

**Finding solutions to forced evictions
worldwide:
A priority to meet the MDGs and
implement the Habitat Agenda**

**Executive Summary Report of the
Advisory Group on Forced Evictions (AGFE)¹
to the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT**

April 2007

¹ This report was prepared jointly by Yves Cabannes, AGFE Convenor and Leticia Osorio, AGFE Member. Contributions were made by AGFE Member Cesare Ottolini and UN-HABITAT Staff Members.

1. Introduction

This report presents a summary of the main activities, outcomes and challenges of the work implemented by the Advisory Group on Forced Evictions (AGFE) since its inception in 2004, when its Members were appointed by the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT.² The Advisory Group, originally a key component of the Global Campaign for Secure Tenure, derives its mandate from a resolution of the Governing Council of UN-HABITAT in which it “requests the Executive Director, in line with the recommendations of the World Urban Forum, to establish an advisory group to monitor and identify, and, if so requested, to promote alternatives to unlawful evictions”.³

One of the central issues of the present report is that forced evictions over the last years have increased dramatically in frequency, in number, in level of violence and many times in scale, being outnumbered sometimes in hundreds of thousands and in millions. They are gradually becoming a massive common practice *en lieu* of urban planning and inclusive social policies. Existing information indicates that over the last three years evictions have been taking place or are to take place in at least 60 countries. Forced evictions have become a dramatic reality in both poor and rich countries, affecting each year the lives of millions of children, men, women and the elderly, most of them poor. Forced evictions are putting in jeopardy the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. At the current pace, at least 38⁴ and possibly 70 millions people⁵ will have been evicted between 2000 and 2020, quite a dramatic number when compared with the objective of improving the living and housing conditions of 100 millions slum dwellers by the year 2020. This is a central challenge for our urban future.

The second central issue is that despite the devastating effects of forced evictions, local initiatives taken at various levels and by different actors do indicate that solutions **are** possible and that evictions not only **must** but **can** be averted and addressed in a suitable way to realise Human, Land and Housing Rights. The distinctive feature of the work of AGFE is to identify and support the solutions that are forged everyday to address and to prevent the expansion of the epidemic called forced evictions, and to disseminate these successful practices so that they can be applied elsewhere.

The present Executive Summary Report shows that forced evictions are increasing in number although they are illegal and unjust (section 2). Furthermore, it describes the contribution of AGFE and the limits of its action (section 3). Section 4 deals with the lessons learned and the main findings generated from the first three years of AGFE activities. Proposals are then made for a Research Agenda and an Action Plan (section 5). In the last section some suggestions are made to the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT to be presented to the Governing Council of UN-HABITAT (section 6).

2. The practice of forced eviction is increasing although it is illegal and unjust

The practice of forced evictions constitutes a gross violation of a broad range of human rights, in particular the right to adequate housing, the right to remain, the right to freedom of movement, the right to privacy, the right to property, the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to security of the person, the right to security of the home, the right to security of tenure and the right to

² AGFE is composed of individuals involved with national and local social movements, governments and non-governmental organizations engaged in fighting against forced evictions. Its composition reflects appropriate regional, institutional and gender balance.

³ UN-HABITAT (2003), Governing Council Resolution 19/5: Article 7.

⁴ Estimate by the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE), 2007

⁵ Estimate by the International Alliance of Inhabitants (IAI), 2007.

equality of treatment.⁶ Furthermore, all persons should possess a degree of security of tenure which guarantees legal protection against forced evictions, harassment and other threats.⁷ In several cases, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has concluded that violations of Art. 11(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) had taken place due to the practice of forced evictions implemented or tolerated by States parties. The Committee has asserted in its General Comment n. 4 (1991) that “instances of forced evictions are *prima facie* incompatible with the requirements of the ICESCR and can only be justified in the most exceptional circumstances, and in accordance with the relevant principles of international law” (para. 18).

The General Comment n. 7 (1997) stresses that “States parties shall ensure, prior to carrying out any evictions, and particularly those involving large groups, that all feasible alternatives are explored in consultation with the affected persons, with a view to avoiding, or at least minimizing, the need to use force. Legal remedies or procedures should be provided to those who are affected by eviction orders. States parties shall also see to it that all the individuals concerned have a right to adequate compensation for any property, both personal and real, which is affected. In this respect, it is pertinent to recall article 2.3 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which requires States parties to ensure “an effective remedy” for persons whose rights have been violated and the obligation upon the “competent authorities (to) enforce such remedies when granted” (para. 13). Thus, all countries should adopt national shelter strategies and legally protect people against unfair evictions from their homes or lands.⁸ The jurisprudence of other treaty bodies within the United Nations System, as well as of bodies responsible for monitoring regional human rights instruments, affirms the position that forced evictions constitute a violation of human rights.

