



Evaluability Assessment of the UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2014-2019

**Evaluation Unit
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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CPR	Committee of Permanent Representatives
GC	Governing Council
IMDIS	Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System
MTSIP	Medium-Term Strategic and Institutional Plan
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
PAAS	Project Accrual and Accountability System
RBM	Results-Based Management
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMART	Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
TOR	Terms of Reference

Executive Summary

The UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2014-2019 was approved by the Governing Council (GC) at its twenty-fourth session in April 2013, through resolution 24/15, with the evaluation framework of a mid-term evaluation in 2016 and final evaluation in 2019.

Growing demand for evidence of UN-Habitat's performance lead the Office of Internal Oversight (OIOS) to recommend that UN-Habitat should consider an evaluability assessment of the strategic plan and determine the extent to which achievements of results planned could be evaluated in a reliable and credible manner.

The evaluability assessment was conducted by the Evaluation Unit, UN-Habitat in 2016, with the purpose of determining appropriateness of both the design and processes of the Strategic Plan and to provide findings and recommendations which UN-Habitat Management could use to improve the design so that evaluating mid-term and final evaluations of the Strategic Plan could be reliable and credible. For assessment, interviews were carried out with 17 key staff in UN-Habitat and in-depth review was done of UN-Habitat relevant documents.

Key Findings

- The Strategic Plan is viewed as a clear, relevant, and coherent plan that is relevant to organizational mandate, international agreements of which UN-Habitat is bound, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda. However, its formulation was not informed by analysis of UN-Habitat's wide experience in programming within both programmatic and humanitarian contexts, and with no analysis of risks.
- There is a disconnect between the Strategic Plan and the planning and programming at regional and country levels.
- The assessment finds the Strategic Plan serves as a guidance document for setting priorities of UN-Habitat but with gaps in its design. How realistic and comprehensive is the organizational goal to align other UN-Habitat policies, initiative, projects, projects, modalities and partnership is difficult to determine as it represent broad statement of intention.
- Principles of results-based management are applied to formulation of biennial strategic plans and biennial work programmes through which the Strategic Plan is implemented. However, some significant statements of intent found in the Strategic Plan were not incorporated in the programmes of work and budget and may be difficult to evaluate. In particular, cross-cutting issues pose challenges for evaluability.
- The Strategic Plan 2014-2019 lacks explicitly stated logical connections from outputs to outcomes and from outcomes to impact. However, the causal chains are established in the work programme and budget documents, together with indicators, baselines and targets. The work programme and budgets also provide the implementation strategies and external facts that are likely to affect the implementation.
- While causal-chains are present in the biennial work programmes and budget, it is difficult to understand how one level connects to the next level and the "if-then" statements need to be

established and some indicators do not adequately measure the specified expected accomplishments.

- The present support systems and mechanisms seem to facilitate the implementation of the Strategic Plan but there is a room for improvement. Developed policies, strategies, and other initiatives may improve the evaluability of the Strategic Plan if they are geared towards and used with unified strategic intent of supporting the achievement of planned results.
- The Strategic Plan is formulated with monitoring and evaluation frameworks and there are monitoring and evaluation systems in place. However, monitoring and evaluation functions, in practice, are weak because they are not adequately funded.
- The Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System (IMDIS) and the Project Accrual and Accountability System (PAAS), are not used at country levels where UN-Habitat projects and programmes are delivered
- Progress of the implementation of the Strategic Plan is impressive. However, actual translation of the Strategic Plan to country programmes still remains a challenge and there is a need to conceptualize and examine how the global Strategic Plan adds value to country programmes and activities in contexts on normative, operational and humanitarian work of UN-Habitat.
- Internal communication, coordination and knowledge management within UN-Habitat need to improve.

Recommendations

1. The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015 and the New Urban Agenda in 2016, and lessons learned from the implementation of the strategic plan 2014 -2019, should be considered in the revision of the Strategic Plan and with explicit consideration of what needs to improve within UN-Habitat and how changes made support efforts towards achieving the strategic result of the Strategic Plan.
2. Considering the growing demand for evidence of performance of organizations, the assessment recommends that the development of the work programme and budget 2018-2019 should focus on refining and adjusting causal chains to ensure that the Theories of Change between the UN-Habitat goal, organizational objective, sub-programme objectives, expected accomplishments and outputs are clear at all levels. Performance measures including indicators of achievement with the baselines and targets should be measurable.
3. Clear and consistent communication should be used about the understanding and logic of the Strategic Plan and how it relates to other UN-Habitat policies, strategies, initiatives, priorities and global commitments, including the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda, to all levels of UN-Habitat internal and external stakeholders to improve the likelihood of achieving intended results of the Strategic Plan.
4. UN-Habitat should consider all four cross-cutting issues, gender, youth, climate change and human rights to be under the Programme Division; it would ensure the mainstreaming of these cross-cutting issues is systematic and not influenced by different Branches.
5. To enhance the evaluability of the Strategic Plan, UN-Habitat should put emphasis on monitoring its global, regional and country programmes and project through PAAS. The

monitoring should be geared towards project/programme outcomes and results that contribute to the results of the Strategic Plan. The organization should also have a clear approach to measurement and monitoring and reporting of results at global, regional and country level.

