

UN HABITAT

FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

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THE STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2025



REDUCED SPATIAL
INEQUALITY
AND POVERTY IN
COMMUNITIES ACROSS
THE URBAN - RURAL
CONTINUUM

ENHANCED
SHARED
PROSPERITY
OF CITIES AND
REGIONS

STRENGTHENED
CLIMATE ACTION AND
IMPROVED URBAN
ENVIRONMENT

EFFECTIVE
URBAN CRISIS
PREVENTION
AND RESPONSE



UN-Habitat – Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025

Final Draft

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1. Changing to increase impact

1. Sustainable urbanization is central to the realization of the global development goals as set out in the suite of global agreements signed between 2015 and 2016, including, most importantly, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement on climate change, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the New Urban Agenda (NUA).

2. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) Strategic Plan 2020-2025 focuses on the agency's commitment and contribution to the implementation of these global development agendas, particularly the premise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to 'leave no one behind.' Through its normative and operational work as well as coordination and focal point role within the UN system, the agency's objective is: ***"to advance sustainable urbanization as a driver of development and peace to improve living conditions for all."***

3. The Strategic Plan aligns the agency with the United Nations' reform agenda, which includes: (i) the reform of the peace and security architecture, including a strong emphasis on the humanitarian, development and peace nexus; (ii) development system reform, particularly the revamped resident coordinator system and the shifting of focus to more integrated country level action; and (iii) management reform, emphasizing the need for organizational coherence, transparency, efficiency, agility and accountability, while articulating the unique value proposition of UN-Habitat within the UN system.

4. UN-Habitat's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan creates a strong narrative of change, clearly articulating the relationship of sustainable urbanization with the overall notion of sustainable development. The Strategic Plan is focused on positive impact and outcomes for those being left behind, including women and youth, in cities and other human settlements. It is only with a clear transformative strategy, partnerships, and a fresh and innovative vision of development that it is possible to respond to persistent and new development problems, including extreme poverty, socioeconomic inequalities, slums, social exclusion and marginalization, gender-based discrimination, humanitarian crises, conflicts, air pollution, climate change, and high unemployment, which are increasingly concentrated in urban areas. A holistic approach towards an urbanizing world, connecting cities and other human settlements, with consideration of all segments of society, can help advance sustainable solutions for the benefit of all.

5. The Strategic Plan lays out a recalibrated vision and mission, and a sharpened focus. UN-Habitat proposes to serve Member States, sub-national and local governments, and other key urban actors in the pursuit of four mutually reinforcing and integrated Domains of Change or goals:

1. Reduced spatial inequality and poverty in communities across the urban - rural continuum;
2. Enhanced shared prosperity of cities and regions;
3. Strengthened climate action and improved urban environment; and
4. Effective urban crisis prevention and response.

6. The inclusive realization of these outcomes depends upon the incorporation of the social inclusion dimensions (human rights, gender, children, youth and older persons, and disability) discussed in Section 2.4 below, and is supported by a certain number of specific "drivers of change" and "organizational performance enablers". Transformative change can only take place through a paradigm shift. UN-Habitat

is cognizant of this, and in keeping with its role as a focal point in sustainable urban development and human settlements, proposes a clear framework that:

- Repositions the agency as a centre of excellence and innovation;
- Takes into account global and regional urbanization trends;
- Focuses on customizable solutions taking into account countries and communities in different situations;
- Leverages partnerships with local and regional governments, sister United Nations entities, the private sector, and other development actors and stakeholders; and
- Significantly enhances integrated delivery through more effective collaboration across its country offices, regional offices, liaison offices, and the headquarters.

7. UN-Habitat recognizes and targets the specific rights of women, children, youth, older persons and persons with disability through each Domain of Change. To achieve this, all work of the agency is underpinned by a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA), which ensures that those furthest behind are targeted first and foremost.

8. In addition, the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 equally requires organizational changes and a new model for financial sustainability to ensure that UN-Habitat resources are commensurate with its mandates and roles.

1.1 UN-Habitat as a global centre of excellence and innovation

9. The Strategic Plan 2020-2025 is repositioning UN-Habitat as a major global entity, a centre of excellence and innovation. In this respect, the Organization is refocusing its niche as the thought leader and go-to agency that sets the global discourse and agenda on sustainable urban development, drive political discussions, generates specialized and cutting-edge knowledge, shape technical norms, principles and standards and acts as a multiplier in the exchange of knowledge, experience and best practices in getting cities and human settlements right. UN-Habitat is exceptionally placed and equipped to play this role, in collaboration with research institutions.

10. A focus on normative work repositions the Organization in the framework of the reform of the United Nations Development System by emphasizing its unique value proposition and demonstrating readiness to contribute in a meaningful manner in the identification of regional and country problems, challenges and opportunities.

11. As a centre of excellence and innovation, UN-Habitat also advocates sustainable solutions through demonstration, pilot and innovative operational projects that can be adapted and taken to scale by countries and other partners, all the while ensuring that normative outcomes inform transformative operational solutions, and in turn field operations influence normative work. By catalyzing networks of partners, including local authorities, and policy makers in leading the implementation at scale of cutting-edge solutions, UN-Habitat will be able to bring about transformational change for the benefit of millions of people, ensuring that no one and no place is left behind.

