

NATIONAL URBAN POLICY

Feasibility Guide



National Urban Policy Feasibility Guide

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FOREWORD

Urbanization is a complex phenomenon, requiring a sustainable and coordinated approach, in this context a National Urban Policy (NUP) can provide a harmonious framework needed to ensure sustainable urbanization by aligning national sectorial policies which affect urban development. One of UN-Habitat's priorities is to globally ensure an integrated and holistic sustainable urban development across all countries of the world, which a participatory, inclusive and forward looking NUP can provide.

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda (NUA) has provided strong rationale for countries to embark on developing and implementing inclusive and participatory NUP and Frameworks. As of June 2018, UN-Habitat is supporting 40 countries worldwide, including 19 in the African region, in the formulation and implementation of NUPs.

During the Habitat III preparatory process, NUP was recognized as an essential tool for government and other stakeholders to achieve sustainable urbanization. The National Urban Policy Feasibility Guide expounds on the feasibility phase, which is the first step in the development of a NUP. The other phases are diagnostic, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This guide is part of a series of guides on the five phases of NUP development. By working to facilitate vertical and horizontal institutional linkages, the feasibility phase of NUP can help start the urban discussion in a country, assist with the mobilization of stakeholders, align the objectives of a NUP in the country context and define an urban vision and plan.



Countries may be tempted to hasten the feasibility phase of NUP, but it is critical to the successful development, implementation and monitoring of a NUP. One of the key messages which I hope this guide will convey is that NUP should not be seen as the domain of urban specialists. In the quest of leaving no one behind, everyone has a say in their urban development, which is why this guide emphasizes the importance of engaging all key stakeholders.

I recommend this guide to policymakers, civil servants, mayors, citizen groups and all those concerned with the welfare of our urbanizing world. I am confident it will have a significant impact on the development, formulation and implementation, monitoring and evaluation of a modern approach to National Urban Policies in the years to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Maimunah', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Mrs Maimunah Mohd Sharif,
Executive Director UN-Habitat

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| FOREWORD..... | 4 |
| LIST OF BOXES | 6 |
| LIST OF FIGURES..... | 6 |
| LIST OF TABLES | 6 |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY..... | 7 |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 8 |
| 1. URBANIZATION TRENDS AND THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL URBAN POLICY | 13 |
| 2. THE NATIONAL URBAN POLICY PROCESS..... | 18 |
| 2.1 Phases of a National Urban Policy | 18 |
| 2.2 Key Pillars of a National Urban Policy | 19 |
| 3. THE FEASIBILITY PHASE..... | 24 |
| • Functions of the feasibility phase | 24 |
| 3.1. Building national consensus | 25 |
| 3.2. Defining the rationale for a NUP in a country context | 27 |
| 3.3. Defining the role of the national governments at the feasibility phase | 30 |
| 3.4. Defining the role of the mass media | 31 |
| 3.5. Defining the role of subnational governments..... | 31 |
| 3.6. Engaging academic and research institutions | 32 |
| 3.7. Defining the role of other stakeholders | 33 |
| 3.8. Developing a roadmap | 33 |
| 3.9. Developing a risk mitigation strategy | 33 |
| 4. MODALITIES OF THE FEASIBILITY PHASE | 37 |
| • Outputs of the feasibility phase | 39 |
| 4.1. National Urban Policy Note..... | 39 |
| 4.2. Communication Strategy | 40 |
| 4.3. Discussion Paper | 40 |
| 4.4. Feasibility Study | 42 |
| 4.5. Political economic analysis (PEA) | 44 |
| 5. CONCLUSION..... | 46 |
| 6. REFERENCES | 49 |

