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****COHRE and RUIG/GIAN Joint Media Statement****

The Olympic Games have displaced more than two million people in the last 20 years

The Olympic Games have displaced more than two million people in the last 20 years, disproportionately affecting minorities such as the homeless, the poor, Roma and African-Americans, according to a new report, *Fair Play for Housing Rights: Mega-Events, Olympic Games and Housing Rights*.

Jean du Plessis, Executive Director (a.i.) of the Geneva-based Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE), said, “Our research shows that little has changed since 1988 when 720,000 people were forcibly displaced in Seoul, South Korea, in preparation for the Summer Olympic Games. It is shocking and entirely unacceptable that 1.25 million people have already been displaced in Beijing, in preparation for the 2008 Games, in flagrant violation of their right to adequate housing. These figures show the extent to which mega-events, such as the Olympic Games, can often leave a negative housing legacy for the local population.”

A research team, coordinated by COHRE, has spent three years studying seven past and future Olympic host cities (Seoul, Barcelona, Atlanta, Sydney, Athens, Beijing and London) and the impact the Games have had on the housing rights of their residents. The project was supported by the Geneva International Academic Network (RUIG/GIAN), and was undertaken in conjunction with a number of partner organisations.

As a result of this study, COHRE has developed a set of guidelines for all stakeholders in future host cities to follow in order to minimise the negative impacts arising from mega-events. These *Multi-Stakeholder Guidelines on Mega-Events and the Protection and Promotion of Housing Rights* also seek to highlight opportunities for promoting positive housing legacies to be enjoyed long after the event has been staged.

The report also addresses the housing impacts of other mega-events such as the FIFA World Cup, World Expos, IMF/World Bank Conferences and even beauty pageants such as the Miss World and Miss Universe contests. It demonstrates that mega-events can both directly and indirectly cause a number of housing rights violations and other negative effects. These include: forced eviction; displacement; rising housing costs (leading to unaffordability of housing); reductions in the provision of social, public, and low-cost housing; discrimination against minorities and the poor; criminalisation of homelessness; expropriation of private property; and lack of transparency and exclusion of local residents from participation in decision-making.

Du Plessis said: “No person or community should be forcibly evicted for the sake of a sporting event. No-one should be displaced due to a cultural celebration. The rich diversity of a community should not be hidden, moved or destroyed for the sake of a beauty pageant. It is possible (and imperative) for mega-events to be organised without forcibly evicting people, without criminalising the homeless and without rendering housing unaffordable. COHRE calls on all parties to ensure that adequate attention to the housing rights of anyone affected by the hosting of such events is mainstreamed into the bidding, selection and implementation processes. COHRE also calls on affected communities and support organisations to closely monitor these processes, and to take action to ensure that no housing rights are violated as a result of mega-events. This is important not just for the Olympic Games, but for all mega-events.”

The principal findings detailed in the *Fair Play for Housing Rights* report are:

- More than **1.25 million people** have already been displaced in **Beijing, China**, in preparation for the 2008 Games. COHRE's research reveals that a total of **1.5 million people** will be displaced from their homes by the time the Games commence in August 2008. These figures do not include approximately 400,000 migrants living 'temporarily' in 171 neighbourhoods in situations of extreme insecurity, having come to Beijing due to lack of livelihood opportunities in rural areas. Victims of forced evictions, their legal representatives and housing rights defenders who oppose or challenge evictions are subject to ongoing intimidation, harassment and, in some instances, imprisonment for their activism.
- Already, five years before the Olympic Games are due to be staged in **London** in 2012, over **1,000 people** face the threat of displacement from their homes, and housing prices are escalating. It is possible at this early stage to predict that construction of the Olympic venues and facilities in London will disproportionately affect a number of groups: in particular the poor; low-income earners; residents of public housing; and ethnic minorities such as Gypsies and Travellers.
- Approximately **2,700 Roma** were directly affected by the preparation and staging of the Olympic Games in **Athens**. For the Roma, the Olympic Games served to aggravate the discrimination and marginalisation they already suffered, leading to further segregation, violent forced evictions and setbacks in their prospects of securing adequate and humane living conditions.
- The staging of the Olympic Games exacerbated the escalation of housing costs in **Sydney**. Between 1993 (when Sydney was selected as the Host City of the 2000 Summer Olympic Games) and 1995, Sydney's **rents increased by 40 percent**, compared with Melbourne, the Australian city with the next biggest increase in rents, which was only 9.6 percent over the same period.
- Approximately **30,000 poor residents** were displaced from their homes in **Atlanta** by gentrification, the demolition of public housing, rental speculation, and urban renewal projects associated with the Olympics. Approximately **2,000 public housing units** were demolished and nearly **6,000 residents** displaced. **African-Americans** were disproportionately affected by displacements, housing unaffordability, and harassment and arrests of the homeless. The criminalisation of homelessness was a key feature of the 1996 Atlanta Games: **9,000 arrest citations** were issued to homeless people in Atlanta in 1995 and 1996 as part of the Olympic Games 'clean up'.
- The completion of the Olympic Games project in **Barcelona** resulted in the displacement and relocation of **624 families (approximately 2,500 people)**. Increases in the prices of housing for rent and sale led to a drastic decline in housing affordability, as the **cumulative increase from 1986 to 1993 was 139 percent for sale prices and nearly 145 percent for rentals**. There was also a drastic decrease in the availability of **public housing**, with a **cumulative decrease of 75.92 percent** from 1986 to 1992. In areas surrounding the Olympic Village communities, between **90 and 100 percent of the Roma** were displaced.
- In **Seoul, South Korea**, **720,000 people** were forcibly displaced from their homes in preparation for the 1988 Summer Games. The urban poor and other minorities were disproportionately affected. Street peddlers, beggars and the homeless were driven away from the city in preparation for the Games.

COHRE's Du Plessis also said, "The negative housing impacts that are often inflicted on communities and individuals before, during and after mega-events, are not simply undesirable side-effects. In many instances, they constitute egregious violations of international human rights law, in particular the right to adequate housing. This is in complete contradiction to the spirit and ideals of the Olympic Movement, which aims to foster peace, solidarity and respect for universal fundamental principles. The Olympic Movement has made admirable commitments towards creating positive housing legacies in its *Olympic Charter*, *Code of Ethics*, and the *Olympic Movement Agenda 21*. Yet COHRE's research indicates that there is unfortunately still a long way to go for the Olympic Movement to meet these commitments."

