



**UN HABITAT**  
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

**Annual Report**  
**2020**

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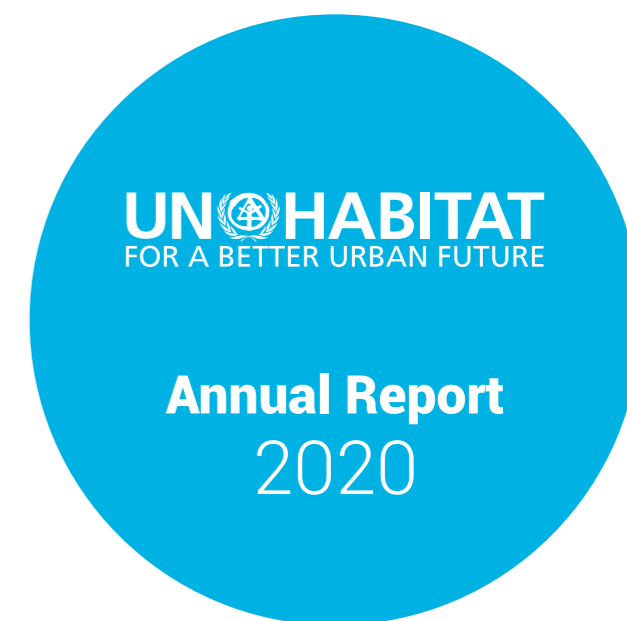
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### Cover Photo

A student wearing a homemade mask for COVID-19 protection.

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## FOREWORD

UN-Habitat's Annual Report 2020 is a chronicle of our time. A year after the declaration of a global pandemic, we reflect on the challenges and changes that have occurred so quickly in the world's cities and in all our human settlements.

While we have seen inequalities deepen and widen in some cases, we have also seen innovative and inclusive approaches to solutions and recovery in others. Circumstances forced us to understand change and adjust to it. This report reflects the achievements as well as the lessons we take forward in support of sustainable urbanization.

At UN-Habitat, we know that data, knowledge, ideas, good practices and innovative solutions are our best tools to understand and anticipate the challenges of sustainable urbanization in a rapidly changing world.

2020 was the first year of our Strategic Plan 2020–2023 and the first year of our new organizational structure. I am pleased to report that both have been tested and found to be robust and flexible in the face of the global pandemic and its consequences. We have responded to change with professionalism, commitment and a clear sense of urgency. We have held ourselves to our guiding principles of competency, accountability, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness, and achieved strong results with a view to leaving no one and no place behind.

Since the United Nations Habitat Assembly adopted this Strategic Plan in May 2019, we have been able to strengthen our role as a global catalyst for sustainable urbanization, a convener of excellence and demonstrate technical leadership in our normative work. We have created a specialized unit on innovation and reinforced our approach to strategic partnerships to leverage global action. We have adapted to the world of 2020 and managed fiscal austerity while also providing support to the most marginalized communities facing COVID-19.

This Annual Report is testimony to the energy that UN-Habitat has deployed to protect the People and the Planet, enhance urban Prosperity and, as a result, preserve Peace. Ground in Partnership, UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan is fully contributing to these "5 Ps" that shape the Sustainable Development Goals and global progress to Agenda 2030.

I am pleased to share this Annual Report with you, highlighting UN-Habitat's work and achievements through a turbulent and challenging year. We have focused our efforts on ensuring that cities and all human settlements stay on the sustainable development trajectory, equipped with normative guidance and operational support to build a greener, more inclusive, more just and sustainable future for all.



**Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif**  
United Nations Under-Secretary-General  
and Executive Director

# 2020 Achievements

## Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic



We rolled out UN-Habitat's immediate response plan covering **75 projects** in **37 countries** with **USD 32 million** raised and reprogrammed to support the most marginalized most quickly.

UN-Habitat worked with key agencies and local governments to bring learning and recommendations forward in the United Nations Secretary-General's Policy Brief: **COVID-19 in an Urban World**.

Working with CitiIQ, we created **a global database** on city preparedness and pandemic responses involving **1,700 cities** across all regional groups.

Throughout the year we provided support to **6.8 million people** in **37 countries** and **262 cities** to adapt to the global health crisis and resulting social-economic fallouts by implementing **71 projects** with more than **250 partners**.

We worked with partners to ensure that **social cohesion** and **community resilience** are a pillar of the United Nations framework for the immediate socio-economic **response to COVID-19**.

