Urbanization is particularly rapid in the developing world, where globalization and major economic restructuring in countries like China and India, and the lack of rural employment opportunities in many African and Asian countries, is provoking an exodus from rural areas to towns and cities. Although much of the focus has been on the growth, infrastructural and environmental problems of megacities (those over 10 million in population), the reality is that most urbanization is taking place in the small to medium sized cities, and not just large or “primate” cities. This poses numerous challenges to the environment and human health, ranging from conversion of cropland, forest and wetlands to urban “built up” areas (and the consequent loss of ecosystem services); adequate provision of improved water and sanitation, particularly in informal settlements; waste removal; and air pollutant emissions from transportation and industry.

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