

An Incremental and Participatory
Toolbox for Urban Planning

A global toolbox to support local governments and urban actors in small and intermediate cities to implement and customize inclusive urban planning processes

Second edition of Participatory Incremental Urban Planning (PIUP)



Our City Plans: An Incremental and Participatory Toolbox for Urban Planning

A global toolbox to support local governments and urban actors in small and intermediate cities to implement and customize inclusive urban planning processes

Second edition of Participatory Incremental Urban Planning (PIUP) Phase 1 (Assessment) and Phase 2 (Plan)

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Foreword



As cities are rapidly growing, small and intermediate municipalities struggle to address the need for sustainable urbanisation with limited capacities, facing additional challenges such as conflicts over land and property, unplanned and unstructured territorial development resulting in spatial inequality, urban sprawl, insufficient infrastructure and basic services provision, lagging mobility networks and climate change impacts. To adequately respond to the rapid increase in population, cities need to understand their territory and identify priority interventions through the development of territorial and urban strategic plans.

The current pandemic has put the world under an unprecedented economic, environmental, social, and political stress. Local governments seek guidance, as cities have become the epicentres of the covid-19 pandemic, with over 95% of total cases concentrated in urban areas. Existing issues such as the lack of access to clean water and sanitation, inadequate housing and unequal access to public spaces have been amplified, especially for the most excluded and vulnerable groups.

Additionally, community engagement and participatory planning processes are often deprioritized, especially when time and resources

are limited. Due to the pandemic, gathering and physical distancing restrictions have hindered the implementation of participatory and inclusive urban planning processes that include traditional in-person collaborative design workshops and validation sessions. The role of new digital tools and processes has been crucial to be able to continue to meaningfully engage communities and key stakeholders.

It is in this context that UN-Habitat has developed the Our City Plans (OCP), as a step-by-step guide for city leaders, urban planners and stakeholders to carry out and participate in integrated urban planning processes, from its evaluation to its implementation.

Our City Plans provides an adjustable structure for planning processes and includes the most relevant tools to successfully complete the different phases and activities of preparing a territorial and urban plan, from its evaluation, participatory activities, environmental and social safeguards, spatial analysis to reviewing financial and legal mechanisms.

Our City Plans supports governments and urban actors through an iterative process rather than a Master Planning approach. It is a tested methodology that builds on the vast experience of UN-Habitat in supporting the development of planning frameworks in numerous countries. The toolbox is incremental and flexible and allows local governments to tailor the planning process to their own context, priorities, available resources, and capacities.

I hope that this publication and its upcoming digital platform will contribute to the vital work of city leaders, urban planners, and other key stakeholders, serving as a consolidated guide of urban planning processes bringing together the best tools, to trigger collaboration and partnerships for participatory urban planning, and to help build more socially inclusive, vibrant, and resilient cities creating a better urban future for all.

Maimunah Mohd Shariff Executive Director, UN-Habitat

Introduction

A global toolbox to support local governments and urban actors in small and intermediate cities to implement and customize inclusive urban planning processes.

What is Our City Plans?

Our Citiy Plans is a step-by-step methodology to assess, design, operationalize and implement urban planning processes. This means that by following the proposed timeline of phases, blocks and activities, supported by innovative tools, the toolbox helps the different urban stakeholders to better understand urban planning processes and to assess at which stage they need to participate to ensure that their voices are heard and their interests considered as part of the city's vision, policies, strategies, programmes, plans and projects.

How does the toolbox help...?

CITY LEADERS

The toolbox is a resource for city leaders as it provides a **comprehensive and strategic overview** of the whole planning process. The toolbox includes a city leaders track, which clearly indicates which are the critical activities in which city leaders should be engaged and dedicate time to. But most importantly, it gives city leaders a clear understanding of which are the **key deliverables** (urban analysis, scenarios, strategic plan, action plan, detailed plans, project feasibility studies, etc) and the importance of **citizens participation** in urban planning. It also presents the critical activities to make sure that the plan is implemented and that positive impact is achieved for the residents.

CITY PLANNERS

The toolbox provides city planners and urban planning practitioners with a step-by-step guide on how to **run**, **identify gaps and improve urban planning processes**. The toolbox includes a city planning track, it provides a clear **prioritization of participatory activities**, highlighting which activities are mandatory or recommended, according to the level of detail that best matches the financial and human resources of the municipality. The toolbox also helps practitioners to understand the **human and financial resources required** to undertake different planning processes. It represents a compilation of tools, operationalization and implementation mechanisms to move the planning process **from assessment to implementation**.

CIVIL SOCIETY, INVESTORS AND PRIVATE SECTOR

The toolbox also provides a civil society, investors and private sector track. It is designed to help civil society and urban residents visualize in a simplified manner the complexity of urban planning processes. It also helps them identify the steps in the process critical to influence urban policies, programmes, plans and projects. It is also a toolbox to provide more transparency on urban priorities so that public - private investments can be better aligned.

Introduction

Our City Plans is...

Process-based.

It recognises the importance in urban planning of defining a **process framework** rather than a design framework.

Fit-for-purpose.

It is a simplified roadmap for urban planning processes based on best practices for contexts with limited resources and capacities. It is based on our experiences in multiple cities with different social, economic and cultural contexts in a variety of countries, such as Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Ethiopia, Angola, Sao Tome & Principe, Saudi Arabia, Comoros, Cabo Verde, Mexico, etc.

Incremental, modular and flexible.

It is a step-by-step methodology that guide city leaders and practitioners through the planning process. It is structured in phases, blocks and activities, supported by innovative tools to facilitate the smooth and **gradual development** plan. It enables cities to **tailor the planning process**, considering the available resources and capacities of the context.

Impact-oriented.

It promotes a planning process which is **intervention-oriented** through smart mechanisms and incentives, operationalisation tools, coherent policy implementation, linked to land management, city finance, urban governance and legislation. It stresses the importance of **action planning** to put projects on the ground.

Participatory and people-centred.

It places local authorities and citizens at the driver's seat of sustainable urban development. It stresses that the implementation of a plan depends upon multiple stakeholders, all critical planning steps should be understood and owned by stakeholders before further continuation.

Open source.

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