6. UN-Habitat's ability to demonstrate evidence of performance towards its goal and strategic result depends on improving systems and capacity to consistent of quality data. Current monitoring and evaluation resources are not sufficient to effectively measure and report comprehensively on performance of the Strategic Plan. UN-Habitat should investment in monitoring and evaluation functions at UN-Habitat Headquarters and at regional and country levels.
7. Management should consider a series of strategic evaluations of "flagship" programmes to establish the extent to which UN-Habitat's work achieve the strategic result of the Strategic Plan. This will increase the evaluability of the Strategic Plan.

1. Introduction

The UN-Habitat Evaluation Unit conducted an evaluability assessment of the UN-Habitat Strategic Plan for 2014-2019 in 2016. The Strategic Plan sets the organization's vision, mission, goal, strategic results with in the overall purpose of realizing a world with economically productive, socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable cities and other human settlements. Broadly stated, an evaluability assessment is a systematic review of a proposed intervention/strategy/ activity intended to determine whether its objectives are adequately defined and is in a condition to be evaluated.

As per the Terms of Reference (Annex 1), the purpose of this evaluability assessment is to: (a) inform UN-Habitat Management and key stakeholders regarding how robust the design of the Strategic Plan is to be readily evaluated in future; and (b) provide recommendations which UN-Habitat Management can use to improve and to revise the Strategic Plan. The main audience of the evaluability assessment is the UN-Habitat Management and the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), who recommended that UN-Habitat should consider an evaluability assessment of the Strategic plan 2014-2019.¹

1.1 Background

In April 2011, at its twenty-third session, the Governing Council (GC) of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme requested the Executive Director to develop, in consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives, a Strategic Plan for 2014-2019. The Strategic Plan was developed and approved by the GC at its twenty-fourth session in April 2013, through resolution 24/15. The GC also requested UN-Habitat to continue strengthening implementation of results-based management in all the programmes, projects, policies and activities and to maintain emphasis on results for the achievement of the programme objectives, and for the efficient and transparent use of resources. Hence, the Strategic Plan also has a results framework and a plan for measuring performance².

1.2 Objectives of the Evaluability Assessment

The evaluability assessment examines the appropriateness of both the design of the Strategic Plan 2014-2019 and its supporting processes for implementation, monitoring and reporting. It identifies strengths and weaknesses in the design and provides recommendations for corrective measures to improve the quality of the plan. It was framed around eight objectives:

- (i) Assess context, relevance, clarity and coherence of the Strategic Plan Design;
- (ii) Assess the quality of the design for achievement of results;
- (iii) Assess SMARTness of the results framework (Theory of Change)
- (iv) Assess appropriateness of organizational setting and support systems put in place to facilitate the implementation of the Strategic Plan;
- (v) Assess the monitoring and evaluation systems for the Strategic Plan;
- (vi) Assess initial progress of implementation and assess what has changed since the implementation of the plan;
- (vii) Assess readiness of the Strategic Plan for mid-term evaluation to take place in 2017 and final evaluation in 2019.

¹ Evaluation of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme: Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (E/AC.51/2015/2).

² Institutionalizing Results Based Management: Performance Measurement Plan for the Six Year Strategic Plan (2014-2019).

(viii) Formulate recommendations on the purpose, scope, timing and design of the mid-term and final evaluations of the Strategic Plan.

1.3 Assessment Approach, Focus and Methods

The evaluability assessment was conducted by the Evaluation Unit, supported by the Quality Assurance Unit, Management and Operations Division, evaluation focal points and project managers responsible for the implementation of the Strategic Plan. It was a participatory and a consultative exercise. It relied on two main methods: (i) Review of relevant documents (a list of documents reviewed is in Annex 2), and (ii) interviews and consultations. Semi-structured interviews carried out at UN-Habitat Headquarters and by Skype with staff at regional offices provided information relevant to the assessment's questions and additional information. A list of interviewed staff is in provided in Annex 3.

The assessment is grounded in areas of analytic focus which are: assessing context, relevance, clarity and coherence of the Strategic Plan; examining logic, causal chains and theory of change; examining performance measures, including indicators, data availability, data management, monitoring and reporting systems; assessing evaluation systems to demonstrate results achieved; assessing initial progress of implementation of the Strategic Plan; determining the readiness of the Strategic Plan for midterm evaluation in 2017 and final evaluation in 2019. Table 1 provides an overview of the assessment's objectives and key questions.

Table 1: Evaluability assessment objectives and key questions.

Objective 1: Assess the context, relevance, clarity and coherence of the Strategic Plan's design.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How relevant is the Strategic Plan in relation to UN-Habitat mandates and priorities of Member States and other UN-Habitat partners?• Does the Strategic Plan clearly identify the problem and beneficiaries?• How coherent is the Strategic Plan with other planning documents, including the biennial strategic plans and programme of work, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and New Urban Agenda,• How is the Strategic Plan aligned with programmes and projects implemented in different countries?
Objective 2: Assess the quality of the design of the Strategic Plan for achievement of intended results.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is there clarity of the strategic intent of the Strategic Plan?• Does the Strategic Plan articulate activities, outputs, results, and resources to achieve the

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