Although many countries have ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as other regional human rights instruments which protect human rights, forced evictions continue to occur massively.

The opening presentation of the AGFE Networking Event held during the third session of the World Urban Forum (2006), alerted the public to a disturbing increase in forced evictions carried out massively and violently in the past decade, which many times resulted in victims arbitrarily detained, jailed, tortured, and even assassinated.⁹ The majority of the cases being documented by the AGFE show examples of threats and persecution of community leaders and human rights defenders, as well as of violence and loss of livelihood by the effected persons. Moreover, as it was pointed out during the opening presentation, “the practice of eviction without consultation or adequate alternatives and compensation is *illegal* according to international law; it is also *unjust*, with devastating consequences for those who are affected. In referencing international experience and best practice, it is fundamentally *counterproductive* to the goal of human development.”¹⁰

The impunity to the practice of forced evictions and displacements, the destruction of homes in countries under foreign occupation, armed conflicts, ethnic cleansing, discrimination against

⁶ Resolution 1993/77 of the UN Commission on Human Rights and U.N. Sub-Commission on the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, Resolution 1998/9 on Forced Evictions, E/CN.4/SUB.2/RES/1998/9 (Aug. 20, 1998).

⁷ General Comment n. 4 (1991) of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, para. 8(a).

⁸ Agenda 21, para. 7.b(b), adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992.

⁹ Presentation by Jean du Plessis, Ac. Deputy Director of (COHRE) to the Campaign on Secure Tenure Networking Event: Forced Evictions: Two years of efforts of the UN Advisory Group on Forced Evictions and its partners. World Urban Forum, Monday 19 June 2006.

¹⁰ Ibidem.

vulnerable groups and women in access to housing, unhealthy or unsafe living conditions, all demonstrate that the international ideals are far from being respected at the local level. One of the central causes of evictions is the fact that those who are irregularly occupying land or housing have no security of tenure as in many of these countries the judicial systems argue that access to land is regulated by real estate market forces or limited to acquisition as individual property.

In many cities, evictions have been a result of the implementation of development strategies which allow the retention of urban areas for land speculation, as well as the appropriation by private property owners of the benefits of public investments in infra-structure. As a consequence, the poor and the vulnerable groups are forced out of the better areas of the city to the informality and precariousness of peripheral areas. These operations seek to transfer high-value land from poorer groups to middle and upper income groups.

Land conflicts have been the principal cause of the evictions and violence which afflict rural workers, indigenous communities and tribal peoples. The causes of such conflicts are overwhelmingly the result of struggles for worker's labour rights, for access to land, water and/or natural resources, for the means of employment or production and for the right to organise. Evictions and forced displacements of indigenous communities and tribal peoples not only deprive these communities of their natural resources but also damage or destroy their cultural identity, religious, family and economic traditions.

Evictions have been conducted or tolerated by national and local governments, private property owners, developers, planners, property speculators, real estate companies and international financial institutions in violation of their own laws, constitutions and principles. They have taken place in the name of national security; for the sake of city beautification and development-based projects; for disaster prevention; rental default; among others. Most of them are carried out in obedience to judicial orders, in legal re-possession actions, or in ownership disputes, where the legal decisions ignore the international and constitutional legislation which guarantees the right to housing and other human rights.

The prevention of forced evictions is fundamental to reach the Millennium Development Goal 7 Target 11, which aims at a "significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by the year 2020". The practice of forced evictions leads to the destruction of homes and infrastructures, thereby frustrating the aim of improving current levels of access to housing. The UN Secretary General's MDG Task Force on slums noted that 'meeting this challenge requires a plan for secure tenure, affordable access to land, basic services, and housing finance'.¹¹

3. The AGFE contribution and the limits of its action

3.1 Summary of achievements for the period 2004 -2007

¹¹ The Task Force makes the following recommendation to States: "Enact legislation against forced evictions and provide security of tenure. The forced demolition of urban slums has never reduced poverty – it creates poverty. Forced evictions have never reduced slums – they simply move slum formation elsewhere. Provision of secure tenure in existing settlements with the participation and contribution of existing residents is crucial to the process of slum upgrading. It is important to note that 'security of tenure' describes a continuum of formal and informal legal arrangements that are highly context specific. They range from full land titling to local customary rights of tenure" ([UN Millennium Project \(2005\), A Home in the City. Task Force on Improving the Lives of Slum Dwellers, p. 3](#)).

