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URBAN IMPACT
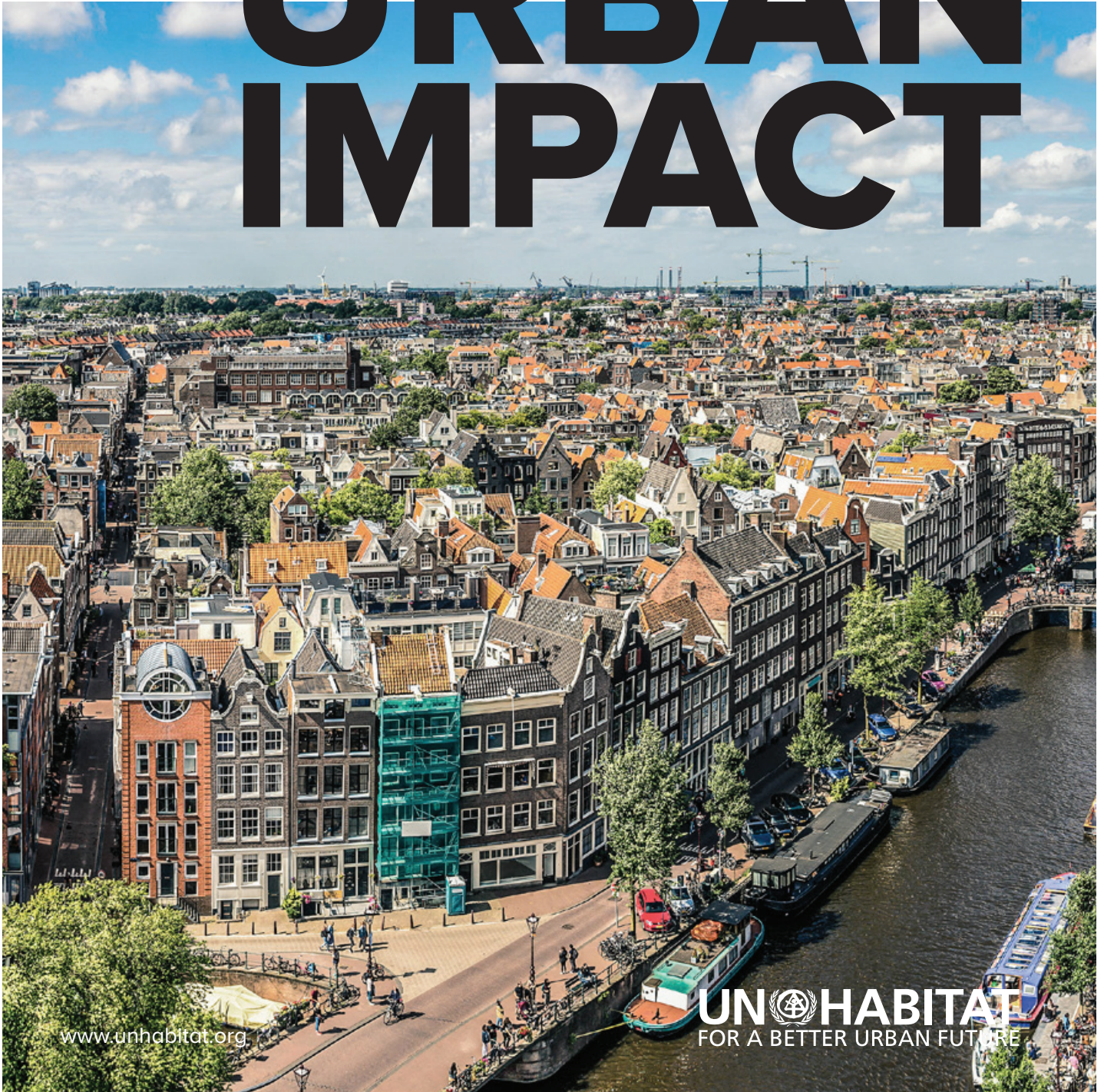
UN@HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

Sustainable urban development can have a positive catalytic impact on overall development, transforming cities and communities around the world by improving living conditions for those furthest behind.

The UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2020 – 2023 sets out a clear pathway to a better quality of life for all in an urbanizing world by focusing on reducing spatial inequality and poverty in communities across the urban-rural continuum, enhancing shared prosperity of cities and regions, strengthening climate action and improving urban environments, and establishing mechanisms for effective urban crisis prevention and response.

The plan emphasizes the need to transition from outputs and processes to outcomes and impacts. This will enable UN-Habitat to contribute more effectively to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, the New Urban Agenda and the Paris Agreement. It will facilitate collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders, actors and communities and leverage social and cultural change, environmental protection and economic growth to drive the sustainable urbanization agenda with a renewed focus on impact.

Cities that are well-planned and governed contribute significantly to addressing global challenges including poverty, social exclusion and spatial inequality, shared prosperity, climate change and environmental protection. UN-Habitat has developed Five Global Flagship Programmes as vehicles for a coherent, impact-oriented and integrated implementation of the Strategic Plan 2020-2023.

By building partner coalitions around issues of common interest the *Inclusive, vibrant neighbourhoods and communities* programme aims to transform socially, economically and environmentally deprived areas and strategic locations of the city into connected, dynamic, diverse and vibrant neighborhoods. *People-focused Smart Cities* from the ground-up is a programme to support cities to ensure that the urban digital transformation works for the benefits of all, driving sustainability, inclusivity, prosperity and the realization of human rights in cities and human settlements.

Through the *Climate Resilience of the Urban Poor,* UN-Habitat will mobilize large scale investments in urban climate change adaptation and resilience-building in the most vulnerable global hotspots, while *Migrant-inclusive Cities and Communities* will support local and national authorities to create inclusive urban environments for all people. Finally, the *SDG Cities - advancing the implementation and localization of SDGs in cities* is designed to enhance the capacity of cities to use data effectively to propel achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif
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Changing for increased impact - UN-Habitat's five Flagship Programmes.

In May 2019, the first session of the UN-Habitat Assembly approved UN-Habitat's strategic plan for the period 2020-2023. The Plan strengthens UN-Habitat's commitment and contribution to the implementation of global agendas, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals, the New Urban Agenda and the Paris Agreement. In addition, it moves the strategic focus of the organization from outputs and processes to outcomes and impacts.

The Strategic Plan creates a strong narrative of change, clearly setting out the relationship between sustainable urbanization and the broader overall notion of sustainable development.

The Plan stresses that well-planned and well-governed cities are the future, as they are both the place and the means to address issues related to poverty, social exclusion and spatial inequality, shared prosperity, climate and the environment, and various forms of crisis. Sustainable urban development can have a positive catalytic impact on development and deliver improved living conditions for those furthest behind.

Well-planned urbanization resulting in effective cities and towns can help to drive the sustainable development agenda across social and cultural change, environmental protection and economic growth. In addition, sustainable urban transformation presents an opportunity to work with all types of actors and communities, particularly those traditionally excluded from such processes. But we must act now.

Flagship programmes - From Outputs to Impacts

In implementing the strategic plan 2020-2023, UN-Habitat will need to continue the repositioning of its strategic and programmatic focus by moving from processes and outputs to outcomes and impacts. As a result, UN-Habitat is moving away from a project-based approach (currently implementing more than 300 projects around the world, which are not necessarily connected and whose outcomes are not clear) to a programme-based approach.

Global flagship programmes are the umbrella frameworks and vehicles that will drive the coherent, impact-focused and integrated implementation of the strategic plan 2020-2023. They also serve as platforms for bringing together coalitions of partners around issues of common interest to support the implantation of the SDGs, including in the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (formerly known as UNDAF).

Internally, UN-Habitat is developing (i) a robust programme implementation manual, with state-of-the-art procedures, workflows and capacity building; (ii) a monitoring and evaluation system, including an online interactive platform accessible to all partners. In addition, UN-Habitat will establish multi-partner trust-funds, which will constitute the financing vehicles of the flagship programmes.

Focus on Innovation and Sustainabiltity

While providing a strong and needs based combination of innovative normative approaches and sustainable operational solutions, the Global flagship programmes are beneficial in several aspects. They reduce fragmentation and allow for a better connection between normative and operational elements of UN-Habitat's work.

They increase the predictability of funding and enhance the flexibility to implement the priorities defined by the strategic plan 2020-2023. They establish long-term partnerships with communities, national governments, partner organizations and donors and strengthen UN-Habitat's visibility and global positioning. Finally, they enhance the horizontal and vertical integration of sustainable urbanization concerns and improve accountability.

UN-Habitat is developing 5 global flagship programmes, which are aligned with the domains of change of its strategic plan 2020-2023:

1. *Inclusive, vibrant neighbourhoods and communities* which aims to transform socially, economically, environmentally deprived areas and strategic locations of the city into connected, dynamic, diverse and vibrant neighborhoods;

2. *People-focused Smart Cities* from the ground-up, whose objective is to make the urban digital transformation work for the benefits of all, driving sustainability, inclusivity and prosperity and the realization of human rights in cities and human settlements;

3. *Climate Resilience of the Urban Poor* which aims to mobilize and coordinate large scale investments for urban adaptation and resilience-building into the global hotspots of vulnerability, and to solidify a new way of working together between a coalition of international to local development partners;

4. *Migrant-inclusive Cities and Communities* which aims to support local and national authorities to create inclusive urban environments for all people; and

5. *SDG Cities - advancing the implementation and localization of SDGs in cities* whose objective is to realize the potential of cities to drive the achievement of the SDGs.

UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan 2020-2023 builds upon the Programme's positive record in i) applying a Human Rights based approach to its work, ii) advancing the right to an adequate standard of living, including the right to shelter, and iii) recognizing the gender specific and poverty and age-related dimensions of sustainable urban development.

Broadening Social Inclusion

The new social inclusion approach will continue previous initiatives but broaden the range of social inclusion priority groups to provide more consideration of the needs of those with disabilities and the relative poor, the latter as an extension to UN-Habitat's traditional focus on the absolute poor.

It will also deepen the consideration of impact on all social inclusion priority groups in UN-Habitat's project work to provide consistent and comparable baselines and benchmarks for project implementation and outcomes. This is accompanied by a systematic approach to the advancement of fundamental Human Rights across all subprogrammes and projects.

At the subprogramme level, this starts with a simple matrix of commonly affected Human Rights and their relationships to social inclusion priority groups that can be used to establish

baselines and to develop implementation and outcome assessments.

At the project level, a framework for connecting social inclusion priority groups, Human Rights and local and national governance structures has been developed. This new social inclusion approach is designed to be implemented by all UN-Habitat project managers and to only require more than minimal specialized support in particularly complex projects.

As resources allow, it is proposed to introduce staff induction and refresher training, to strengthen project monitoring and closure assessments, and to develop normative analysis and conclusions across related projects.

The successful implementation of these flagship programmes will require the identification of "champion" cities and countries to lead the way in the roll-out of activities across countries and regions in order to achieve global impact. To ensure that no one and no place is left behind, implementation will cooperate with partners across the UN-system, communities, local and national governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to implement the flagship programmes.

Inclusive, vibrant neighbourhoods and communities

Levels of spatial inequality are higher today than they were two decades ago in 75 percent of the world's cities. This means that today, access to basic urban services, public spaces, affordable housing and livelihood opportunities are less equitably distributed within these cities than they were twenty years ago. Fragmentation of urban space frequently manifests in segregation and a concentration of poverty and multiple deprivations in certain pockets of the city. These sites of socio-economic and spatial exclusion have higher levels of poverty, unemployment, crime, delinquency and exposure to environmental hazards than other parts of the city. They host a significant proportion of the world's population.

In addition to one billion people living in informal settlements globally, 600 million more do not have adequate housing, and nearly 80 percent of all urban residents do not have convenient access to open public spaces[1]. With many cities around the world experiencing urban decay, spatial inequality is a growing global concern.

Neglected historical sites in inner cities, dilapidated public housing in mono-functional residential zones, declining or abandoned industrial zones,[2] and unplanned peri-urban neighbourhoods are features of many cities across the world today.

Residents of these neglected and dysfunctional neighbourhoods are excluded from the benefits of sustainable urbanisation. They typically walk or rely on public transport to meet their mobility needs. Where public spaces and public transport services are inadequate or under-developed they have limited access to socio-economic opportunities, health care and leisure.

Connecting these neighbourhoods to livelihood opportunities, urban infrastructure and urban basic services is essential to fight exclusion and improve the social integration, dynamism, and economic vibrancy of cities.

1 UN Sustainable Development Goals Report 2019, p. 45 (Based on 2018 data from 220 cities in 77 countries)
2 A mono-functional resident zone refers to a settlement where there is only one main industry/function.

Reducing spatial inequalities, improving quality of life

As pointed out by the New Urban Agenda, by readdressing the way cities and human settlements are planned, designed, financed, developed, governed and managed, sustainable urbanisation will help to reduce inequalities and realising SDGs such as ending poverty (SDG 1), promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth (SDG 8), achieving gender equality (SDG 5), ensuring healthy lives and well-being of people (SDG 3) as well as building sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11).[3]

Urban regeneration is the use of various physical and socio-economic interventions to restore, integrate, redevelop and revive parts of the city, connecting their transformation to overall city development. As a tool, urban regeneration reduces spatial inequalities and improves quality of life in targeted areas of cities by transforming socially, economically and environmentally dilapidated urban neighbourhoods into dynamic, diverse and vibrant communities that cultivate, nurture and value their natural and built heritage. Urban regeneration incubates economic, social and environmental benefits for the wider city.