The *Fair Play for Housing Rights* report calls for the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and other mega-event governing bodies to fully integrate housing rights considerations into the selection criteria used for judging bids to host a mega-event. It also emphasises the need for event organisers to incorporate housing rights considerations into all aspects of the preparation and staging of the event. The report shows that governments, municipal authorities, event organisers, bid committees, and even corporate sponsors, athletes and spectators, all have a role to play in respecting and upholding the housing rights of the local residents.

UN Sports Ambassador, the Kenyan long-distance runner and three times champion of the world half marathon Tegla Loroupe, supported COHRE and its project partners in launching the *Fair Play for Housing Rights* report and the *Multi-Stakeholder Guidelines on Mega-Events and the Protection and Promotion of Housing Rights*. Loroupe, said, “As an Olympian, I’m proud to have participated in an event that brings people of all nationalities and cultures together, and thereby builds community spirit and fosters cross-cultural understanding. Such a wonderful event should not mean that local people suffer from displacement and discrimination – they too should benefit.”

The *Mega-Events, Olympic Games and Housing Rights* project, coordinated by COHRE and supported by RUIG/GIAN, was undertaken in partnership with UN-HABITAT, the Special Advisor to the UN Secretary General on Sport for Development and Peace, the Graduate Institute of International Studies (IUHEI), the Geneva School of Architecture, the University of Toronto, the New York University Law School and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The *Fair Play for Housing Rights* report, the *Multi-Stakeholder Guidelines* and background papers on each of the Olympic Cities studied are available online at: www.cohre.org/mega-events

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Fact Sheet - Mega-Events, Forced Evictions and Displacements

Hosting a ‘mega-event’ can have a significant impact upon the enjoyment of housing rights for many of a city’s inhabitants. When cities prepare to host large-scale events such as major sporting, cultural or political gatherings, many people may find themselves displaced, sometimes forcibly, while others are disproportionately affected by rising housing prices. Many poor and marginalised communities are discriminated against as a city undergoes the significant redevelopment considered necessary in order to put it ‘on the world map’.

The *Mega-Events, Olympic Games and Housing Rights* project, coordinated by COHRE and supported by RUIG/GIAN, was undertaken with several partners including UN-HABITAT, the Special Advisor to the UN Secretary General on Sport for Development and Peace, the Graduate Institute of International Studies (IUHEI), the Geneva School of Architecture, the University of Toronto, the New York University Law School and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The project takes the staging of the Olympic Games as a case study to analyse the impact that the organization of mega-events may have upon communities and the opportunities that exist for minimising such effects through the proper planning and consideration of housing issues throughout the hosting process.

This project is based on the view that mega-events, including the Olympic Games, can be convened without forcibly evicting people, without criminalising the homeless or targeting other minorities, and without rendering housing unaffordable for segments of the population. A comprehensive approach to this issue, firmly grounded in accepted international human rights norms and involving all stakeholders – including communities, local Governments, national Governments, the IOC, the United Nations (UN), corporate sponsors, those involved in venue construction, athletes and civil society groups – can potentially make a real difference in the lives of millions of people who would otherwise face forced eviction and resultant homelessness, displacement and despair.

Our research has highlighted that the staging of mega-events such as the Olympic Games often impact significantly upon the local population’s enjoyment of the right to adequate housing. These impacts are not unique to the Olympic Games – studies of other mega-events also show similar outcomes and vulnerabilities. A decade ago the UN Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) identified that more than one in seven massive evictions worldwide were related to mega-events, and that ‘beautification’ projects related to these events served as the most common justification for slum clearance programmes. COHRE’s research generally confirms this, for example in 2004 over 20 per cent of the global forced evictions recorded by COHRE were caused by mega-events. It is hoped that the lessons to be learned from this case study of the Olympic Games can also be applied to other mega-events.

Overall, from the first city studied in this publication, Seoul (host of the 1988 Olympics), to Beijing (the upcoming host of the 2008 Olympics twenty years later), we can see patterns of forced evictions preceding the hosting of the Olympic Games. In most Olympic host cities we can also see evidence of escalating housing costs, leading to a reduction in the availability of affordable housing (particularly evident in Barcelona, Atlanta and Sydney) and absolute declines in the level of public housing stock and low cost housing in general (evident in every Olympic Host City studied, from Seoul to London).

The positive contributions of the Olympic Games and other mega-events to global peace and understanding is undermined when forced evictions and other violations of the right to housing are carried out prior to the convening of these events.

Mega-Events, Forced Evictions and Displacements – Facts at a glance

**** (detailed fact sheets of seven future and past Olympic cities, Beijing, London, Athens, Sydney, Atlanta, Barcelona and Seoul are provided in subsequent pages) ****

- The city of **Shanghai** is being transformed in preparation for its hosting of the **2010 World Expo**. A boom in construction in the city has led to the displacement and evictions of many: 18,000 families have reportedly been evicted from the Expo site alone. However, this figure is only a small portion of the 400,000 people it is estimated will be moved to the suburbs as part of a comprehensive urban development scheme that includes the Expo, large infrastructural development, and market-rate commercial and residential development.
- In **New Delhi, India**, the athletes for the **2010 Commonwealth Games** will be housed on land from which slum dwellers were cleared. Forced evictions related to a river beautification plan and development for the Commonwealth Games have resulted in the forcible eviction of 35,000 families from public lands on the riverbanks over the course of the last two years. The UN Special Rapporteur on Housing has said that there have been evictions of around 300,000 people between 2003 and 2006. The evictions are due to the city authorities' desire to make New Delhi 'slum free' before the athletes and spectators arrive for the Commonwealth Games.
- Lately concerns have also been expressed about the treatment of the homeless and beggars, mostly street children, in **Uganda**, in relation to the preparations the Government of Uganda is undertaking for the **Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in November 2007**. Reports indicate that already hundreds of street children have been 'rounded up' by the Government and taken to a makeshift holding centre, actually a rehabilitation centre for young offenders, outside of Kampala (the capital).
- One of the most recent examples of forced evictions related to the preparations for a political mega-event are reports of the violent forced eviction of 30 households (affecting 42 families) in **Lapu-Lapu City in Cebu, Philippines**, in September 2006, at the site of the **12th ASEAN Summit** scheduled for **December 2006**.
- Staging horticultural fairs can also involve evictions: in **Osaka, Japan**, at the **2006 World Rose Convention**, 440 private security guards and 350 police officers forcibly removed 28 tents occupied by homeless people from two public parks.
- **Nigeria's** attempt to beautify the city of **Abuja** in preparation for hosting the **2002 Miss World Beauty Pageant** resulted in forced evictions. As a consequence, the world witnessed the ugly impacts of mega-events, with the destruction of shantytowns and the forced eviction of at least 1,000 households.
- 'Clean-up' programmes associated with the **FIFA World Cup** (the international men's football competition) events led to the displacement of homeless people, for example, 300 homeless were removed from an area surrounding the Nagai Stadium in **Osaka, Japan**, in **2002**. City officials claimed that the removal was carried out in order to avoid confrontations between rowdy fans and the homeless.
- A 'cleaning operation' displaced roughly 20 homeless people from their makeshift homes days before the **1994 FIFA World Cup in Chicago, USA**, and between 200 and 300 people were displaced after the demolition of their seven-year old shantytown underneath a highway overpass in **Dallas, USA**, in preparation for the **1994 World Cup**.