## Setting the global discourse on sustainable urban development



**The City Prosperity Initiative** was used to guide decision-making in around **50 cities** by establishing linkages between data, knowledge and policy actions.

We collected data on **77 indicators** from **1,500 urban areas** in **132 countries** with the Global Urban Indicators Database.

We prepared a Global Monitoring Framework as a **universal urban monitoring system**.

We launched the **Urban Agenda Platform** to support monitoring of progress to achieve the New Urban Agenda and urban related SDGs.

## Reaching those most in need



We provided support to **36 national governments** and more than **20 cities**, benefitting more than **300,000 people** by improving living conditions in informal settlements.

We supported the local **implementation of the SDGs** through 30 sustainable, integrated and inclusive urban projects, achieving scaled transformative change in **19 cities**.

**96 cities** used participatory planning methodologies and collected spatial data to increase **social cohesion** between migrant, displaced and host communities under several **regional and country teams**.

The **HerCity platform** provided a digital toolbox to create more inclusive, equal and sustainable cities and promote **participation of girls and young women** in urban planning using innovative digital technologies in **17 cities**.

## Establishing new partnerships and funding



UN-Habitat's total income in 2020 was **USD 193.7 million**, representing **76.6 per cent** of its target.

Since January 2020, we have signed agreements with **191 partners**: Governments (51), United Nations entities (18), Local Governments (26) and Civil Society Organizations (96).

Projects financed by the **Adaptation Fund** totalled **over USD 49 million**, supporting the community-level adaptation of infrastructure to climatic changes in south-eastern Africa, Cambodia, Jordan, Lebanon, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Pakistan and Vietnam, significantly increasing the portfolio to benefit **14 countries**.