1.2 Global trends: challenges and opportunities of a rapidly urbanizing world

12. Urbanization is one of the global mega-trends of our time, unstoppable and irreversible. In 30 years, two-thirds of the world's population will live in urban areas. Ninety per cent of urban growth will occur in less developed regions such as East Asia, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa at a rapid pace and in situations where capacities and resources are most constrained and development challenges are most intense. Urbanization in these parts of the world is largely unplanned, fueling the continuous growth of informal or slum settlements. Unchecked and unplanned urban sprawl and inequality are universal concerns, both within cities and across territories; over 75 per cent of the world's cities grew more unequal over the past 20 years. Although the world has made significant progress in reducing poverty since 2000, inequality is rising in the cities of both the developing and developed world. Today, the gap between the rich and the poor in most countries is at its highest levels in 30 years; the global one per cent earners captured twice as much of that growth as the 50 per cent poorest.¹

13. In developing countries, slums and informal settlements, which currently accommodate close to 1 billion people, are the physical manifestation of urban poverty and inequality. About 2.3 billion people still lack access to basic sanitation service in 2015² and 1.2 billion people lack access to clean drinking water worldwide.³ Fewer than 35 per cent of the cities in developing countries have their waste water treated.⁴ Moreover, today, 1.6 billion people globally live in inadequate housing⁵ and often do not have security of tenure.

14. It is clear that climate change is one of the greatest challenges that cities must contend with, as indicated in the Paris agreement. Cities account for 60 to 80 per cent of energy consumption and generate as much as 70 per cent of the human-induced greenhouse gas emissions, primarily through the consumption of fossil fuels for energy supply and transportation. Climate change projections predict significant impacts on human development progress within just a few decades. Urgent and radical action to transform urban systems is required well before 2030 to contribute to limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees. Urban areas also absorb significant climate risks and must be prepared to withstand the climatic extremes currently predicted with 3 to 4 degrees of global warming.

15. The current economic model of investment, consumption and growth also drives the exploitative extraction of the planet's natural assets. Urban development is increasingly occupying land that was previously used for forestry and/or food production, at the same time the growing population's demand for food, timber products, biomass for heating etc. is increasing. Urbanization has not completed a full transition away from fossil-fuelled energy, resulting in extensive air pollution which damages the health of vulnerable groups of people, particularly children and the elderly. The shift to a greener and more resource efficient economy is still in nascent stages.

16. Migration adds complexity to the numerous issues, cities and other human settlements must deal with. Currently, there are 763 million internal migrants and 224 million international migrants in the world.⁶ This means that every seventh person in the world is a migrant. Most of these migrants are found in urban areas. Refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in particular require special attention in

¹ World Inequality Report (2018)

² WHO and UNICEF (2017) Progress on drinking water, sanitation and hygiene Joint Monitoring Programme 2017 update and SDG baselines

³ UN-Habitat (2015)

⁴ UN-Habitat (2015)

⁵ UN-Habitat (2017)

⁶ IOM (2017) Global Migration Trends Factsheet; <http://gmdac.iom.int/global-migration-trends-factsheet>

the overall context of sustainable urbanization. Today there are 25 million refugees and 40 million IDPs who have fled conflict and crisis. The majority are not in humanitarian camps but seek refuge in cities.⁷

17. Gender-based discrimination persist in many parts of the world, and challenges associated with children, youth and older persons are growing. As the world witnesses an increased feminization of poverty, women make up a large proportion of the informal sector of employment in cities and are disproportionately affected by limited access to safe places of work, education, skills, resources and technology.

18. Poverty, humanitarian crises, and conflict are becoming increasingly urban phenomena. Rural areas do not benefit from overall growth, feeding a continuous rural-urban migration.

19. In sum, the challenges posed by the current model of urbanization have global ramifications that, if not addressed adequately, could jeopardize chances of achieving the SDGs.

20. Despite the challenges, urbanization is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for change at all levels and all types of human settlements, from small rural communities, villages, and market towns, to intermediate cities and metropolises. Research now shows that urbanization can have a positive catalytic impact on development and deliver improved living conditions to the furthest behind. Cities and towns can help drive the sustainable agenda across social and cultural change, environmental protection and economic growth as the principles of the circular economy are embraced. Contributing about 80 per cent of global GDP, cities function as catalysts, driving innovation, consumption, and investment worldwide, making them a positive and potent force for addressing issues related to poverty, social exclusion and spatial inequality, shared prosperity, climate and the environment, and various forms of crisis. Most importantly, sustainable urban transformation presents an opportunity to work with all types of actors and communities, particularly those traditionally excluded from such processes.

21. The implementation of UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan 2020-2025 will provide pathways to accelerate this transformation towards achieving the SDGs. If we get our cities right, as envisioned in the New Urban Agenda and SDG 11, it will be easier to reach other development goals and targets and to achieve meaningful progress in realizing gender equality and inclusion of youth. However, this will require creativity, human and financial capital and joined-up efforts at the global, regional, national, and local levels, in countries at every stage of development.

1.3 Becoming a “solutions agency” to deliver change

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