

GLOBAL PUBLIC SPACE PROGRAMME ANNUAL REPORT 2020







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Cover photo: Faces of Covid-19 Mural in Quito, Ecuador © Dialogo Diverso

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Project manager:	Cecilia Andersson
Project supervisor:	Laura Petrella
Principal author:	Christelle Lahoud, Chiara Martinuzzi
Contributors:	Jose Chong, Joy Mutai, Mark Ojal, Sohel Rana, Mario Tavera, Maia Smillie, Mitiku Woldesenbet

Design and layout: Christelle Lahoud, Chiara Martinuzzi

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GLOBAL PUBLIC SPACE PROGRAMME

UN-Habitat's Global Public Space Programme was launched in 2012 with the objective to support local governments in creating and promoting socially inclusive, integrated, connected, environmentally sustainable and safe streets and public spaces, especially for the most vulnerable, promoting a better quality of life for all. The programme has developed an integrated, multi-sectoral and iterative approach to support local governments to create vibrant and inclusive public space networks, longterm urban strategies and national policies, focusing on the most vulnerable groups. Starting from the national and regional scale, the Programme provides technical support and capacity building in public space assessments, policy guides, strategies and design principles, management and maintenance frameworks and using innovative participatory tools. The outcomes of this approach inform city planning frameworks, monitoring of the 2030 New Urban Agenda, SDG 11.7 and thematic aspects such as inequality, prosperity, accessibility, resilience and health.

2020 has been a challenging year: the world is living through an unprecedented crisis as COVID-19 continues to spread, with hundreds of thousands of lives lost and over two hundred countries affected. The impact of COVID-19 will be most devastating in poor and densely populated urban areas, particularly affecting the most vulnerable groups of our society. In just a few months, the pandemic has transformed the way we live, work, travel and socialize. As a guick response, most cities are following semi-similar prevention actions by adopting confinement, strict dusk-to-dawn curfews and lockdown measures to minimize physical contact. However, social distancing does not work for the informal sector that relies on public spaces to earn a living. As a result of these globalised measures, many businesses are closing, working hours are narrowing and supply networks for food and goods are being disrupted. Meanwhile, stay at home orders are increasing rates of depression and put women, girls and children at a greater risk of domestic violence with limited access to protection services and social networks.

Worldwide measures cannot be generalized and should rather be adapted to diverse contexts. If not addressed properly, the impact of COVID-19 could exacerbate inequalities once the crisis is over. Public spaces have the potential to provide space for the rapid establishment of temporary and secondary facilities (e.g. for health care and for food distribution) and livelihood opportunities. Furthermore, streets and markets can allow informal vendors to continue to operate if these public spaces are adapted and designed in a way to provide sufficient distance from each stall and provide the opportunity for some of the vendors to spill over into the streets ensuring adequate distance.

This year, more than ever, the Global Public Space Programme is working to leverage the value of public spaces for urban health and social inclusion. In particular, digital participation has now become a critical point to ensure inclusive urban planning processes during the era of social distancing. Our methodologies and operative tools are adapting to the change and integrating new approaches and opportunities to plan and design the public realm of the new normal, following the guidelines of WHO. The focus of upgrading projects is on building health resilience, livelihood opportunities and social trust among the community, to enable people to use and enjoy public spaces again.



Number of cities where the Global Public Space Programme is active

HOW WE WORK



CONTINUED PROGRESS

Where we started and where we are now



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