## Key publications



**World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization.**



**2020 Catalogue of Services.**



**United Nations System-wide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements.**

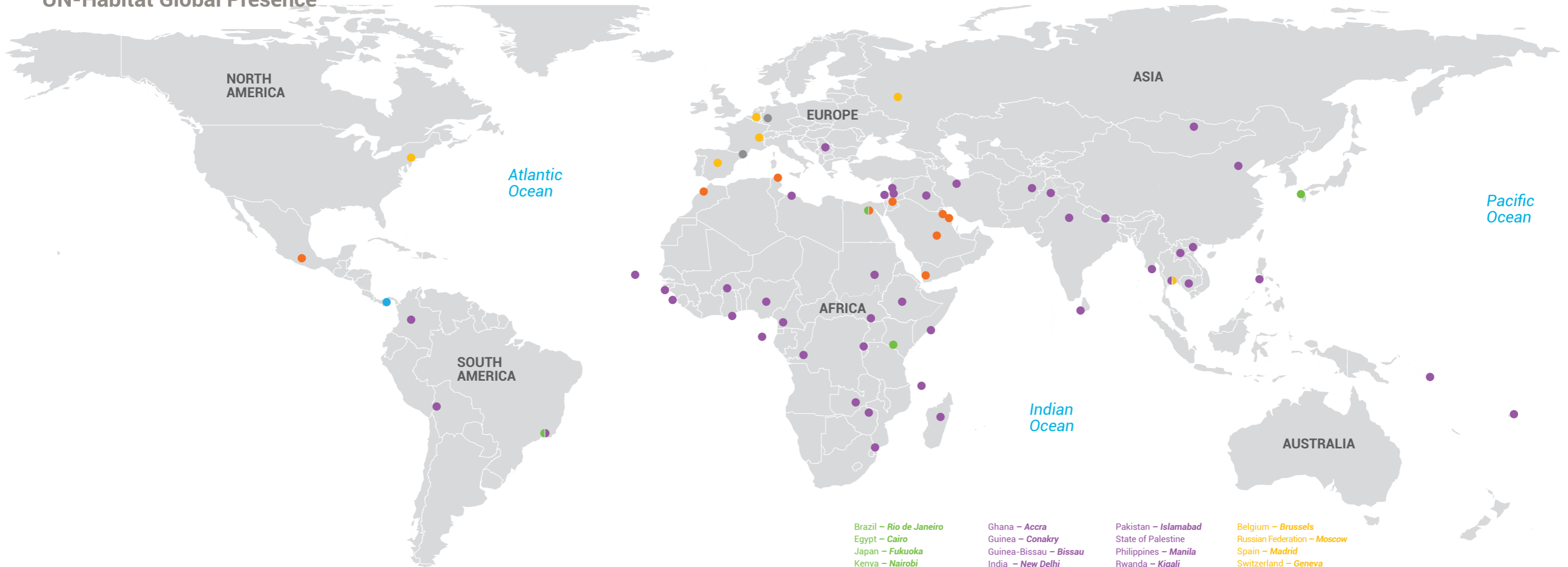


**The New Urban Agenda Illustrated.**

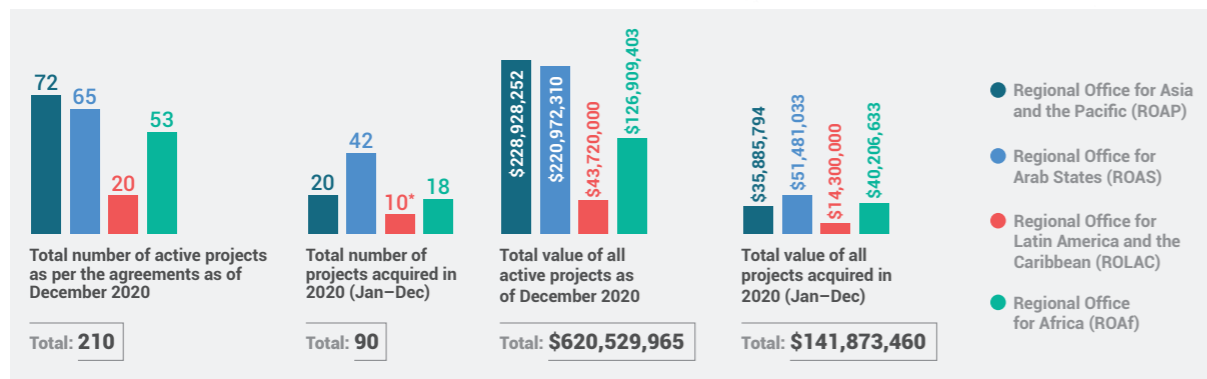


# UN-Habitat's Portfolio at a Glance

## UN-Habitat Global Presence



### Foundation Special Purpose (Earmarked/Technical Cooperation)



- Brazil – Rio de Janeiro
- Egypt – Cairo
- Japan – Fukuoka
- Kenya – Nairobi
- Afghanistan – Kabul
- Bolivia – La Paz
- Brazil – Rio de Janeiro
- Burkina Faso – Ouagadougou
- Cambodia – Phnom Penh
- Cameroon – Yaounde
- Cape Verde – Praia
- China – Beijing
- Colombia – Bogota
- Comoros – Moroni
- Democratic Republic of the Congo – Kinshasa
- Ethiopia – Addis Ababa
- Fiji – Suva
- Ghana – Accra
- Guinea – Conakry
- Guinea-Bissau – Bissau
- India – New Delhi
- Islamic Republic of Iran – Tehran
- Iraq – Baghdad
- Kosovo\* – Pristina
- Lao People's Democratic Republic – Vientiane
- Lebanon – Beirut
- Libya – Tripoli
- Madagascar – Antananarivo
- Mongolia – Ulaanbaatar
- Mozambique – Maputo
- Myanmar – Yangon
- Nepal – Kathmandu
- Nigeria – Abuja
- Pakistan – Islamabad
- State of Palestine
- Philippines – Manila
- Rwanda – Kigali
- Sao Tomé and Príncipe – Sao Tomé
- Saudi Arabia – Riyadh
- Solomon Islands – Honiara
- Somalia – Mogadishu
- South Sudan\*\* – Juba
- Sri Lanka – Colombo
- Sudan – Khartoum
- Syrian Arab Republic – Damascus
- Thailand – Bangkok
- Vietnam – Hanoi
- Zambia – Lusaka
- Zimbabwe – Harare
- Belgium – Brussels
- Russian Federation – Moscow
- Spain – Madrid
- Switzerland – Geneva
- Thailand – Bangkok
- United States of America – New York
- Germany – Bonn
- Spain – Barcelona
- Bahrain – Manama
- Egypt – Cairo
- Jordan – Amman
- Kuwait – Kuwait
- Mexico – Mexico City
- Morocco – Rabat
- Tunisia – Tunis
- Yemen – Sanaa
- Panama – Panama

- Regional Office
- Project Office
- Liaison/Representation Office
- Global Programme Office
- Country Office
- Administrative Office

\*Any reference to Kosovo in United Nations documents and United Nations websites, whether to the territory, institutions or population, is to be understood in full compliance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo. Kosovo is therefore not listed as a country.

\*\*The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. Final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined.

\*Includes new grants, COVID-19 related projects, United Nations Development Account projects and additional funding to ongoing projects.

