

NATIONAL URBAN POLICY: A GUIDING FRAMEWORK



UN  **HABITAT**
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

NATIONAL URBAN POLICY:

A Guiding Framework

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Foreword



There is a growing consensus in the international community about the transformative power of urbanization. The new Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development consolidates our vision of urbanization as a tool and an engine, for development, as reflected in Goal 11, as well as other goals. If well planned and designed, urbanization is a source of wealth, social prosperity and environmental sustainability. Urbanization brings changes in the dynamics of the spatial distribution of people and the distribution and use of resources and of land. With rapid urbanization come both challenges and opportunities. Governments have new opportunities to chart the future of urban patterns and develop and implement national urban policies as one of the means to implement progressive urbanization that produces wealth. Urban actors and stakeholders play an important role in the betterment of social services, growth of employment options and the provision of better basic services. This approach contrasts with urban challenges such as unemployment, growth of slums, spread of disease and lack of basic services. Many of these challenges have emerged due to relatively uncontrolled urbanization, where urban planning and policy have failed to accommodate rapid rates of demographic growth.

Good urbanization does not happen by chance. Good urbanization occurs through choice. The potential opportunities and gains from urbanization are well understood. There is a need for government, policy makers and other stakeholders to acknowledge that urbanization will not necessarily directly correlate with

productivity and prosperity in cities. Rather, it is necessary through urban policy to actively facilitate the growth of cities that will incubate and grow the conditions that are required for productive and prosperous urban growth. A National Urban Policy (NUP) is an essential tool through which government can facilitate positive urbanization patterns to support productivity, competitiveness and prosperity in cities. A NUP should be able to create the conditions for good urbanization through the appropriate legal framework, municipal financing and planning and design which articulate horizontal and vertical coordination.

This Guiding Framework is particularly timely. The establishment of SDG 11: “to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” and the recognition of NUP as one of ten Policy Units for Habitat III have both confirmed the importance of NUP in the development of the New Urban Agenda. I am confident, therefore, that this Framework will act not only as an essential guide for policy makers, but will also be an important contribution by UN-Habitat towards the formulation and implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Joan Clos". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Dr. Joan Clos
Executive Director, UN-Habitat

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Executive Summary

With the rapid levels of urbanization currently being seen globally, the growth of cities – along with climate change – has become one of the most defining features of the twenty-first century. With the growth of human settlements come both opportunities and challenges. Opportunities such as the betterment of social services, employment options, the provision of better housing options, local economic development and country-wide economic competitiveness are contrasted by urban challenges such as unemployment, the growth of slums, spread of disease and lack of basic services.

Many of these challenges have emerged due to relatively uncontrolled urbanization, where urban planning and policy have failed to accommodate rapid rates of growth. It is

for this reason that twenty-first century cities demand twenty-first century urban policies, or, a new generation of urban policy. This new generation of urban policy reaches beyond the traditional boundaries of the city and fosters stronger horizontal and vertical linkages, and creative partnerships in order to tackle complex urban problems in a coordinated way.

According to UN-Habitat, a National Urban Policy (NUP) is:

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, 2014).



Street in Kigali, Rwanda © Flickr/Adam Cohn

A NUP is an essential tool for national government, which, when developed in consultation with other stakeholders, can provide an opportunity to control urbanization and capitalize on its opportunities of urbanization. By doing so, a NUP can help to promote productive, prosperous and environmentally sustainable cities. The value of a NUP is not only in the product, but is also in the process. The development of a NUP can promote good practices, such as stakeholder consultation, capacity development and evaluation of country policy processes. Integrating these lessons into future policy practice can promote systems change and institutional learning.

This Guiding Framework is designed to outline key elements and instruments of

the policy process through all the five NUP phases: feasibility, diagnosis, formulation, implementation and monitoring, and evaluation. Each phase is the subject of one part of the Framework. For each phase, the Framework will recommend perspectives and approaches that can be productive in the development of NUP. In addition, the Framework will consider the inclusion of the three NUP pillars: participation, capacity development, acupuncture projects and iterative policy design. While it is understood that all policy processes are unique and context-specific, this document will provide a guiding framework, based on research and practical experiences, in order to provide guidance on proceeding through the NUP process.



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