- As a consequence of the **1992** celebrations for the **500th Columbus Anniversary in Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic**, 30,000 families (180,000 people) were reportedly evicted from their homes as part of urban redevelopment schemes conducted in the course of preparations (from 1986 to 1992). Most were not offered any form of resettlement.
- **Thailand** carried out evictions when hosting the **Miss Universe Beauty Pageant** in the same year as the **IMF/World Bank Conference (1991)**. At the time, the Thai authorities sought to evict as many as 5,000 people.
- Historical milestone events can also result in negative housing impacts. The **Australian Bicentennial** on 26 January **1988**, which was marked by a year of celebrations throughout the country, resulted in a loss of low income housing in **Sydney** as boarding houses were converted into tourist accommodation.
- At the time of the **1988 Expo in Brisbane, Australia**, between 1,400 and 3,000 people were estimated to have been evicted from low cost housing due to unbearable escalation in rental costs or the demolition of their homes in favour of high-rent commercial and residential development on the former Expo site. In the lead-up to the 1988 Brisbane Expo, neither the State Government nor the city made arrangements to provide affordable replacement housing, and it is estimated that over 800 beds were lost as a result.
- The staging of the Winter Olympic Games can also affect the enjoyment of housing rights. At the **1988 Winter Olympics in Calgary, Canada**, over 2,000 people were displaced (some temporarily), including approximately 740 tenants who were displaced from two apartment complex towers and one townhouse, as weak tenancy laws allowed for the exorbitant rent increases that led to the evictions.
- The announcement of **Vancouver** as host-city for the **1986 World's Fair** created a market for land speculation in neighbourhoods that bordered the site. Landlords evicted between 500 and 850 people in order to use their units to accommodate tourists for the fair. Most evictees were unemployed, elderly, poor, and either handicapped or in a poor state of health. In addition, between 1,000 and 2,000 low income lodging house units were lost to demolition or conversion to non-residential uses, while 1,150 residential hotel units were lost in the few years following the Expo, as the Pacific Place, a giant mixed-use development, was constructed on the Expo site.
- In **Seoul, South Korea**, preparations for the **1985 IMF/World Bank Conference** included bulldozers and police tearing down a slum located between a luxury hotel and the corporate headquarters of Daewoo Corporation, the two principal venues for the conference. One thousand, two hundred slum families were evicted from the site.
- At the **1982 World's Fair in Knoxville, United States**, approximately 1,500 tenants were evicted from low-rent accommodations as landlords rented their apartments to visitors.
- Thirty years ago in **Manila, the Philippines**, the **1976 IMF/World Bank Conference** was precipitated by the eviction of 400 families from a slum as part of an urban renewal project. Forced evictions formed part of the city's beautification campaign in preparation for the conference.

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Fact Sheet – Forced evictions and displacements in future Olympic cities

BEIJING, CHINA (2008):

China is striving to ensure that the 2008 Olympic Games will firmly establish its credentials as a genuine superpower of the 21st century. The construction of this image has required a thorough transformation of Beijing's residents, work places, modes of living, transport and culture.

According to COHRE's field research, based on Chinese government statements and documents, by April 2007, at least 1.25 million people have already been displaced as a result of urban development linked to the Olympic Games, and unknown numbers of these people were forcibly evicted. At least a further 250,000 people are expected to be displaced in the final year before the Olympic Games, resulting in a total of 1.5 million people being displaced in Beijing by August 2008 due to Olympics related development. While many of these displacements resulted from large scale urban development that would have occurred without the Olympic Games, the scale of displacements has more than doubled since Beijing was elected as an Olympic Host City. Over the period between 2006 and 2008, an average of 60,000 homes per year were or are being demolished, displacing 156,000 people per year. These figures do not include approximately 400,000 migrants living 'temporarily' in 171 neighbourhoods in situations of extreme insecurity, having come to Beijing due to lack of livelihood opportunities in rural areas.

The main areas in which evictions have been carried out within the municipality of Beijing during the period between 2000 and 2007 are neighbourhoods in the four central districts of the capital where overcrowding and old or dangerous housing is common; namely Dongcheng, Xicheng, Chongwen and Xuanwu. Large-scale evictions have also been carried out in several *Chengzhongcun* (literally, villages in the city), informal settlements comprising housing that has not been approved for construction, does not comply with building codes and typically receives urban services informally, if at all. The most extensive of these are now found between the second and fifth ring roads in the extended urban districts of Chaoyang, Fengtai, Shijingshan and Haidian.

Evictions in Beijing often involve the complete demolition of poor peoples' houses. The inhabitants are then forced to relocate far from their communities and workplaces, with inadequate transportation networks adding significantly to their cost of living. In Beijing, and in China more generally, the process of demolition and eviction is characterized by arbitrariness and lack of due process. In many cases, tenants are given little or no notice of their eviction and do not receive the promised compensation. This lack of adequate compensation (or any compensation at all) sometimes leaves the evictees at risk of homelessness. The forced evictions are often violent and abuses committed during the eviction processes have multiplied.

If the standard for assessing the impact of the 2008 Olympic Games on relocations is calculated to include urban development activities that were accelerated, expanded or facilitated by the political imperative of "holding the best Olympics ever," there will be at least 1.5 million persons affected. Many of these have been subjected to forcible evictions and other violations of their housing rights, and perhaps as many as 20 percent of these have crossed the line from having a sustainable low income livelihood to a genuinely precarious one.