Reporting to the Executive Director and the Governing Council of UN-HABITAT

A collective effort generated two global reports entitled “Forced Evictions: towards solutions?”. The first one, published in 2005 presented: (a) the activities of the group, (b) cases of eviction threats and innovative cases where local solutions were found, (c) AGFE mission reports, and (d) reflections on innovative solutions and the way forward. The first report was launched during the UN-HABITAT Governing Council in 2005. The second report, containing up to date information on the cases of evictions dealt with by AGFE, is presented along with this Executive Summary Report to the UN-HABITAT Governing Council in April 2007.

Dialogue, lobbying and advocacy at the World Urban Forums

A session on “Fighting Forced Evictions” and a Networking Event on “Fighting Forced Evictions: two years of efforts of the UN Advisory Group and its partners” were organized respectively at the second World Urban Forum in Barcelona in September 2004, and the third one in Vancouver in June 2006. They generated a platform for a rich dialogue between panellists from local and central governments, grassroots and threatened communities, advisory groups and over hundred of participants at each event. These were clear signals that forced evictions had become a burning, difficult and global issue.

Documentation, monitoring and follow-up

Through its Members and its large Network of different actors, AGFE has followed up and monitored planned and carried-out evictions in many countries: Argentina, Botswana, Brazil, China, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Egypt, France, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, India,, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States of America, and Zimbabwe, where Members have provided advisory services to governmental bodies and facilitated provision of legal assistance to the victims. A large number of cases have been documented. Preliminary research has been carried out in order to extract lessons and to guide advocacy activities to prevent and combat evictions. The cases documented so far constitute an important and unique database on both the global situation and measures on how to face evictions.

Mediating and conciliatory missions

Since its creation, AGFE has carried out mediating and conciliatory missions to facilitate dialogue between local and national governments and organisations of civil society to achieve negotiated alternatives in situation where forced evictions were eminent or happening, such as in Curitiba (Brazil), in Rome (Italy) in Santo Domingo (the Dominican Republic) and in Accra (Ghana). These short missions of less than one week duration composed of AGFE Members along with internationally and locally recognized specialists and leaders have generated a highly positive impact.

A voice and a hope

During its three years of existence, AGFE has become *a voice and a hope* for a wide range of institutions and for threatened and evicted communities. It is permanently informed of existing threats and innovative actions and is well connected to the major actors in the field. At the same time, it maintains a permanent communication channel with UN-HABITAT.

3.2. The limits of the work of AGFE

From 2004 to date and despite the aforementioned achievements, AGFE has modestly performed its advisory role to the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT. Its role has also been limited in relation to the dramatic increase of forced evictions taking place worldwide as well as to the ever increasing requests from a large variety of actors. Limited political support and resources have been

obstacles to meeting the needs and to ensuring the regular functioning of the Group, especially with regard to convening AGFE actions, secretariat related activities and for fielding mediating and conciliatory missions.

According to the AGFE mandate derived from UN-HABITAT Governing Council Resolution 19/5, such missions can be undertaken if so requested by the Executive Director considering the demands of affected groups, communities and victims. In practice, this has required a written request to AGFE by a national or local authority. Calls from threatened or forcefully evicted communities and their organisations have not been considered as meeting the requirements for an AGFE intervention in a Member State of the United Nations. Given that in most cases evictions are resulting from a lack of dialogue between related parties, the difficulty in getting invitations from national or local authorities has significantly limited the number of missions that AGFE could have carried out.

AGFE is in need of more political and financial support in order to enable its Members to undertake the activities envisioned in its Terms of Reference, such as carrying out fact-finding and conciliatory missions, documenting and monitoring forced evictions, and facilitating dialogue and training.

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4. Main findings and lessons learnt

4.1. On forced evictions

Evictions tend to be most prevalent in countries or parts of cities with the worst housing conditions and mostly affect the poor people. They also occur as a result of the implementation of repressive discriminatory policies against homeless people, minorities and vulnerable groups. The documented cases show that evictions are deeply reflective of patterns of social inequalities, discrimination and exclusion.

