Happy New Year. This issue will give you a status report on the WRR working papers and current discussions regarding the audience for the WRR. Other topics include our plans for stakeholder engagements, communications and a new Cities Research Seminar Series. Most importantly, this issue highlights three ways we would like to engage the country offices.

**Status of Working Papers**

The first set of publication plans for working papers on housing, water risk and energy were submitted to Science & Research on schedule! A publication plan for the transportation working paper will be submitted in January and a third set of publication plans on urban expansion and household access to potable water will be submitted in February. All publication plans are stored on OneDrive. If you need help accessing OneDrive, please email Valeria Gelman and she will send you a link. If you do not have access to OneDrive, Valeria can send you documents.

**WRR Audience**

A question about the most appropriate audience(s) for the WRR surfaced during internal meetings, as well as during the Stakeholder Roundtable in November. After much discussion, the WRR will focus on change agents who are most likely to impact the planning, building, management and governance of rapidly urbanizing cities. In this context, change agents come from different levels of government and represent diverse groups of societal actors. So, the primary audience for the WRR is *urban change agents* in government, the private sector, and civil society who are responding to the urgency of meeting basic needs while trying to avoid unsustainable “lock in” in rapidly urbanizing cities. The secondary audience is practitioners, policy makers and experts who operate on a higher international level.

**Stakeholder Engagement and Communications**

In the second quarter of the DFID grant, we will not host a large Stakeholder Roundtable. Instead, we have initiated a *Cities Research Seminar Series* and have asked some of the most accomplished individuals working on topics central to the WRR to present their research and engage us on our work.

The first seminar will be given by Martin Ravallion on the growth of urban poverty in developing countries—the “urbanization of poverty.” Following this, Weiping Wu will present on China’s urban transformation. Sumila Gulyani is our counterpart at the World Bank, and we have asked her to present on her team’s work. Bipasha Baruah has an ongoing project on women’s employment in renewable energy in China, Brazil and India. Shlomo Angel will present his work...
on managing urban expansion. Jennifer (Jenna) Davis will present her work on household access to potable water in urban areas. There will be a seminar approximately every two weeks. Information about the seminars will be accessible on our website. The link to the WRR project page will be available soon and will be emailed to everyone. The seminars will all have GotoMeeting access for anyone from the country offices to participate.

Anjali recently reached out to the country offices asking for help identifying different stakeholders. We have identified five different types of stakeholders needed to support the WRR. Amplifiers have political power and can influence decision makers in rapidly urbanizing regions. Advisors are recognized experts in the topics central to the WRR. Partners are individuals or institutions who are new or who have a long standing relationship with WRI, and will contribute data, funding, and/or in-kind support. Co-authors are committed to writing working papers or case studies with WRI authors. Reviewers are subject matter experts who will provide critical feedback on working papers. Anjali will follow-up with the country offices to further discuss the names you provided. Thank you to everyone who sent names.

We are currently working with the Marketing and Communications team to revise our overall Communications Strategy. In the interim, Anjali and I spent a day in New York City in late December meeting with journalists to get a sense of their interest and response to the WRR framing. We met with Bryan Walsh at Time Magazine, Eduardo Porter at the New York Times, and Peter Coy (Economics Editor) and Eric Roston (Sustainability Editor) at Bloomberg Business. These interviews are stored on OneDrive. We found these meetings informative and the WRI media team is helping us plan more meetings with journalists in D.C.

**Individual Vignettes and City-Level Case Studies**

In the very near future, we need to collect a number of individual stories or vignettes to complete the Framing Paper. We have created an interview template to guide this work. We will share more on this at the WRR session planned on January 12th in the D.C. office with staff from the country offices. The interviews should take no more than one hour, after an appropriate respondent is identified. Later in the year we will ask the country offices for help with city-level case studies. The case studies will be more in-depth and eventually become chapters on urban transformation in the WRR.

**We want to hear from the Country Offices**

For the next WRR Update, we would like to hear from the country offices about current work that relates to the WRR. To facilitate this, we will circulate a draft of the Framing Paper and the working paper Pub Plans. Sebastian Varela Contador will reach out to the country offices to compile this information. Outside of the WRR Update, if there is work you are doing that could contribute to the WRR, please reach out to us (Victoria and Anjali).

**Let’s Meet in the D.C. Office in January**

While staff from the country offices are in D.C. for the Transforming Transportation Conference, let’s meet to discuss the WRR. We have reserved Arctic in the D.C. office on January 12th from 11:00 to 12:00. Staff from the country offices will have an opportunity to meet with the lead authors of the WRR.
working papers and to discuss the vignettes for the Framing Paper. Let’s make the most of this opportunity to meet face to face.

**New Members of the WRR Team**

The WRR team is growing. We have hired a new urban economist, German Caruso, who is originally from Argentina. German is expected to join the Cities Program full time in April. German holds a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Urbana Champaign, and prior to joining WRI he worked for the World Bank. We are also grateful to have the help of Randy Crane from the University of California, Los Angeles in the D.C. office starting in January. Randy will use his sabbatical to provide editorial support for the Framing Paper and working papers. We have been working with Diana Mitlin and David Satterwaite from IIED on the Framing Paper and they are helping us think through work in Africa. We are in the process of formalizing this collaboration. Finally, we are delighted to have hired Emily Norford as an intern supporting the WRR and the Research Team. Emily worked for WRI as a Project Coordinator before leaving to complete her master’s degree in Environmental Studies and Sustainability Science at Lund University.

If you have any questions about the WRR or anything included in this *WRR Update*, please reach out to Victoria and Anjali.