Estimates of Households and Persons Affected by Demolitions in Beijing 2000-2008

Year	Households Affected by Demolitions	Persons Per Household	Persons Affected by Demolitions
2000	58,550	3	175,650
2001	58,550	3	175,650
2002	69,000	3	262,200
2003	50,000	2.9	145,000
2004	24,000	2.9	69,600
2005	72,000	2.6	187,200
2006	60,000	2.6	156,000
2007	60,000	2.6	156,000
2008	60,000	2.6	156,000
Total	512,100		1,483,300

BEIJING, CHINA (2008): Facts at a glance

- By April 2007, at least 1.25 million people had been displaced as a result of urban development linked to the Olympic Games, and unknown numbers of these people were forcibly evicted.
- At least a further 250,000 people are expected to be displaced in the final year before the Olympic Games, resulting in a total of 1.5 million people being displaced in Beijing by August 2008 due to Olympics related development.
- These figures do not include approximately 400,000 migrants living ‘temporarily’ in 171 neighbourhoods in situations of extreme insecurity, having come to Beijing due to lack of livelihood opportunities in rural areas.
- Over the period between 2006 and 2008, an average of 60,000 homes per year were or are being demolished, displacing 156,000 people per year.
- Of the total number of person displaced in Olympics related development, COHRE estimates that each year, as many as 33,000 people with sustainable livelihoods were pushed into poverty, or deeper poverty, because their homes and neighbourhoods were demolished. This scale has doubled since Beijing was elected as an Olympic Host City in 2001.
- If the standard for assessing the impact of the 2008 Olympic Games on relocations is calculated to include urban development activities that were accelerated, expanded or facilitated by the political imperative of “holding the best Olympics ever,” there will be at least 1.5 million persons affected. Many of these have been subjected to forcible evictions and other violations of their housing rights, and perhaps as many as 20 percent of these have crossed the line from having a sustainable low income livelihood to a genuinely precarious one.
- The level of repression and violence directed against victims of forced evictions, their legal representatives and housing rights defenders who try to oppose or challenge evictions remains a grave concern. Housing rights activists are subjected to ongoing intimidation, harassment and, in some instances imprisonment, for their housing and land rights activities.

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Fact Sheet – Forced evictions and displacements in future Olympic cities

VANCOUVER, CANADA (2010):

The city of Vancouver has promised that the 2010 Winter Olympics will be a ‘socially sustainable’ event, with commitments to ensuring no one is made homeless or evicted because of the Games. Vancouver’s commitments in the field of housing rights go beyond any previously made by a city hosting a mega-event, and because of this COHRE has studied the Vancouver plans as an example of ‘best practice’ in incorporating housing concerns into the bid to host the Olympic Games. However, these commitments have been jeopardised by proposals to cut funding for the affordable housing program.

Community organisations were engaged in focusing the broad goal of social sustainability on issues such as the protection of civil liberties and social housing. As a result, the city of Vancouver, the province of British Columbia and the Canadian Federal Government each issued an ‘Inner-City Inclusive Commitment Statement’ which made commitments in 12 different areas, aimed at ensuring no adverse affects for inner city residents arising out of the process of staging the Olympic Games. One of these 12 areas was affordable housing, with commitments in this area including: protecting housing stock; providing alternative temporary accommodation for Olympic Games visitors; protecting the homeless and ensuring that no-one is made homeless as a result of the Olympic Games; ensuring there are no involuntary displacements or evictions due to the Olympic Games; ensuring no unreasonable increases in rent because of the Olympic Games; and providing an affordable housing legacy. The city promised that the staging of the Olympic Games would result in no evictions and would create a legacy of affordable housing, with 30 percent of the housing to be built being committed to use as social housing after the Olympic Games. The governments committed CAN\$500,000 towards funding shelter beds for the homeless during the Olympic Games, and made specific commitments towards supporting homeless people with mental illness and drug addiction problems.

Despite impressive promises to promote affordable housing in the world’s first ‘socially sustainable’ Games, there are grave concerns about the evictions of low income tenants already taking place in Vancouver. It has also been reported that the Vancouver authorities were discussing a proposal to increase law enforcement against aggressive panhandling and open drug use – the kind of legislation that has been used elsewhere, such as in Atlanta, to target the homeless.

Hundreds of poor and elderly residents have already been displaced from downtown Vancouver as developers work to convert buildings that previously housed the indigent and elderly into boutique hotels and tourist accommodation. Landlords are evicting tenants in order to renovate their properties and place them back on the market for double the rental rates. Local activists and politicians report that the Vancouver Downtown Eastside has lost over 700 units of low income housing since the city’s election as Host City for the 2010 Winter Games.

The shrinking stock of low cost housing has been evident in both the public and private housing market in Vancouver, with drastic consequences for the thousands of indigent people already on waiting lists for affordable accommodation. The loss of low cost housing in Vancouver, particularly the conversion of single room occupancy hotels, has been referred to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Local housing advocates have already successfully challenged illegal eviction notices and rent increases that had been linked to the Olympic Games.

Attention must be given to the issue of homelessness and the importance of developing affordable housing as part of the Olympic Games preparations. It is imperative that Vancouver takes steps now to turn its Olympic housing commitments into reality – policy changes and other initiatives are necessary to maximise the potential positive housing legacies from the 2010 Winter Games. Recommendations, such as those made in the Report of the Inner-City Housing Table, must be implemented to address these concerns

VANCOUVER, CANADA (2010): Facts at a glance

- Vancouver hopes to be the world's first 'socially sustainable' Games, and the city included a number of housing related commitments in its Olympic Bid, such as promises to ensure no-one is made homeless as a result of the Olympic Games, and that there would be no unreasonable increases in rent.
- Thirty percent of the housing to be built in Vancouver for the Olympic Games has been committed to use as social housing after the event.
- Some of these commitments have been jeopardised by proposals to cut funding for the affordable housing programme, and there are grave concerns about the evictions of low income tenants already taking place in Vancouver.
- Single Resident Occupancy hotels (inhabited predominantly by low or no income earners) are being destroyed and converted into boutique hotels and tourist accommodation, and landlords are evicting tenants in order to renovate their properties and capitalise on the Olympic effect.
- Vancouver Downtown Eastside has reportedly lost over 700 units of low income housing since the city's election as Host City for the 2010 Winter Games.

