparently discussed and coordinated within the network.

The learning experience of such "pilot cases" could then be used for dissemination to other countries and for incrementally building issue-specific member working groups or "networks" across country boundaries and regions.

#### Organizational Structure

- **Simplifying and streamlining organizational structures:** With the present largely parallel organizational set-up (and thematic coverage) of HIC and HLRN, and the overall scarcity of resources, it is recommended to explore options for simplifying and streamlining present structures.

One possible option could be to merge HLRN with HIC's global structure into a new "HIC-HLRN", a name that is in practice already being used in public appearances like at the WSF in Nairobi. Since HLRN is already providing important resources and services to HIC, e.g. the hosting of websites or financial services, this would allow for even more synergies and, at the same time, reduce the complexity and inconsistencies of the present HIC structures. Under the aspect of cost reduction and with a longer-term time horizon, the General Secretariat and the HLRN Global Coordination Office could be merged and possibly located more centrally than the present GS office in Chile. It will, however, be crucial not to dilute the GS's overall coordinating and facilitating role in any possible alternative set-up.

In such a simplified set-up, which might also better reflect and represent HIC's relatively small active membership, there would be only

one structure with global coverage, i.e. HIC-HLRN, and a number of regionally organized member bodies, either in the form of consolidated formal networks like HIC-AL and to a lesser extent HIC-MENA, or more informal or ad-hoc structures like in Anglophone and Francophone Africa, Europe, North America and in Asia, with the potential to develop over time into more stable regional reference centers.

On parallel lines, it is recommended to give up the ambitious idea of additional global "Thematic Networks" in favor of a more flexible and demand-driven approach of issue-specific working groups or committees of like-minded members, which could be organized both regionally and globally. The present HLRN regional sub-program in South Asia could, for instance, could feature as an established regional thematic program in such a set-up. Other working groups would have the possibility to develop in similar ways, provided members are interested and willing to contribute with their own resources.

In general, existing networks such as WAS in Latin America should be treated as what they are (small, regional, largely informal), but should be more integrated into the relevant HIC regional network – by publishing articles in regional and GS newsletters for example.

Moreover, any body (whether called a network, working group, or simply a committee) should have a reliable, responsive and responsible contact person as a minimum. If one does not exist, the body should be considered inactive and treated as such.

As it is difficult, however, to come up with a viable alternative organizational set-up for a complex association like HIC, the above options should rather be considered "food for thought" for subsequent deliberation within HIC.

#### Membership, Internal Interaction and Procedures

- **Making membership more meaningful:** At present, HIC membership does not seem to really have a meaning, neither in terms of commitments or obligations nor in terms of benefits and rights. Both aspects of membership should therefore urgently be defined in a better and more transparent way including appropriate sanctions and incentives. For this purpose, it is recommended to discuss and consider the following options:

**Commitments and obligations:** Membership is recommended to involve some more real commitments and obligations like:

- Payment of membership fees: Presently, according to the Constitution, the only real obligation for members, it is not really enforced, and more seriously, in contradiction to the Constitution, has no impact on the member's voting rights. For reasons of legitimacy and accountability, it is therefore recommended either to completely give up this obligation or to enforce it more seriously<sup>45</sup>.
- Participation in HIC activities: This second, much more ambiguous obligation formulated by the Constitution needs urgently to be de-

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<sup>45</sup> Giving up membership fees in their present negligible form would have little impact on HIC's financial sustainability.

fined more transparently and verifiably, instead of being largely left to the discretion of the Board. It could, for instance, involve obligations like submitting a short annual report on a member's activities related to HIC (e.g. on the "HIC Land and Housing Rights Day", the support of "Urgent Action Appeals", etc.) and/or the regular updating of member information on the HIC-website(s).

- Participation in elections: Given the present dismal participation in HIC electoral processes, it is suggested to consider making this compulsory.
- Budgeting for participation in HIC activities: With a view to increasing the sense of ownership of members, it is suggested to explore the possibilities of requesting members to budget for their participation in HIC activities in their own project and programs submitted to funding agencies (see above).

**Benefits and rights:** On parallel lines, it will be important to establish and communicate tangible and valuable benefits and rights attached to a HIC-membership, e.g. :

- Access to HIC services: Presently there is no distinction in access to the services provided by HIC's global and regional bodies, and therefore, arguably, little value in these services. An appropriate incentive might thus be to limit access to certain services (e.g. parts of the websites, specific newsletters, etc.) to members fully complying with their obligations.
- Rights to participate in HIC-specific events: On similar lines, it might be useful to also give more value to the participation in specific HIC events, in particular the General Assemblies (GA). However, this would also require to make such events more meaningful and interesting for the members. In particular, the character of the GA would have to be changed from an acclamation to a real decision-making body.
- Voting rights: Voting rights should be exclusively linked to full compliance with a member's obligations. The current practice of defining or somehow "negotiating" voting rights in or between the different HIC bodies, which seriously undermines the organization's credibility and legitimacy, should be given up as soon as possible. On parallel lines, the appointment/selection of candidates for elections will have to be
- Influencing project and program planning: An additional membership incentive, also in the sense of increasing ownership, could be to involve members more directly in HIC's global and/or regional project and program applications, e.g. by requiring support or endorsement of a certain share (quorum) of members for all applications to external funding agencies.