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# Introduction



UN-Habitat is the United Nations Programme mandated with action for sustainable urban development, and our mission has never been more important than it was in 2020. The year was defined by the COVID-19 pandemic with more than 90 per cent of cases occurring in cities, and UN-Habitat has been at the forefront of the global pandemic response. Alongside partners, UN-Habitat has closely monitored the impact of the pandemic on human settlements, supported city responses globally and gathered knowledge to inform both our operational and normative work.

UN-Habitat's role is to provide technical assistance to improve planning, policies, legislation and governance as well as support access to land, housing and basic services all grounded in an approach which advances social inclusion and human rights. Throughout 2020, UN-Habitat's

teams worked in 67 countries, developed critical guidelines, established global norms and contributed to advancing the global urban agenda including evidence-based recommendations for sustainable recovery from the pandemic and resilience to future shocks.

The pandemic has affected cities most. Cities have led the frontline response and will spearhead long-term recovery. This underscores the importance of UN-Habitat's work to help authorities adapt to changing landscapes and crises while providing key services, keeping communities safe and improving quality of life for all. The consequences of the pandemic are likely to be long-lasting on cities and urban settlements but offer opportunities to emerge stronger and to build back differently and better through sustainable, inclusive and green recoveries.



A child using a touchless handwashing facility installed by UN-Habitat that aims to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Sittwe, Myanmar © UN-Habitat

## A new strategic focus to leverage impact



Figure 1: The four Domains of Change and 12 outcomes of the UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2020-2023

This Annual Report summarizes UN-Habitat's achievements in the first year of the Strategic Plan 2020–2023 which focuses on working in the most pressing areas of development such as poverty, prosperity, climate action and crisis prevention. This includes the full range of the continuum of human settlements from neighbourhood communities to the largest urban conglomeration.

To support the implementation of the Strategic Plan, in January 2020 UN-Habitat put in place a revised organizational structure to strengthen integrated programming and improve the impact of its work. UN-Habitat is now more outcome-

focused and results-oriented, and better equipped to support national and local governments in achieving the New Urban Agenda, Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as other global commitments. The Strategic Plan details how UN-Habitat will support Member States and cities to achieve sustainable urban development supported by data, policy, evidence, technical advisory services and capacity-building action.

UN-Habitat aims to reach those most in need by addressing issues of human rights and gender with specific considerations for children, youth, older people and persons living with disabilities. UN-Habitat also aims to

redress chronic issues of discrimination and marginalization at a structural level. These elements form the social inclusion dimension of the Strategic Plan and cut across all domains of change.

Five flagship programmes aligned to the domains of change were launched in February 2020 to develop more effective and integrated responses and attract multi-donor funding and investment in large-scale programmes. The flagship programmes promote urban regeneration, people-centred smart cities, climate action for more resilient settlements, safe migration and inclusive neighbourhoods, and accelerating achievement of the SDGs in cities.

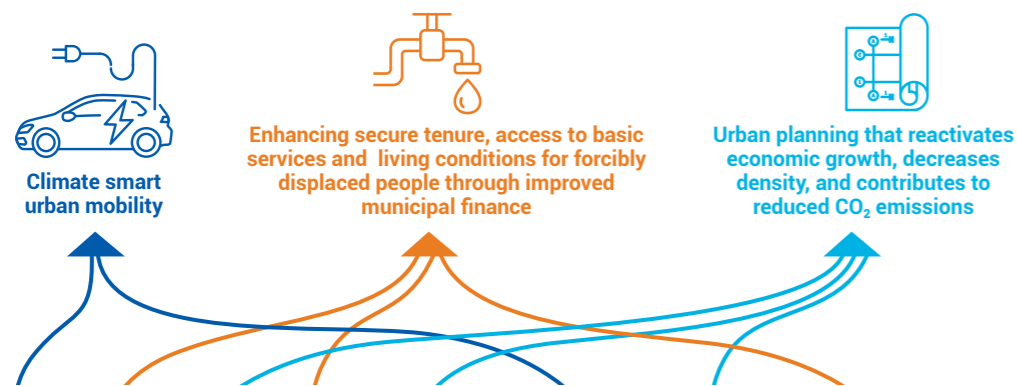
BOX 01

### An integrated way of working

UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan 2020–2023 and the United Nations System-Wide Strategy on Sustainable Urban Development 2019 are proving to be valuable instruments in facilitating and encouraging more integrated programming, framing joint projects and collaborating with other United Nations entities and partners, and enhancing UN-Habitat's catalytic function to drive transformative change and become a centre of excellence.