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Fact Sheet – Forced evictions and displacements in future Olympic cities

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM (2012):

Since the election of London as the Host City for the 2012 Olympic Games, COHRE has followed the preparations underway in that city, and the impacts on housing rights that are already becoming evident, in particular in the East London area. Already, over five years before the Olympic Games are due to be staged, over 1,000 people face the threat of displacement from their homes, and housing prices are escalating. It is possible at this early stage to predict that, despite there being no reference to the need for evictions in the bid books, construction of the Olympic venues and facilities in London will affect a number of marginalized groups: in particular the poor, low-income earners, residents of public housing, and ethnic minorities such as Gypsies and Irish Travellers.

Foreign students at the East London University Park Village estate were affected by this planned construction even before London had been officially selected as the Host City, with 550 being displaced in July 2005 from their university accommodation under threat of court action. Although it was proposed that these students would be relocated to the Docklands or Barking, this was not a suitable solution for many of the students because it meant living far from their university campus. As a result, many students have been forced into the private housing market.

Most of London's proposed Olympic sites, from north Newham to Manor Park, Leyton, Homerton and Hackney Wick, are sites with a major concentration of relatively cheap private rented housing. This affordable housing is a rarity in a city like London, and is relied upon by thousands of people on low and average incomes. It is widely feared that the Olympics Games will therefore result in a reduction of the total stock of affordable housing in London.

There are concerns that because the neighbourhoods where the Olympic sites are positioned are some of the most affordable in London (for both buyers and renters), they are prime candidates for price escalation, which will drastically affect the current affordability of these areas. For example, much of the Lower Lea area is already a popular 'buy-to-let' investment zone, with a high proportion of tenanted properties.

In order to progress the plans for redeveloping the Lower Lea Valley, the London Development Agency (LDA) has been renegotiating relocation options with residents and businesses currently located in the area. However, these negotiations have taken place under the shadow of a compulsory purchase order (CPO). The LDA issued a CPO for the land to ensure its acquisition from those with whom it could not strike a deal. This CPO issued for the Olympics site is said to be the largest ever compulsory land acquisition programme in England.

The main area affected by the CPO is Clay's Lane, where 430 residents of the Clay's Lane Housing Cooperative were issued with orders to leave by July 2007, as well as 15 families residing at an adjacent Gypsy and Irish Travellers site, who must leave by August 2007. The second key residential area affected by the CPO is a Gypsy and Travellers site at Waterden Crescent, in which 20 Irish Traveller families reside. In total, thirty-five families are to be displaced: many residents are challenging their eviction orders and claim authorities have not had adequate rehousing strategies in place. These families have been given several alternatives to their present site. The proposals involve splitting the community into four smaller sites.

Over the course of the negotiations for the Lea Valley area and the related CPOs, businesses employing nearly 15,000 workers in total were also reportedly forced to move. In Stratford, 300 businesses were evicted in order to use the land on which they operated for the Olympic Park. In order to clear the path for the construction of the Olympic Stadium, companies employing over 5,000 staff were reportedly moved out of their establishments in the Marshgate Lane area. Many of these businesses benefited from

their proximity to central London, and the relocation sites offered were over 50 miles away from where they were originally located.

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM (2012): Facts at a glance

- Already, over five years before the Olympic Games are due to be staged, over 1,000 people face the threat of displacement from their homes, and housing prices are escalating.
- The main area affected by the CPO is Clay's Lane, where 430 residents of the Clay's Lane Housing Cooperative were issued with orders to leave by July 2007, as well as 15 families residing at an adjacent Gypsy and Irish Travellers site, who must leave by August 2007. The second key residential area affected by the CPO is a Gypsy and Irish Travellers site at Waterden Crescent, in which 20 Irish Traveller families reside.
- Gypsies and Irish Travellers have been particularly affected by the Olympic development plans, with 35 families in total (approximately 120 people) being forced to relocate to sites they consider unsuitable.
- Foreign students at the East London University Park Village estate were affected by Olympic related construction even before London had been officially selected as the Host City, with 550 being displaced in July 2005 from their university accommodation under threat of court action.
- Over the course of the negotiations for the Lea Valley area and the related CPOs, businesses employing nearly 15,000 workers in total were also reportedly forced to move.
- In Stratford, 300 businesses were evicted in order to use the land on which they operated for the Olympic Park.
- In order to clear the path for the construction of the Olympic Stadium, companies employing over 5,000 staff were reportedly moved out of their establishments in the Marshgate Lane area. Many of these businesses benefited from their proximity to central London, and the relocation sites offered were over 50 miles away from where they were originally located.
- The escalation of housing costs in the Olympic venue areas will inevitably change the composition of communities currently residing there, unless further steps are taken to ensure sufficient supplies of social housing and other forms of low cost and truly affordable housing.

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Fact Sheet – Forced evictions and displacements in past Olympic cities

ATHENS, GREECE (2004):

The 2004 Olympic Games in Athens resulted in a number of impacts on the housing rights of residents of the city. For the Roma, the Olympic Games served to aggravate the discrimination and marginalisation they already suffered, leading to further segregation, violent forced evictions and setbacks in their prospects of securing adequate and humane living conditions. Approximately 2,700 Roma were directly affected by the preparation and staging of the Olympic Games in Athens, and the long term impacts of the Games on this group are still evident today.

Besides the disastrous consequences of the Olympic Games for the already marginalised Roma community, the staging of the event had other impacts, both positive and negative, on housing in Athens. Other vulnerable groups, such as asylum seekers, the homeless and drug addicts were also specifically affected, while special laws to accelerate expropriation processes were passed in order to facilitate the acquisition of land needed to construct the Olympic venues and facilities. On the positive side, the Olympic village will provide 3,000 units of subsidised housing for approximately 10,000 residents, while two media villages have been converted into student dormitories. However this admirable plan for post-Olympic use of the Athletes' village for subsidised workers housing has had many implementation problems, and residents are still adversely affected by a lack of services and coordination problems with their local municipality.

Almost all forced evictions that occurred in relation to the preparations for the 2004 Athens Olympic Games involved Roma communities. Approximately 2,700 Roma were affected by the Olympic Games, either forcibly evicted or displaced directly as a result of reclamation of land for, or near, Olympic facilities, or because relocation projects were abandoned as resources were instead devoted to Olympic Games projects. In general, the Olympic Games were used as a pretext for pushing Roma communities out of their existing settlements. Such evictions were not limited to the preparations for the Olympic Games, but also occurred during the period of the Games itself. Roma communities in Herakleion, Lechaina, Aghia Paraskevi and Marousi were particularly affected by these initiatives.

