Fact Sheet: Squatter Settlements in Rio De Janeiro

Conditions

- **Housing**: The walls of the house are made of bricks and the roofs of corrugated iron. They are usually 3 or 4 stories high. The houses are built very close to each other (high density) and the streets a very narrow.

- **Average incomes** are very low – they can be as low as $100 a month.

- **Drinking water** is usually accessed by tapping into a city water main at the bottom of the steep slopes on which the favelas are located. This has to be done several times a day and the water may not be clean leading to people contracting water borne diseases.

- Only about 50% of favela residents have access to **indoor toilets** and **sewers** are often open drains running at street level, creating major **outbreaks of water borne diseases**. This has led to **infant mortality** rates that are **50% higher** than elsewhere in the Rio State

- **Rubbish** is either disposed of by incineration or by bringing the rubbish to the foot of the favela. However, that which is incinerated can set fire to the wooden buildings and the smoke can be damaging to residents health, causing them **respiratory diseases**. In addition the city does not always collect the rubbish and it may fester in the hot humid climate and become a source of **disease**.

- Heavy tropical rainstorms can lead to **mudslides** on the steep slopes. In April 1994 heavy rainfalls led to the deaths of 250 people who lived in the Favela's.

- There are few public services such as **mains electricity**, **primary schools**, youth centres and **health centres** for the residents to access.

- The gangs that sell drugs make the favelas dangerous places to live and levels of drug related **crime** are also high.

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Improvements - The Complexo de Alemão is a squatter settlement located on steep slopes in the north of the city was improved in the following ways. In 1995 with the aid of Inter-Americans Development Bank Rio de Janerio launched the Programa Favela - Bairoo an initiative that aimed to improve the quality of life for some of the people living in the favelas.

- 26,000 residents were provided with access to a clean water supply and drainage system that collected their waste. This reduced the prevalence of water borne diseases.

- Public lighting was provided and the streets were widened to improve safety in the area and to allow access for rubbish trucks to collect the rubbish.

- Two new primary schools, a technical college, a library and two crèches were built, along with other healthcare and public services. The hillsides around the favela were stabilised to prevent future landslides.

- The city established Pacifying Police Unit in an effort to restore law and order. The aim is not so much to abolish the drug trade, but rather drive it underground. The number of murders has dropped by 500% between 2009 and 2010. This allowed the cities authorities to improve the infrastructure and public services and to formalise and legalise the favela.

- As the area is safer An NGO (non-government organisation) called Solar has tried to provide residents with an alternative to criminality by providing day care, primary and secondary schooling and counselling.

- A cable car has been built to connect the favela with more commercial district of Ipanema. This should allow the residents better access to the commercial and improve the employment prospects.