Projects with large potential and synergistic relationships targeting numerous outcomes include those on:

- **Basic services and mobility, while delivering on climate mitigation, resource efficiency, and urban environment and mitigation.** Examples in 2020 are the projects on Urban Pathways towards low carbon basis urban services, Demonstration actions & Living Labs, Integrated Urban Electric Mobility Solutions in the Context of the Paris Agreement, Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda, and the Urban-LEDS II project which addresses integrated low emission and resilient development.
- **Security of tenure and municipal finance, while also addressing basic services, social integration and improved living conditions.** An important example is the project on Land and Property Tax Revenues for Service Delivery, Reconstruction, Citizenship Building and Sustaining Peace in Fragile States which targets primarily security of tenure and municipal finance while indirectly impacting outcome basic services, social integration and improved living conditions for refugees/internally displaced people. The project is building on years of experience in Afghanistan and Somalia and focused on increasing impact and scalability of the approach going forward.
- **The United Nations Joint Programme to Build Urban and Rural Resilience and the Conditions for Recovery in the Syrian Arab Republic** is a good example of how UN-Habitat's urban expertise developing area-based recovery and neighbourhood plans, can facilitate integration and synergies across the interventions of the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Population Fund and the World Food Programme.



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[https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5\\_17459](https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_17459)



## Responding to COVID-19

In March 2020, immediately after the World Health Organization's declaration of the global pandemic, UN-Habitat's Executive Director launched a corporate-wide emergency response to ensure duty of care to staff, business continuity at headquarters and all field offices, and mobilize resources for emergency programming. This included leveraging USD 1.3 million for quick impact projects in 13 countries.

UN-Habitat's technical assistance during the emergency response phase helped local officials adapt public health directives to improve conditions in informal settlements. UN-Habitat was sought out by governments and cities for its expertise in slum upgrading, urban basic services, affordable housing, disaster recovery and livelihoods for youth.

In the course of 2020, USD 32 million was mobilized for UN-Habitat's COVID-19 response, representing 44 per cent of the total USD 72 million sought in the UN-Habitat COVID-19 Response Plan of April 2020. From rapid response to longer-term recovery, UN-Habitat supported national and local

governments with 75 projects in 37 countries and 300 cities. UN-Habitat's profiling of urban contexts includes mapping and data from 1,700 cities benefiting over 10 million people by informing decision-making and improving coherence in the response to the pandemic.

UN-Habitat has supported COVID-19 responses at global, national and city level focusing on the densely populated urban areas hit hardest due to lack of adequate housing, mobility and connectivity. The COVID-19 policy and programme framework has focused on:

- Supporting local government and community-led solutions.
- Profiling of urban context using data, mapping and knowledge.
- Mitigating economic impact and initiating recovery.
- Promoting active learning on policy measures and practices.

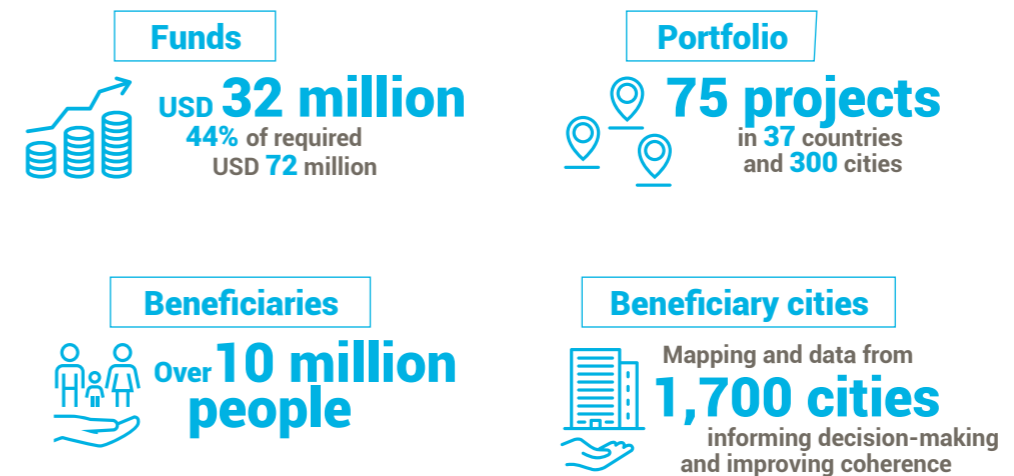


Figure 3: Key results of UN-Habitat's response to COVID-19