ATHENS, GREECE (2004): Facts at a glance

- Approximately 2,700 Roma were directly affected by the preparation and staging of the Olympic Games in Athens, and the long term impacts of the Games on this group are still evident today.
- Other vulnerable groups, such as asylum seekers, the homeless and drug addicts were also specifically affected, while special laws to accelerate expropriation processes were passed in order to facilitate the acquisition of land needed to construct the Olympic facilities.
- On the positive side, the Olympic village will provide 3,000 units of subsidised housing for approximately 10,000 residents, while two media villages have been converted into student dormitories. However this admirable plan for post-Olympic use of the Athletes' village for subsidized workers housing has had many implementation problems, and residents are still adversely affected by a lack of services and problems with their local municipality.
- Roma communities in Herakleion, Lechaina, Aghia Paraskevi and Marousi were particularly affected by the evictions and displacements.

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Fact Sheet – Forced evictions and displacements in past Olympic cities

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA (2000):

At first glance, it may appear that the staging of the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney had a limited impact on local housing when compared with the experiences of other Host Cities. For example, there were no forced evictions in the course of construction or upgrading of facilities for the Olympic Games. Nonetheless, a number of negative housing impacts occurred.

An enormous amount of development associated with the Olympic Games was fast-tracked, and as a result of this development, housing in Sydney became less affordable for those on limited or low incomes. Although the Olympic Village became an important new suburb of the city, there was no commitment in the bid document to reserve any part of it for low cost or social housing.

The staging of the Olympic Games exacerbated the escalation of housing costs in Sydney. The acceleration of the gentrification of the city, including renovation and rejuvenation of inner city housing stock, led to house prices more than doubling between 1996 and 2003. Rents also increased significantly during this period, contributing to the lack of affordability of housing. There was a loss of low income housing stock, such as boarding houses, in the lead up to the Olympic Games. Low income earners living in boarding houses were evicted by the owners in order for these dwellings to be converted into accommodation for Olympic Games visitors.

Between 1993 (when Sydney was selected as the Host City of the 2000 Summer Olympic Games) and 1995, Sydney's **rents increased by 40 percent**, compared with Melbourne, the Australian city with the next biggest increase in rents, which was only 9.6 percent over the same period.

According to COHRE's research, prior to the Olympic Games, some landlords decided to renovate their properties and issued notices to vacate to the tenant so that they could carry out extensive renovations. Others decided it was a good time to sell, and issued their tenants with termination notices. Local advocacy groups recorded a number of examples where tenants received termination notices and upon inquiring, were told that their landlord wanted to renovate or sell the property to make the most of the rise in property values generated by the Olympic Games.

There were also reports of landlords evicting tenants because they wished to rent their houses out to Olympic Games visitors for a lucrative return. In the areas close to the Olympic Stadium, tenants' advocates noted that rent increases caused a number of people to move to more affordable areas. A report published in June 1998 found that 160,000 Sydney households faced little choice but to live on the city's fringe, leave Sydney altogether or pay more than 30 percent of their income in rent closer to the city.

A number of positive examples can be drawn from the Sydney Olympic Games experience, such as the establishment of a Social Impact Advisory Committee, which included representatives from civil society organisations. Such positive practices resulted from action on the part of the Government, as well as by NGOs and activists. From the outset, and unlike in other Olympic Host Cities, the Government did not resume residential areas, evict or relocate people in order to build Olympics facilities. In contrast to what happened in Atlanta, Seoul and Barcelona, the site selected for the main sporting complex was surplus government land and not an established residential area. Sydney also strived to avert another 'Atlanta experience' where homeless were targeted and criminalized – the Olympic authorities, local governments and advocacy groups committed to a "Homelessness Protocol" which was applied to ensure that the homeless were not subject to harassment.

Despite these positive examples, the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games continues to have negative impacts on the right to adequate housing for many people. The conclusion drawn by most is that the staging of the Olympic Games exacerbated Sydney's housing unaffordability. During the lead up to the Olympic Games,

the Government failed to take a preventative approach to pressures for increased rents and evictions as a result of the Olympics, refusing to enact legislation proposed to control housing unaffordability. The staging of the Olympic Games increased the momentum of rising housing costs in Sydney, It was by no means the sole cause, but it did exacerbate a process that was already underway. The Olympics directly affected the housing rights of thousands of people in Sydney, particularly low and median income earners renting in certain areas of the city, and the homeless.

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA (2000): Facts at a glance

- The staging of the Olympic Games exacerbated the escalation of housing costs in Sydney. The acceleration of the gentrification of the city, including renovation and rejuvenation of inner city housing stock, led to house prices more than doubling between 1996 and 2003.
- Between 1993 (when Sydney was selected as the Host City of the 2000 Summer Olympic Games) and 1995, Sydney's **rents increased by 40 percent**, compared with Melbourne, the Australian city with the next biggest increase in rents, which was only 9.6 percent over the same period.
- A report published in June 1998 found that 160,000 Sydney households faced little choice but to live on the city's fringe, leave Sydney altogether or pay more than 30 percent of their income in rent closer to the city.
- A "Homelessness Protocol" was introduced to ensure that homeless people were not subject to harassment. This was implemented by local authorities and monitored by housing and homelessness advocates.
- A "Social Impact Advisory Committee" was established, which included representatives from civil society.

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Fact Sheet – Forced evictions and displacements in past Olympic cities

ATLANTA, USA (1996):

Preparations for the Atlanta 1996 Olympic Games produced three key impacts for housing: evictions of low-income communities; criminalization and arrests of homeless people; and reinforcement and acceleration of Atlanta's gentrification process. In general, the Olympic Games was a significant aggravating factor in the deterioration of the housing situations of low income and African-American populations living in Atlanta.

The criminalisation of homelessness was a key feature of the 1996 Atlanta Games: 9,000 arrest citations were issued to homeless people in Atlanta in 1995 and 1996 as part of the Olympic Games 'clean up'. There was also widespread displacement, approximately 30,000 poor families and other individuals were forced from their homes by Olympic gentrification, the demolition of public housing, rental speculation, and continuing urban renewal. People were displaced to make way for visitors, new construction, and higher cost housing. Public housing was destroyed, with approximately 2,000 public housing units destroyed and nearly 6,000 residents displaced: COHRE's research into one particularly striking example revealed evictions of at least 1,000 households (approximately 4,000 people) from just one housing estate – Techwood Homes.

