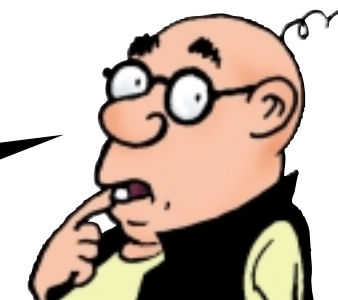




# Slum truths,

mostly myths



On World Habitat Day, October 6, 2003, the United Nations acknowledged these myths

## Not true

Slums are the first stop for immigrants. They provide low-cost housing for millions, low-cost services for the rest of the city and are social support networks.

## On the contrary

The poor are currently the largest producers of shelter and builders of cities in the world. Slums in Africa and Latin America have given the main musical and dance movements of the 20th century: jazz, blues, rock and roll, reggae and break dancing.

## Convenient

In some cases, slum crime stories are a fabrication of the media. In cities with high crime rates, poor people suffer more from violence and theft because their homes are less secure.

## Not to blame

Slums are the result of a failure of housing policies, laws and delivery systems, as well as of national and urban policies.

Slums serve no purpose

Slum dwellers don't want to help themselves

There never used to be slums

Slums dwellers are a burden on the economy

They contribute nothing to the society

All slums are the same. All slum-dwellers are poor

Crime emanates from the slums

Squatters are people who just don't want to pay the rent

## Untrue

In the 19th Century in the West, conditions were as bad as those found anywhere today and slums were just as widespread.

## In fact

In many cities, as much as 60 per cent of employment is in the "informal" sector of the urban population. This serves the needs of the city through goods and services.

## False

Some people with reasonable incomes actually choose to live within or on the edges of slums. Many slums in southeast Asia have colour TVs and mobiles.

## Wrong

25 per cent of the world's squatters do pay rent. In parts of India, squatter housing is rented from landlords, and ironically, given the low level of services available and the poor quality of the housing, these people actually pay more per square foot than the rich.