It is clearly understood that such narrower interpretation of HIC membership could lead to a significant reduction of "active" HIC members as compared to the present much looser definition. However, it would definitely improve transparency and accountability, and, at the same time, provide some basic incentives for members to participate more actively in HIC.

Trying to serve, manage and get the most out of 75-100 members is also much easier (and less exhausting of energies and resources) than trying to cover 400 widely dispersed and barely interested groups. In general, HIC should give priority to quality over quantity.

A kind of compromise might be to think of a distinction between two types of members: "core members" complying with all obligations and entitled to full benefits and rights, and more "affiliate members" who would still have access to some basic services to be defined for this purpose.

- **Introducing new members adequately:** As a complementary measure, HIC should prepare, debate, approve and publish a Guide to New Members (and Old) that clearly defines membership, how it is renewed on an annual basis, and how it can be fully exercised. This should include information about fees, voting rights, decision-making structures and how members influence them, resources and assistance to members in finding funding to contribute to their HIC participation.
- **Empowering members and improving their sense of ownership:** In addition to clarifying HIC's membership concept, it will be important to continue empowering and encouraging members to interact more closely between themselves, within the regional structures and at the global level.

In the past, the focus of such initiatives has been mainly on training, other capacity-building measures and information provided by or through the different regional bodies or thematic networks. More efforts will be needed to reduce the dependency of members on HIC's global, regional and thematic programs or projects, and to better mobilize their own resources and contributions.

With particular view to improving the sense of ownership of members and to developing HIC towards a more membership-based organization, it is therefore recommended to explore options for including tangible member contributions, either in kind or financial, in all major program or project activities at regional or global level. As stated above, such contributions could be promoted by requiring budgeting for joint activities as a condition for membership, and by encouraging members to include resources for joint activities in their applications to external funders.

- **Creating more transparency in internal working procedures and decision-making processes:** Major efforts are also recommended to improve transparency of working procedures and decision-making, with particular view to resource allocation within HIC. In more detail, this would have to involve:
  - a streamlining of HIC's constitution clarifying the presently surprisingly vaguely defined functions and responsibilities of the different bodies;
  - establishing procedures for internal project and program planning at global and regional level with improved membership participation, and for communicating planning results to the members (e.g. publication of simple annual work plans);

- introducing more regular and more concise reporting on the progress of global and regional programs and projects to the members, including consolidated financial reports.
- **Finding more opportunities for direct interaction:** For providing more scope for strategic discourse within the organization and for successfully mobilizing members, it will be imperative to find more opportunities for direct personal interaction, which presently basically takes place, usually under enormous time pressure and minimum participation, at large-scale international events like WUFs and WSFs. There seems to be a clear need for more HIC-specific meetings and events at country, regional and global level.

Taking into consideration that such personal meetings are quite costly for a global network and can probably not be covered by HIC's Global and/or Regional Programs, it will be important to mobilize the member's own resources for such purposes. In a real membership-based organization worth its salt, members should really be interested to participate in strategic discussions and decision-making, and thus also be willing to contribute financially. Although many members may lack sufficient resources for this, HIC also has many relatively well-established and consolidated members, who should be able to cover their own travel expenses for such meetings or to obtain possibly needed approval from their external funding agencies for such purposes.

In general, also in the sense of empowering the members (see below), it is recommended to encourage members to include expenses and resources for HIC-specific activities in their own project and program planning, and their proposals to external funding agencies<sup>46</sup>.

### Communications

- **Defining a communication strategy with clear core messages :** HIC should establish a brief summary of its nature, mission and purpose, that is easily understood and present on most of its websites, publications and in members' websites and publications. This is not as hard as it sounds and would serve HIC well. During the Nairobi workshop, for example, the following key ideas emerged:  
*Habitat International Coalition: A global network of people's organizations working worldwide to build decent, dignified communities for people.*  
Communicationally speaking, HIC should develop the ability to better synthesize its main points and issues. Lengthy documents do no service to its proposals and ability to visualize and incarnate innovative, effective ways of changing existing ills.
- **Developing HIC's collective profile:** Moreover, HIC should develop its collective profile, by actively encouraging members to use its logo, links and other relevant information on their letterheads, websites and other communications tools.

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<sup>46</sup> In a time calling for increasing international networking and mobilizing synergies, it is expected that most funding agencies would be willing to support such initiatives provided that they are well-defined and transparent.

The GS should also focus on HIC's on both external and internal profile and communications to ensure all members are aware of and participating appropriately in the different HIC regional and global initiatives.