One of the most significant losses of housing in Atlanta related to the destruction of the Techwood/Clark-Howell public housing community. While Techwood was not a site for the construction of any Olympic facility, the Olympic Games were used as an opportunity to develop this area given its proximity to Olympic venues. The Techwood/Clark-Howell demolition project resulted in 1,195 public housing units being replaced with 900 new units intended for mixed income use. Only 360 of the 900 units were to be public housing, and only a very small fraction of the original residents were ever able to return. A small portion of the remaining units were set aside as 'affordable housing', while the majority were sold at market rates. In the end, there was a net loss of over 800 public housing units at this site.

According to many local residents and advocates, Techwood/Clark-Howell did not need to be torn down, but for societal imaging reasons, it was the most expedient path to redevelopment. Of the over 1,000 households (between 3,600 and 4,300 people) evicted between 1990 and 1996, only 44 percent received relocation assistance. Moreover, former residents reported that this assistance was minimal and did not result in replacement housing for most of those displaced. Before the Olympic Games preparations began in Atlanta, the Techwood/Clark-Howell Housing Community contained 1,195 units. After the Olympic Games, it became the privately managed Centennial Place Apartments with 360 subsidised units, leaving only 30 percent available for former income-level residents.

Although Techwood was the most notorious of the redevelopment projects, it was not the only area affected. For example, in the neighbourhood of Summerville, the construction of new townhouses and single family homes and the renovations of street fronts led to an increase in land values and the displacement of 60 households. While some of these residents were evicted, their homes remained empty during the Olympic Games. Those who were evicted from their homes were usually poor families headed by a female, and minorities. The casualties of the redevelopment in places like the Summerhill stadium area were the low income renters, and owners of small businesses along the streets leading to the new stadium. The elderly were also affected by evictions and displacements, some being evicted from homes in which they had lived for 30 years.

Atlanta's Olympic experience brought housing displacement, evictions, arrests of homeless people, and the cementing of developers' control over the city's administration and planning processes. Hosting the Olympic Games led to a deterioration in the housing situation for many thousands of low income residents of Atlanta, particularly affecting the African-American communities. Secondary displacements resulting from gentrification and beautification were widespread.

ATLANTA, USA (1996): Facts at a glance

- Approximately 30,000 poor residents were displaced from their homes by Olympic gentrification, the demolition of public housing, rental speculation, and urban renewal projects associated with the Olympics.
- Approximately **2,000 public housing units** were demolished and nearly **6,000 residents** displaced. COHRE's research into one particularly striking example revealed evictions of at least 1,000 households (approximately 4,000 people) from just one housing estate – Techwood Homes.
- African-Americans were disproportionately affected by displacements, housing unaffordability and harassment and arrests of homeless.
- The Techwood/Clark-Howell demolition project resulted in 1,195 public housing units being replaced with 900 new units intended for mixed income use. Only 360 of the 900 units were to be public housing. A small portion of the remaining units were set aside as 'affordable housing', while the majority were sold at market rates. In the end, there was a net loss of over 800 public housing units at this site.
- Of the over 1,000 households (between 3,600 and 4,300 people) evicted between 1990 and 1996, only 44 percent received relocation assistance.
- The criminalization of homelessness was a key feature of the 1996 Atlanta Games: 9,000 arrest citations were issued to homeless people in Atlanta in 1995 and 1996 as part of the Olympic Games 'clean up'.

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Fact Sheet – Forced evictions and displacements in past Olympic cities

BARCELONA, SPAIN (1992):

The staging of the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games had a negative impact on the accessibility and affordability of housing. Between 1986 (the period from the Olympic candidature to the staging of the Games) the price of housing increased, the availability of rental accommodation was reduced, the construction of public housing decreased, and there were no public housing policies directed at the groups most in need of assistance. Many people in Barcelona were displaced, with over 600 families evicted from areas designated as Olympic sites or because of associated Olympic redevelopment. A reported 240 percent rise in new house prices between the 1986 announcement of the election of Barcelona as a Host City and the 1992 actual event created a more expensive housing environment that led to further secondary displacements.

The preparation and celebration of the Olympic Games took place in the context of minimal state intervention in the area of housing. The Olympic Games served to reinforce and exacerbate the consequences of the privatisation of housing. In Barcelona, the organisation and celebration of the Olympic Games accentuated the decline in housing affordability, demonstrated by strong increases in the prices of housing for rent and for sale (from 1986 to 1993 the cumulative increase was 139 percent for sale prices and nearly 145 percent for rentals). A drastic decrease in the availability of public housing was also experienced (from 1986 to 1992 there was a cumulative decrease of 75.92 percent).

Significant increases in housing costs have led to unaffordability particularly affecting the poor, low income earners and those with insecure tenure. It led to many secondary displacements and evictions: it has been said that a further 59,000 residents left Barcelona to live elsewhere between the years of 1984 and 1992.

The completion of the Olympic Games project resulted in the displacement and relocation of 624 families in total, consisting of 147 families who were directly affected (due to the construction of the Olympic Village in *Poblenou*); and 477 indirectly affected families (282 due to the elimination of informal settlements and 195 due to the completion of ring roads). Sixty-five percent of families living in the informal settlements were of Roma ethnicity.

Most of the people from the Olympic Village area who opted for houses from the City Council Department of Housing (PMH) were rehoused in the *Llevant Sud*, a set of buildings located in *les Corts Catalanes*, comprising 322 houses in total. Although not built for this purpose, they were used to rehouse the affected people from the *Parc de Mar* area. Fifteen years later, the relocated residents continue to experience problems with this alternative housing. In interviews conducted as part of this project, the residents explained they are still waiting for improvements to the public spaces to be carried out.

The main group affected by Olympic-related displacements in Barcelona were the families of Roma ethnicity. In areas surrounding the Olympic Village communities which were between 90 and 95 percent Roma were displaced, and in the Olympic Ring area of *Montjuic*, it was completely Roma communities who were displaced from their homes and means of livelihood. Other groups who were disproportionately affected in the process of Barcelona's preparations for hosting the Olympic Games were immigrants, the elderly, low-income earners, the homeless and sex workers. It has also been estimated that over 400 poor and homeless persons were subjected to 'control and supervision' during the Olympic Games.

Over a decade after the Olympic Games, it is evident that, while the Olympic Games helped to promote Barcelona as an international tourist destination, it significantly affected the price of housing in Barcelona, and the increased tourism also affected housing availability and the use of public spaces.

BARCELONA, SPAIN (1992): Facts at a glance

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- Significant increases in housing costs have led to unaffordability particularly affecting the poor, low income earners and those with insecure tenure. It also led to many secondary displacements and evictions: it has been said that a further 59,000 residents left Barcelona to live elsewhere between the years of 1984 and 1992.
- In areas surrounding the Olympic Village communities which were between 90 and 95 percent Roma were displaced, and in the Olympic Ring area of *Montjuic*, it was completely Roma communities who were displaced from their homes and means of livelihood.
- It has also been estimated that over 400 poor and homeless persons were subjected to ‘control and supervision’ during the Olympic Games.

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Fact Sheet – Forced evictions and displacements in past Olympic cities

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA (1988):

Slum clearance was a major element of the preparations for the Olympic Games in Seoul. In the lead up to the 1988 Olympic Games, displacements of residents were conducted on such an enormous scale that Seoul's practice of forced evictions became known internationally.

A widely cited international investigation conducted in 1989 by the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) states that around 100 neighbourhoods were redeveloped between 1982 and 1989. It goes on to report that between 1983 and 1988, 48,000 buildings housing 720,000 people were destroyed, and that government officials verified these figures in face-to-face meetings. These were the figures relied upon at the UN Habitat meeting in 1987 which condemned South Korea. COHRE's research verifies these estimates.

By the time of the 1988 Olympic Games, 'city beautification' came to be understood as 'slum clearance' because it entailed demolishing tracts of unauthorised buildings and replacing them with highly-priced condominiums. The 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul caused the forced eviction of resisting populations of Mokdong, Sadangong, Sanggyedong, and numerous other residential and mixed-use central city neighbourhoods, not to mention Olympic site villages. The international press also drew attention to the sweeping up of street peddlers, beggars and the homeless in the weeks prior to the event. Between 1983 and 1988, in a rush to beautify the city, nearly 100 sites were cleared and redeveloped within Seoul. A significant feature of the Seoul evictions was the level of violence that accompanied the demolitions of neighbourhoods such as Sadangong, Mokdong, and Sanggyedong.

Despite the boom in construction of new housing units during the Olympic Games period, the new housing constructed was not designed for or subsequently inhabited by those who were evicted from the previous housing. This resulted in a worsening shortage of low-income housing. The dire situation of the evicted low-income renters in Seoul as a result of Olympic Games preparation policies highlighted the need for low-income housing to replace what was being demolished, but no steps were taken to address this need in time to help the evictees.

The Olympic Games period demonstrated a repeated, systemic failure to manage the situations that arise when tenants are expelled from land claimed for redevelopment. The ferocity of government and development corporation members' actions against the urban poor gave rise to an outpouring of support for the displaced, initially from all over the country, and later from the international community.

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA (1988): Facts at a glance

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Fact Sheet – COHRE’s *Multi-Stakeholder Guidelines on Mega-Events and the Protection and Promotion of Housing Rights*

The *Multi-Stakeholder Guidelines on Mega-Events and the Protection and Promotion of Housing Rights* calls for all mega-event stakeholders to play their part in promoting and protecting housing rights, so that everyone, including the local residents, can reap the benefits of hosting a mega-event. They are founded on the principle of compliance with international human right standards and laws. The *Guidelines* are directed towards all mega-event stakeholders, including: mega-event governing bodies, cities applying to host mega-events, municipal authorities, mega-event organising committees, mega-event sponsors and partners, shareholders, development corporations, architecture firms, building corporations, members of the construction industry, mega-event suppliers, mega-event participants such as athletes, volunteers, and spectators, sporting associations and federations, event exhibitors, consumers, community activists, NGOs, housing policy makers, service providers, urban planners, landlords, the media, the international community as a whole, and not least of all local residents.

According to the *Guidelines*, all entities should:

Guideline 1: Respect, ensure respect for, and implement all international housing rights laws and standards in all aspects of hosting a mega-event

Guideline 2: Thoroughly assess, monitor and evaluate potential and actual housing impacts of mega-events and develop and implement policies and initiatives to adequately address these

Guideline 3: Prevent evictions and displacements related to mega-events

Guideline 4: Prevent any homelessness related to a mega-event, avoid disrupting the existing homeless population and reduce the number of homeless persons

Guideline 5: Ensure that staging a mega-event contributes to creating stable housing markets and delivering more affordable housing

Guideline 6: Use mega-events as an opportunity to increase the supply of low income, public and social housing and improve the existing housing stock

Guideline 7: Enhance the legal and regulatory protection of housing rights

Guideline 8: Hold violators of housing rights to account and ensure the availability of remedies for victims

Guideline 9: Ensure transparency and active public participation in all aspects of hosting a mega-event

Guideline 10: Ensure the housing needs of all sectors of society are taken into account in planning a mega-event and addressing its impact

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Organisational Profile: Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE)

The Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions is an independent international human rights organisation dedicated to securing economic, social and cultural rights, with a special focus on housing. COHRE's work concentrates on preventing planned forced evictions and creating conditions in which people all over the world can enjoy access to safe, affordable and secure housing.

COHRE was founded in 1994 and now has some 60 staff members working from offices in Accra (Ghana), Colombo (Sri Lanka), Duluth (USA), Geneva (Switzerland), Melbourne (Australia) and Porto Alegre (Brazil).

In its thirteen years of existence, COHRE has played a principal role in addressing eviction issues, land and housing rights in dozens of countries. COHRE works closely with key civil society organisations around the world and has assisted in halting numerous forced evictions, which if carried out would have added several million people to the world's homeless population. COHRE has been instrumental in reshaping international law standards on evictions issues and housing rights, through the adoption of over 50 new international standards on these issues.

COHRE has contributed to the establishment of major institutions such as the United Nations (UN) Housing Rights Programme, the Housing and Property Directorate in Kosovo, the Commission on Land, Housing and Property Rights in Sri Lanka and many others. COHRE has consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN and consultative status with the Council of Europe (COE) and the Organisation of American States (OAS).

Since 1994 COHRE has received generous financial support from the Ford Foundation, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Swedish NGO Foundation for Human Rights, the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the United National Trust Fund in support of Actions to Eliminate Violence Against Women (UNIFEM), Netherlands Ministry of Housing (VROM), CordAid (Netherlands), Misereor (Germany), the Swiss Development Corporation (SDC), the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Geneva International Academic Network (RUIG/GIAN) and others.

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