Adding to these phenomena, a large majority of evictions have been executed in compliance with judicial decisions based on national legislations which do not reflect international standards of human rights. Because of this, it is essential that legal protection for affected groups or communities is made available before and during the discussion of the legal case. It is fundamental to strongly urge the judiciary to adopt all necessary measures giving full protection against forced evictions, based upon effective participation, consultation and negotiation with the affected person or groups. It is of utmost importance that judges must give due attention to this practice in discharging their responsibilities as well as undertaking measures, whenever possible, to persuade governments to halt planned evictions and to ensure the provision of adequate remedies and compensation when they occur.

4.2. On innovative solutions

Solutions do exist

The most essential finding is that *solutions and innovative ways out do exist* to avert forced evictions and reduce existing threats. Unfortunately, positive approaches are seldom recognized and are consequently insufficiently documented. Most of the eviction cases submitted to AGFE, even some of the worst ones, do contain elements of answers. These are usually not acknowledged, simply because the emergency or the violence of a case tends to overshadow everything else and places the learning aspect on a secondary level.

Forced evictions as multi-dimension problem

The second finding is that forced eviction is a *multidimensional* problem, with legal, social, political, institutional and economic implications. Innovative solutions are usually those that have been able to address all these dimensions in a simultaneously strategic and tactical manner. In each situation, the combination of these elements is quite unique and that is why the solutions are local and require a case-by-case understanding

Multi-actor process

A third element is that forced evictions are not only a multifaceted issue but at the same time a *multi-actor process*. When the different actors are able to establish a fruitful dialogue, sit down together and look for options to resolve a particular case, solutions are usually found. Lessons from cases and from the missions are briefly summarized: (i) well-organized communities, strong mobilisation and people-driven processes are critical keys to finding positive ways out of forced evictions; (ii) international NGO or CBO networks working in alliance with local organizations have been sometimes instrumental in stopping threats of eviction; (iii) even if local governments have a limited capacity to halt evictions, some have generated major breakthroughs for instance through issuing decrees declaring a municipality a “territory free of evictions” -- decisions that were further replicated and supported; (iv) central governments have in a few cases been able to put into place

preventive policies and practices¹²; (v) the mass media, television, radio, national or local press have been in some cases a key instrument of success, transforming a hidden practice into a national and political issue; (vi) active international solidarity expressed through campaigns, support to national protests and the lobbying for debt swapping in favour of Housing and Land Funds for evicted people have been quite instrumental as well in forging innovative solutions¹³.

In developing international and national strategies and methodologies to prevent and avert forced evictions it is important to consider the local specific conditions and the diversity of affected populations. This is because realization of housing rights is a complex and progressive process and the violations are diverse and occur at different levels. Given this complexity, a range of different tools must be developed and applied for specific and diverse situations. Organisations, faith based bodies, social movements and local and central governments should undertake joint initiatives, share resources and collaborate.

Learning from missions

One of the key added values of the AGFE mediating and conciliatory missions is probably its legitimizing effect on the work of parties directly involved in the search for positive solutions to eviction matters. Even if they worked independently the AGFE missions developed a clear multi-dimension and multi-actor approach and were able to bring together key actors to the process and to establish a basis for dialogue. Unfortunately, in the cases where no follow-up was provided by AGFE (basically for lack of resources), these channels did not last and did not consolidate, resulting in new evictions processes that had been halted for a while. Another highly valued outcome of the missions is that they allowed for exchange of experiences between the members and the local actors at various levels, grassroots, local authorities, advisory groups, etc.

¹² In Brazil, the Ministry of the Cities has created an inter-ministerial Work Group on the prevention of forced evictions, based on a platform designed and discussed by social movements and NGOs. In Uganda, the President directly intervened to stop evictions in Kampala City and urged the local government to build housing units for low-income people instead. As a result, evictions were called off.

¹³ The W Nairobi W Campaign, led by the IAI, contributed to a “debt swap” agreement between the Governments of Kenya and Italy. A great part of the 44 million Euro will be used for the upgrading of slums and provision of security of tenure in the informal settlements of Nairobi

5. Way forward and proposals

5.1 AGFE statement on forced evictions

AGFE reaffirms that evictions must and can be prevented and averted as a way to tackle the international housing crisis. It also emphasizes that ultimate legal responsibility for preventing this practice rests with governments both at national and local levels. AGFE is convinced that by exposing and discussing concrete cases, pressure can be brought to bear on the perpetrators of this human rights violation. To work against forced evictions is to champion the protection of housing rights and social justice.