LIST OF BOXES

| | | |
|-------------|--|----|
| Box1 | World Urbanization Prospects 2018: Key Facts | 14 |
| Box2 | 15 Reasons Why National Urban Policies matter | 16 |
| Box3 | Using a participatory process for changing mindsets in Liberia | 20 |
| Box4 | Public space implementation in Bamenda | 21 |
| Box5 | Principles of a National Urban Policy | 27 |
| Box6 | City Prosperity Initiative | 29 |
| Box7 | Elements for effective national, subnational government partnerships | 32 |
| Box8 | Table of contents of Zambia’s NUP discussion paper | 42 |
| Box9 | Table of contents of Afghanistan’s Feasibility Study | 43 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | | |
|----------------|---|----|
| Figure1 | Countries UN-Habitat supports with NUP Development..... | 8 |
| Figure2 | Relevance of the NUP to the Sustainable Development Goals | 9 |
| Figure3 | Stage of NUP, Regional Scale..... | 10 |
| Figure4 | Projected growth of cities | 13 |
| Figure5 | National Urban Policy Guiding Framework | 18 |
| Figure6 | Policy Note for Cameroon..... | 39 |
| Figure7 | Discussion Paper on Liberia | 41 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | | |
|---------------|---|----|
| Table1 | Positive effects of participatory approaches..... | 34 |
| Table2 | Activities of the feasibility phase | 38 |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At a time of increasing globalization, the importance of urbanization in ensuring a nation's socio-economic future cannot be overstated. Cities have, therefore, become important engines of growth for both national and subnational governments. To capitalize on the potential of urbanization, a framework is needed to coordinate the management of urban issues.

For the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), a national urban policy (NUP) is a framework that provides the required coordination mechanism needed to promote equitable urban development. Implementing a NUP could lead to enhanced local and national economic growth, ensure an equitable quality of life for all and protect the environment.

As a coordinating framework, a NUP should not only be a list of corrective measures but should also encourage proactive actions that foster economic, social and environmentally sensitive development.

This guide provides a framework for undertaking the feasibility phase of a NUP and draws largely on UN-Habitat's experience in engaging with countries that have requested support for developing and implementing a NUP. Secondary research, an extensive review of literature on urbanization, trends and the state of national urban policies in different countries and regions also inform the development of this guide.

Feasibility is the first of five phases in the NUP process. The other four are diagnosis, formulation, implementation and monitoring & evaluation. One of the main purposes of the feasibility phase is to ensure that key stakeholders appreciate and value the need for developing and implementing a participatory and inclusive NUP. Such understanding is critical to the design of a contextualized NUP process. During the feasibility phase, problems and challenges with NUP development and implementation are identified. This guide explores the process and ways in which the challenges can be met for consensus building around the benefit of a NUP. The document emphasizes engagement with all relevant stakeholders.

At the outset, the partnerships developed between key actors are a critical component of a successful feasibility phase. The guide targets countries that are considering developing a NUP or are already in the feasibility phase. Ideas and suggestions to strengthen stakeholder engagement and participatory approaches to the process are highlighted and it provides guidance for national and subnational governments on who and what is needed during the feasibility phase. As many national and subnational governments are gearing up to use a NUP as a key instrument to implement the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this guide will act as a useful tool to kickstart an informed NUP process.

INTRODUCTION

“Local is global and global is local; sustainability runs through world’s towns and cities. By building sustainable towns and cities, you will build global sustainability.” – United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, 2012.

Urbanization is a global phenomenon affecting all countries, but processes of rapid urbanization are a particular issue in emerging and developing economies. Urban development has challenges and opportunities – both of which can be managed by well-prepared governments with frameworks in place for urban development.

The strength of a national urban policy as a tool for government to guide and manage urbanization is recognized by article 89 of the NUA, which states: “We will take measures to establish legal and policy frameworks, based on the principles of

equality and non-discrimination, to enhance governments’ ability to effectively implement national urban policies, as appropriate, and to empower them as policymakers and decision makers, ensuring appropriate fiscal, political and administrative decentralization based on the principle of subsidiarity.”

Globalization has made national governments more responsible for ensuring sustainable cities and they should take an active role in defining a sustainable future for their urban areas through the development and implementation of a NUP.

A NUP is defined as “a coherent set of decisions derived through a deliberate, government-led process of coordinating and rallying various actors for a common vision and goal that will promote more transformative, productive, inclusive and resilient urban development for the long term” (UN-Habitat and Cities Alliance,

Figure1. Countries UN-Habitat supports with NUP Development

Countries (41) Supported by UN-Habitat with NUP Development

Updated in November 2016



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