Cities which do not embrace inclusive urban regeneration are ultimately confronted with the challenges posed by gentrification[4], deepening socio-economic and spatial inequalities, and the destruction of valuable cultural heritage, often in the name of modernization.

> *UN-Habitat has extensive experience and expertise in spatial planning, developing legal and governance frameworks, and implementing participatory methodologies to improve access to affordable housing, basic infrastructure and services, quality public spaces and the recognition of a continuum of land rights — all of which are key components in urban regeneration.*

This flagship programme promotes the transformation of socially, economically, and environmentally deprived areas of cities into connected, dynamic, diverse and vibrant neighbourhoods by improving the quality of life and reducing socio-economic and spatial inequalities within cities, leaving no one and no place behind.

UN-Habitat's portfolio of urban regeneration projects ranges from densification and revitalisation of central districts in Mexico City to heritage preservation in in the historic city of Basra in Iraq. In Nairobi, Kenya, the adoption of inclusive urban regeneration processes has reduced spatial inequality and built a vibrant community in the neighbourhood of Dandora.

Transforming Dandora through community-led neighbourhood regeneration

In the 1970s, Dandora was a World Bank developed middle-class residential site and service scheme. Today, it is a planned low-income neighborhood with a population of 141,885 and the location of the largest dumpsite in Nairobi. Over the years, the rapidly growing population, neglected infrastructure and poor management have seen Dandora gradually declining into a crowded slum with the rise of informal settlements and streets overflowing with garbage. Rising crime rates further stigmatised the neighbourhood. The challenge was to reclaim public streets so that residents could feel safer and use public spaces that were available but not easily accessible.

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3 UN-Habitat, 2017, New Urban Agenda, paragraph 5.

4 Gentrification is a process of changing the character of a neighbourhood through the influx of more affluent residents and businesses.
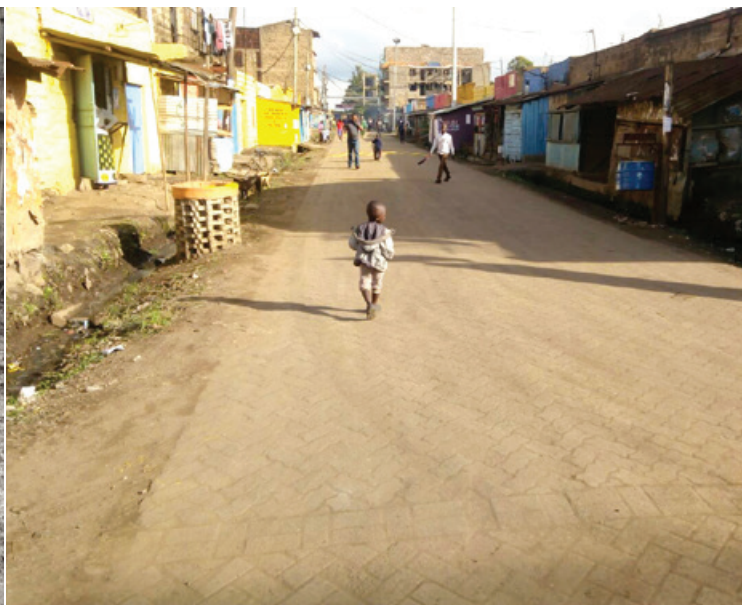
In 2015, UN-Habitat partnered with the Nairobi City County Government, the Dandora Transformation League and Making Cities Together Coalition to upgrade a model street in Dandora as a way of showcasing the process of co-creating public spaces. The project brought together over 500 stakeholders who agreed on a common vision for the neighbourhood.

Initiatives undertaken collectively with residents of Dandora included cleaning up and landscaping open spaces, clearing storm drainages, painting building facades and organizing residents to manage their own security. Trees were planted, 800m of roadway paved, waste bins installed, and gateways

> "Sometimes back, M-pesa and other businesses that make a fair amount of money would be closed by 7.00 pm due to fear of attacks. Today however, these and many other small businesses operate until 11 o'clock in the night."
>
> *Charles Gachanga, a local champion and the CEO of Dandora Transformation League*