In order to reduce and prevent forced evictions, the following alternatives should be promoted:

- Support social movements and grassroots organisations in their struggle to prevent and remedy forced evictions by building their capacity and strengthen their skills to dialogue, mediate and advocate for alternative solutions.
- Incorporate international human rights principles and instruments into public policies and programmes in order to not allow evictions and the criminalization of social movements which struggle for land, housing and better living conditions.
- Respect, protect and fulfil the right to land and adequate housing, by adopting measures to outlaw discrimination based on race, colour, sex, language, religion or belief, political opinion, national, social or ethnic origin, legal or social status, age, deficiency or property.
- Implement policies and instruments, based on the art. 11 ICESCR, to democratise, finance and subsidise access to land and to adequate housing by establishing public funds, subsidies and increasing public budget provisions; by regularising ownership and upgrading informal settlements; and by establishing a forum for negotiation with the independent participation of all the stakeholders involved.
- Develop and implement a time-bound plan of action which clearly demonstrates ways in which States will prevent forced evictions.
- Guarantee effective and timely solutions, such as compensation sufficient for the purchase of land or housing of equivalent value.
- Prosecute the actors responsible for unlawful evictions and protect the defenders of housing rights.
- Provide free legal assistance to people threatened with eviction.
- Ensure adequate resettlement in cases where relocation is inevitable and/or restitution is impossible.
- Strengthen the public management of urban planning, housing and land policies by establishing public debates and genuine consultations on policies, programmes, resources and investments.
- Reject financing for programmes from national and international institutions, if their implementation would entail forced evictions or displacements. A way to evaluate such a risk is to carry out Eviction Impact Assessments (EIA) as an instrument to measure the impact of the projects in their various dimensions (legal, social, political, economic, etc.).

5.2. Research Agenda

Even if numerous lessons have been learned, many issues still remain to be tackled. At least six of them deserve special attention in the near future.

(i) Forced, unlawful and legal evictions

A more detailed international definition of what forced and unlawful evictions mean is still needed. These notions are understood and used differently in specific contexts. A clearer conceptual framework will help to address the issue of legal evictions, backed up by international, national and local policies.

(ii) Understanding the causes and the mechanisms of forced evictions

Evidence from the field indicates that the causes of forced evictions are often multiple and are changing through time. Insufficient attention has been paid to market driven processes that fuel massive and often ruthless evictions. The same holds true, but to a lesser extent, to gentrification mechanisms that tend to happen primarily in historic and heritage cities and neighbourhoods. The understanding of the causes and of the mechanisms is essential to design preventive approaches and address the roots of the problem. Among them, as stated in the first AGFE report, *“insufficient attention has been paid to individual landlords or politicians who abuse the poor or the newcomers to cities by selling them false property titles. Insufficient attention has also been paid to land invasion organized by “protected groups” who, once the land is occupied, sell it illegally for their own benefit”*.

(iii) Key principles to solve forced evictions

Some key lessons were extracted and shared so far such as the necessity of participation of all parties concerned, the establishment of a dialogue process, and the understanding of the multidimensional nature of evictions. However, there is still a need to complement these guiding principles for action and deepen their understanding. The cases documented so far are still lying idle and need further analysis to reveal their wealth and their values for action.

(iv) Preventive policies and practices

National policies and local development plans and practices to *prevent* forced evictions do exist. This is for instance facilitated to some extent by the practice of participatory budgeting that allows people to access municipal resources on a regular basis to increase their security of tenure. However, very little is known about these policies precisely because, as they do not allow forced evictions to take place, they do not draw attention from the media or from the international community and remain discreetly in the shade.

(v) Relocation and compensation

In the exceptional cases where evictions are deemed inevitable, more attention should be paid to ways and means to face the economic and social costs to *relocate* the affected populations. One of the various dimensions to look into is the participatory and consensus building processes that result in negotiated settlements with full security of tenure and adequate land and housing. A second major area that needs further understanding is financial and other forms of appropriate compensation to be given to households affected by relocation for the house they usually self built and for the neighbourhood they gradually improved through community effort.

(vi) Contribution of the international community

An identification of tools, methods and ways experienced by a broad range of stakeholders that are contributing to the fulfilment of the art.11 ICESCR and to the attainment of the MDG 7 Target 11 should be made in a systematic way.

