

# THE SILENT REVOLUTION OF PUBLIC SPACES IN AFGHANISTAN



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## **The Silent Revolution of Public Spaces in Afghanistan**

Clean and Green Cities (CGC) Programme

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United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

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# FOREWORDS



## **Maimunah Mohd Sharif**

### **Under-Secretary-General and UN-Habitat Executive Director**

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This book is a visual record of UN-Habitat's partnership with the Afghan people in cities, towns and villages. A magnificent photographic portrayal, it captures the many facets of and direct impact of UN-Habitat work with the institutions and Government of Afghanistan. It is an exceptional publication that shows us the immense benefits of sustainable urban interventions in Afghan cities and the commitment of the Government in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

This unique publication shows a series of human stories and results of our joint interventions through wonderful and rare photographs. It portrays a sense of hope and positiveness arising from the challenging and complex political situation marked by the longstanding conflict.

UN-Habitat's country programme in Afghanistan is globally significant. Headquartered in Kabul, and present in twelve Afghan cities, it is a major human settlements programme in a conflict zone. It is also UN-Habitat's biggest global mission. With more than 1,500 staff, our work covers the development and humanitarian nexus with an important interconnection with peace and stability. Afghan cities have become hubs of peace and prosperity, representing more than 50 per cent of the national GDP.

I wish to express my gratitude and recognition to the UN-Habitat staff, national and international, serving in a difficult duty station. This book captures the on-going commitment and recognition of their work with the institutions and people of Afghanistan. I would like to thank the Ministry of Urban Development and Land (MUDL), the Deputy Ministry of Municipalities (DMM) and the Mayors of the cities in Afghanistan for their strategic partnership with UN-Habitat. We have been working together for more than two decades on a journey towards a better urban future and peace. I also wish to thank the European Union and USAID for funding the Clean and Green Cities Programme (CGC). Enjoy the book!

# Abdul Baqi Popal

## Deputy Minister of Municipalities (DMM)

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Afghanistan's future is urban. With a rapid growing urban population, our cities play a key role in job creation, provision of services and peace. The rapid urbanization offers huge opportunities for the current and future generations. Our main objective is to provide our urban residents with a chance to live with prosperity, peace, basic services as well as promoting job creation.

The Clean and Green Cities (CGC) Programme has been a very successful initiative in achieving our vision, improving basic urban services and providing jobs for our citizens. But above all, it has helped us to work with our people, especially the most vulnerable ones, building confidence between them and the municipalities.

Present in twelve Afghan cities, the Clean and Green Cities (CGC) has been successful in strengthening our institutional capacity and good governance, through the institutionalization of Community Development Councils (CDCs), better infrastructure, services and public spaces. In total, 49 parks have been developed or upgraded throughout of Afghanistan, among other key achievements.

This programme has become an integral part of our citizens' lives and our journey towards inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable Afghan cities, as enshrined in Agenda 2030 and the New Urban Agenda. Clean and Green City Programme was developed in response to the National Unity Government's (NUG) 'Jobs for Peace' initiative. It has contributed to our national vision as established in the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) and the Urban National Priority Programme.

I wish to congratulate the Afghan women and men who made our cities cleaner and greener thanks to their determination and actions. They honored us with their strong commitment and hard work. I would also like to thank UN-Habitat, a strategic partner of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, for the technical support and expertise in the implementation of this programme and for the publication of this enriching photobook.

We are looking forward to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, the UN roadmap to achieve sustainable development. Clean and Green Cities is one of the systematic steps towards its efficient implementation despite the complex security situation. Enjoy your reading and discover our beautiful cities!



## Ahmad Zaki Sarferaz

### Mayor of Kabul

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I am delighted to witness the publication of this photobook about one of the most impactful programmes in the capital city of Afghanistan. Clean and Green Cities (CGC) has been indeed more than a development project. It is an initiative that has enhanced the culture of citizenship among our citizens. It is a programme that has contributed to improve our social cohesion through urban development and job creation.

My Municipality, and especially the Directorate of Sanitation, achieved important milestones in Kabul thanks to the strategic interventions of this programme. Since its launch, we have created and upgraded a total of 21 parks in the city which are today very popular among our citizens. We have beautified our hills, streets and avenues with peaceful and environmentally friendly paintings and mural arts. We have created more than 7,000 jobs for our vulnerable people, especially women. We have improved their livelihoods as well as their culture of citizenship.

Our citizens today are very aware of the importance of solid waste management for their health and for the environment. Kabul Municipality has launched a series of communications campaigns in the framework of this programme that helped us to work with our people to understand our vision for a clean and green city. As a result, more than 3,000 citizens joined us to collect garbage from all corners of the city on Nowruz, the new Afghan year.

I would like to express my gratitude to all the workers, engineers, technical experts and UN-Habitat staff for their commitment to achieve one of our major objectives enshrined in the Kabul Urban Development Framework (KUDF). Your work has proved to be very valuable in improving our city infrastructure and people's day to day lives.

# Acknowledgements

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This book is a result of the personal and professional commitment of UN-Habitat staff working with and for the Afghan people. We cordially thank them for their time, advice and encouragement in a difficult duty station.

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We are grateful for the creativity and dedication of Suhail Mayel and Ahsan Saadat, from the Communications Unit, for capturing these beautiful pictures and the design of this book. They have played a key role in the design of municipal campaigns in streets, mural arts and schools engaging with people and authorities.

We appreciate the work of the Clean and Green Cities Programme Managers: Parul Agarwala, Rajakumar Gollamandala, Haji Mohammad Hamidi and Hamid Samim. They have made a remarkable job in the implementation of the programme. We also want to thank the work of the national provincial managers, team leaders, social organizers and engineering teams for their coordination work with government partners and quality implementation. We thank Antony Lamba and Jack Finegan for reviewing the text.

Thanks to Srinivasa Popuri, Tim Mc Nair, Fernando Da Cruz for leading the Afghanistan Office and for their contributions in the successful implementation of Clean and Green Cities (CGC).

Special thanks to the people and institutions of Afghanistan. This initiative was launched thanks to His Excellency President Ashraf Ghani's Jobs for Peace Initiative. We thank the Ministry of Urban Development and Land (MUDL), the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), the Deputy Ministry of Municipalities (DMM), Kabul Municipality and the municipalities of Herat, Kandahar, Mazar-e-Sharif, Jalalabad, Bamyan, Charikar, Gardez, Lashkar Gah, Farah, Kunduz and

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