- **Strengthening media relations:** HIC should explore options to develop and coordinate a media data base for publication of key campaign and other information. This is no easy task since although several media corporations are actually global, the media remain essentially national in nature, with few genuinely global media. However, these are important to cultivate (often through national or a handful of key international offices) and HIC GS should have the capacity to do this. This also has implications for where the GS is located or, at the very least, its ability to move key speakers/faces around.
- **Using potentials of electronic media to foster greater deliberation:** It is recommended, moreover, to further explore options of better using new Internet technologies, in particular thematic blogs or Wikis that could considerably facilitate strategic discussion and discourse, e.g. by thematic threads or groups. Although there are still many limitations of such approaches, in particular with regard to the access of many members to the Internet, there also seems to quite some room for improvement, especially at the regional level, e.g. in Latin America, MENA or Asia.

The same holds true for HIC's other communication channels and tools (e.g. newsletters, websites), which have more the character of "bulletins" than of platforms for discussion of strategic content and priorities.

#### Services and Products

- **Improving the practice-orientation of tools and instruments:** Since HIC and HLRN are investing considerable resources in the production of tools and instruments, e.g. the "Housing and Land Rights Toolkit", the "Violations Database" and the "Urgent Actions Appeal System" on one hand, and the actual usage by its members remains limited on the other, there seems to be a clear need to improve their practice-orientation and ease of use.

In more particular, it would be important to adjust these tools to the actual capacities and demands of the members, and to reduce the needs for information collection and analysis in favor of more action-oriented approaches.

With particular view to HIC/HLRN's intention to embark on a major new global mapping and monitoring initiative to document both housing and land rights violations, and solutions and success stories, it is urgently recommended to learn from past experience, in particular of the "Violations Database" and its limited appeal to the members. Moreover, it should be carefully assessed to what extent similar initiatives have already been launched by other organizations (e.g. UN-Habitat), who might be better positioned and equipped for such work. At any rate, it is recommended to start such activities first on a pilot basis in just a few countries and to evaluate this experience before extending it to a larger number of countries.

In general, HIC and HLRN seem to produce more documents and written information than both the members and the general public can realistically digest. Less and more concise information could thus be more efficient, and reduce the burden on members and HIC/HLRN staff.

- **Exploring options of developing a "flagship" product:** To better communicate HIC's profile and comparative advantages, and to support an improved communication strategy, the idea was raised to develop an appropriate "flagship" product in the Nairobi evaluation workshop. This could e.g. involve a high quality annual report, a meaningful mapping of housing and land rights violations, etc.

Another specific "flagship" effort could be the creation of a Wikipedia-type glossary of habitat-related language, issues, rights, violations and solutions. This could influence the global language and global thinking in this field, as well as offering a specific and very useful service.

However, given HIC's scarce resources and limited professional capacities, it is recommended to carefully assess the feasibility of launching and sustaining such an ambitious high-profile product, which in case of failure may have serious negative repercussions.

#### Financial Management

- **Introducing consolidated overall financial reporting:** With a view to further improving transparency and accountability of HIC's financial management, it is recommended to produce a simple, concise annual report with financial statements for each regional focal point and HIC GS. This would significantly simplify understanding of the organization, since a budget and financial statements are powerful indicators of where the priorities, activities and actual power are located within an organization.

Moreover, it would probably go a long way to remedying the present confusion about HIC's financial status. This would also, in all likelihood, force recognition of the very different resources and structures that today are partially masked by the "thematic network" or "working group" labels.



## **Annex**

1. Detailed Assessment of Selected HIC Bodies (separate documents)
  - 1.a HIC Latin America (HIC-AL)
  - 1.b HIC Francophone Africa (HIC-AF)
  - 1.c Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN)
2. Documentation of the Internal Member Survey (separate document)
3. Documentation of the Survey of the External Environment (separate document)
4. Documentation of the Evaluation Workshop at Nairobi WSF 2007 (separate document)
5. List of Documents and other Information Consulted
6. Overall TOR for the Evaluation



## List of Documents and Information Consulted

- Habitat International Coalition – HIC; General Secretary: Communicational Strategy Empowering Regional Bodies of Habitat International Coalition 10.2004 to 09.2007 (Project No. 600-600-1235-MISEREOR), July 2004
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- Habitat International Coalition- Housing and Land Rights Network - South Asia Regional Program: Proposal and Operational Plan, 2004–06
- Habitat International Coalition- Housing and Land Rights Network - Middle East / North Africa Region: Proposal and Operational Plan, 2004–06
- Habitat International Coalition Website: <http://www.hic-net.org>
- HIC Regional Body Anglophone Africa Website: <http://www.mazinst.org/>
- HIC Regional Body Francophone Africa Website: <http://www.enda.sn/>
- HIC Regional Body Asia Website: <http://www.achr.net/>
- HIC Regional Body Latinamerica and the Caribbean Website: <http://www.hic-al.org/>
- HIC Regional Body Middle East & North Africa Website: <http://www.hic-mena.org/>
- HIC Regional Body North America Website: <http://www.saveourhomes.org/>
- Housing and Land Rights Network Website: <http://www.hlrn.org/>
- Women and Shelter Network Website: <http://www.hicwas.kabissa.org/>