5.3. Minimum Action Plan

An Action Plan should be discussed and finalized during a meeting of the Advisory Group. The Minimum Plan presented here is based on current requests and needs. It fits into the Terms of Reference that need to be reviewed and updated. The key and central aim of such an Action Plan would be to support the actors, primarily threatened groups and communities, international networks, local and national governments, NGOs, national fora, and research programmes already in action. The envisaged activities fall broadly into the following areas: (a) Mediating and conciliatory missions, (b) Documentation, monitoring and follow-up, (c) Dialogue, lobbying and advocacy, and (d) Reporting to the Executive Director and the Governing Council.

(i) Mediations missions

An increased number of AGFE mediation missions to cities/countries with ongoing large scale evictions or acute eviction threat, should take place between April 2007 and the fourth session of the World Urban Forum to be held in 2008 in Nanjing, China (WUF IV). These missions should include monitoring and follow-up and could include Eviction Impact Assessments. These missions and their success will strongly depend on the support that has to be mobilized by all partners including UN-HABITAT.

(ii) High visibility event at WUF IV and Guidelines Manual

Organisation of a high visibility event at WUF IV (not limited to a Networking Event), presenting successful experience and guidelines for governments and other stakeholders, drawing lessons from all AGFE missions and from the related follow-up, with particular focus on security of tenure and planning to prevent evictions in a longer term perspective. These lessons learned could be formulated into Guidelines and a simple Manual to be launched at WUF IV.

(iii) Discussion groups

Internet based on the issues identified previously as knowledge gaps. Each of the group discussions could be led by interested AGFE Members.

(iv) Strengthening of AGFE

In order to achieve its mandate and the Action Plan, the following institutional steps need to be taken: (a) setting up of a small permanent and adequately funded Secretariat to support the work of AGFE; (b) updating/renewal of AGFE membership (c) clarification of the functions of the members particularly the Convenor. (d) review and updating of AGFE TORs; (e) establishment of functional communication mechanisms among Members; and (f) building/strengthening of a support network able to intervene, beyond the AGFE. This Network could in the future be associated to a much needed *global early warning eviction system*.

6. Suggestions to the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT to be presented to the Governing Council for debate

It is suggested that AGFE should continue its work and be consolidated both as an advisory group to UN-HABITAT and as a unique network of committed and specialized individuals and institutions. The current flexible support approach to local processes that AGFE has been applying in a limited number of cases is positive and should be maintained.

A strong and political mandate from the governments at the Governing Council requesting UN-HABITAT to address forced and market-driven evictions is highly needed. This would be a

necessary step to empower AGFE to more effectively fulfil its mandate. In the meantime, the existing Terms of Reference need to be reviewed and updated accordingly. The revised Terms of Reference should clearly outline the mechanisms and procedures for mediating and conciliatory field missions, including what can be done in cases where AGFE does not receive a government invitation. This is necessary to respond positively to all requests from threatened or evicted communities and to provide support.

Financial resources coming from Governments or Foundations and channelled through UN-HABITAT or already committed institutions are very much needed. Voluntary work and mobilization of local resources can not match the scale of the problem. Additional resources are necessary so that the Group can fulfil its mandate. These resources should help primarily in implementing the Minimum Action Plan. In more broader terms, they will be useful for: (a) Facilitating communication within Members, between AGFE and UN-HABITAT and with the networks and actors involved in the field, (b) setting up a small permanent secretariat to better facilitate the work of AGFE, (c) documenting existing and future forced eviction cases and processing of the information into a Manual, (d) research on pending issues, (e) setting up of training modules, (e) exchange programmes between communities and between cities, (f) mediating and conciliatory missions, and (g) publications.

Concluding remarks

People and their governments can, under certain conditions, successfully prevent evictions and attain security of tenure. When appropriately supported and resourced, they are able to face up to global forces that are becoming powerful and dominant. Some of the cases encountered give great hope for instance to indigenous communities threatened by oil interests in various Amazon Basin countries, to Sri Lankan fishermen threatened by the post Tsunami reconstruction law, to the tenants of the historic centre of Beijing who are removed from their place in the name of investments linked to the Olympics Games, and to the hundreds of thousands of children, women and men all over the world who live in constant threat of evictions instead of living in peace and dignity.

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* AGFE Members are individuals appointed by the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT. All Members, including the Convenor, serve for a term of two years. A serving Member of the Advisory Group may be re-nominated to additional terms, subject to the approval by the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT.