

INNOVATIVE AND EFFECTIVE APPROACHES TO HOUSING

a guide to the unch's best practices database



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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE DATABASE:

*Local residents created and manage a bank that provides micro-loans (with minimal application requirements) and a credit card which can only be used at local businesses. The bank has expanded poor families' access to credit and strengthened the local economy.

< PALMA\$, Brazil

*Costa Rica developed a nonprofit foundation to promote the use of a local material (bamboo) in the production of housing, furniture and crafts, minimizing building costs and generating new income for local communities.

< Bamboo Foundation (FUNBAMBU), Costa Rica

*Local officials staged an architectural competition to design a completely barrier-free residential area (including streets, sidewalks, bridges, squares and parks) for those with impaired vision, mobility or other disabilities. Special computer networks enable disabled residents to telecommute to work and access social services.

< A City for All: Free Neighborhood, Finland

*By institutionalizing a mechanism for permanently settling land-tenure problems, a Naga City project resettled 2,017 families. By developing local associations of poor residents, the project has also upgraded 27 poor communities which host approximately 2,700 families.

< The Kaantabay sa Kauswagan (Partners in Development), Philippines

*Families pooled their resources into revolving funds that enabled them to gain access to land otherwise unavailable to them.

< Habitat for Humanity, Malawi



united nations centre for
human settlements



This guide is intended to introduce policymakers to innovative and effective ideas for housing development that have been documented on Habitat's Best Practices database. These ideas can assist local and national officials, members of non-governmental organizations, and a wide range of policymakers in addressing local urban challenges. This guide was developed by the Columbia/UN Urban Habitat Project at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs.

Comments and suggestions of ideas to include in future guides should be sent to:

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More details on the cases discussed in this guide can be found at:

UNCHS Best Practices Database

Web: <http://www.bestpractices.org/>

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BACKGROUND ON UNCHS AND BEST PRACTICES

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) Best Practices and Local Leadership Programme

The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) was established in 1978, two years after the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements was held in Vancouver, Canada. Following the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (The City Summit), held in Istanbul, Turkey in 1996, Habitat has been designed as the City agency to help monitor and support the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

Habitat's integrated program of policy advice, operational research, technical cooperation, capacity-building and awareness-raising focuses on priority areas defined by governments through the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements, its governing body, and contained in the Centre's Work Programme. These areas are:

- * shelter, social services and security of tenure;
- * urban management and governance;
- * environment and infrastructure; and
- * assessment, information and monitoring.

Currently, Habitat has 235 operational programs and projects underway in 80 countries, focusing on capacity-building, human settlements management and development, basic services and infrastructure and housing. The Centre's principal collaborating partners in the UN system are: the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, and the World Health Organization (WHO). Habitat also closely collaborates with bilateral and external assistance agencies, international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), associations of local authorities, parliamentary associations, women's and youth organizations, and private sector bodies.

Habitat's Best Practices and Local Leadership Programme (BLP) represents the continuation of one of the success stories of the Habitat II preparatory process: the Best Practices Initiative. The BLP, together with its global network of research, capacity-building and training institutions, is responsible for the identification, documentation and dissemination of lessons learned from Best Practices. The BLP is also one of the two principle UNCHS programs charged with monitoring the implementation of the Habitat Agenda under the umbrella of the Global Urban Observatory. One of the key products created by the BLP is a Best Practices Database which presents, in a searchable form, narratives of Best Practices from more than 80 countries.

Best Practices and Local Leadership Programme

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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements

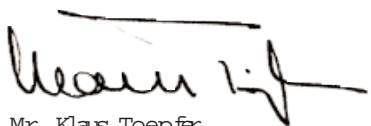
The Best Practice Initiative was originally conceived to identify human settlements success stories for the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), held in Istanbul, Turkey, between 3 and 14 June 1996. Best Practices caught the imagination of Habitat II participants. Over 600 initiatives from 80 countries were submitted as potential best practices according to the criteria of impact, partnership and sustainability. A major international conference on Best Practices was organized by the Municipality of Dubai, United Arab Emirates (19-22 November 1995), bringing together over 900 participants from around the world to learn from each other's successes.

In order to make these best practices more widely available, Habitat and the Together Foundation formed a partnership to develop the Best Practices database and make it available on the Internet (<http://www.bestpractices.org>) and on CD-ROM. The database contains a search engine that allows users to find best practices according to subject, region, country, eco-system and keywords. Over 350 of the submissions sent to Habitat were included in the 1996 Best Practices database. An independent and international two-stage review process selected 12 of these to receive the Dubai and Tokyo Awards for Excellence at a special Award ceremony held during Habitat II.

The work of identifying and disseminating best practices continues. In 1998, over 300 Good and Best Practices were documented on the Best Practices database for the Dubai International Award for Best Practices to Improve the Living Environment. Ten new initiatives received the Dubai International Award on World Habitat Day 1998. In the year 2000, the Award will be presented to a new group of Best Practices. On behalf of UNCHS (Habitat) and Dubai Municipality, I would like to invite all users of this guide to nominate Best Practices for the 2000 Award.

One of the most important lessons learned from the Best Practices process has been the need to deepen our analysis of best practices to distill not only the practical lessons, but also the policy making and normative implications. I am pleased to say that the present document represents an important first step towards this goal. It provides decisionmakers at all levels with examples of policies and practices in the areas of housing and technology that have a proven history of success. As a companion to the Best Practices database or as a stand-alone document, this publication offers a wealth of practical information to policy analysts, city managers and human settlement professionals.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Columbia/UN Urban Habitat Project for their efforts in making this publication a reality.



Mr. Klaus Toepfer
Acting Executive-Director
UNCHS (Habitat)

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

**School of International and Public Affairs
Columbia University**

Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) is pleased to partner with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) in preparing this guide on Best Practices. This is one product of a more extensive partnership between SIPA and UNCHS to further capacity building and implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

We at SIPA are dedicated to sharing our knowledge and expertise with public servants around the world. In particular, through our Center for Urban Research and Policy and its Columbia/UN Urban Habitat Project, we offer a special focus on issues relevant to local and regional governments and their policymakers and officials. For example, our Columbia/UN Urban Habitat Project is creating at SIPA an international clearinghouse on innovative approaches to urban issues, while providing training for local governments around the world.

Combining our world-recognized regional studies with expertise across a wide range of substantive issue areas, we are eager to work with local and regional governments to assist them in meeting their own particular challenges. While we offer a series of established degree, certificate and other training programs, we are also willing to tailor programs to the needs of individual localities.

For more than fifty years, SIPA has formed a point of intersection among Columbia University's academic departments and schools, and among a distinguished university, the United States' largest city and a complex world beyond. As scholars, our faculty, students and alumni work to understand the world. As practitioners, they act to change it. It is a remarkable combination.

We hope that this guide will help you in developing innovative approaches to the challenges of urbanization in your area, and we extend an offer to assist you in designing your own approaches to those challenges. We look forward to a continuing partnership with the United Nations, and with localities around the world.

Sincerely,

(Signature)

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