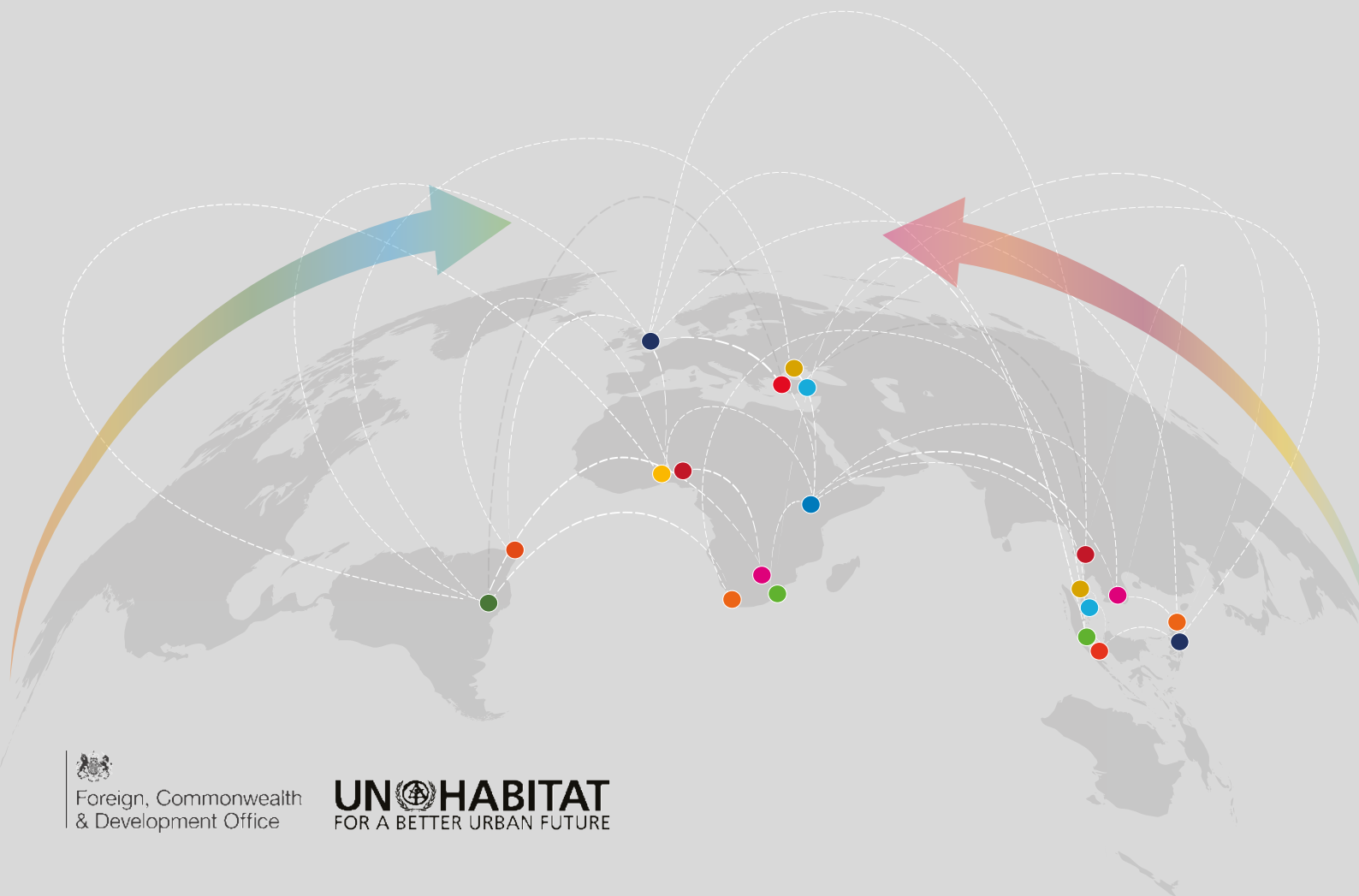




# Integrating the SDGs in Urban Project Design

Recommendations from the  
Global Future Cities Programme



Foreign, Commonwealth  
& Development Office

**UNHABITAT**  
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE



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1st Edition

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United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

P.O. Box 30030 00100 Nairobi GPO KENYA

Tel: +254-020-7623120 (Central Office)

[www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org)

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## **Acknowledgments**

<b>Principal author</b>	Gregory Scruggs
<b>Project supervisors</b>	Naomi Hoogervorst, Klas Groth
<b>Project manager and coordinator</b>	Sara Thabit
<b>Contributors</b>	Fernando Almeida, Jean-Paul Hitipeuw, Mateus Lira, Clara Peter, Sara Thabit, Jean You
<b>Reviewers</b>	Karol Koh, Yelda Reis, Liz Gauntner, Atiqah Zailani
<b>Graphic Design and Layout</b>	Clara Peter (principal designer), Sara Vargues, Gregory Meckstroth

This report has been prepared by UN-Habitat's Urban Lab. The Lab is UN-Habitat's multidisciplinary facility supporting cities and Member States with innovative methodologies and multi-stakeholder processes. The Lab aims to achieve sustainable urbanisation through integrated and transformative urban interventions that contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## Who is this report for?

Based on experiences from the Global Future Cities Programme, this report provides guidance to urban practitioners, local and regional authorities, national policymakers and investors about how to design urban projects that align with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and accelerate national efforts to implement the SDGs through local action in rapidly urbanising cities.

## Why read this report?

This report provides concrete recommendations to guide the design of urban projects that seek to enhance the implementation of the SDGs at the local level. These recommendations build upon the learnings from the Global Future Cities Programme, a four-year multi-partner programme, funded by the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), that promotes sustainable development and increased prosperity in 19 cities across 10 countries. It provides technical and strategic support to cities, including knowledge sharing, with a focus on accelerating local SDG implementation and building the capacity of city authorities.

To prepare these recommendations, UN-Habitat relied on its experience applying the SDG Project Assessment Tool (also known as the SDG Tool), a digital framework to guide the development of urban projects against specific performance criteria drawn from the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda. UN-Habitat analysed all 31 projects in the Global Future Cities Programme to see where the projects encountered challenges and created innovations, then drew on that dataset to generate the following set of recommendations.

This report is complemented by a [three-part podcast](#), that provides listeners with an inside look at how the Global Future Cities Programme has facilitated the design and implementation of sustainable, multi-stakeholder urban projects across the world. In addition, the report is part of a series of normative publications generated by the Global Future Cities Programme and published by UN-Habitat. The other publications include:

- [Laying the Foundations for Transformative Urban Interventions in Emerging Economies: the Value of the Strategic Development Phase in the Global Future Cities Programme \(2019\).](#)
- [Addressing Systemic Barriers for Achieving Sustainable Urbanization in Emerging Economies: Learnings from the 19 Cities of the Global Future Cities Programme \(2019\).](#)
- [Partnering for Transformative SDG-Oriented Urban Development: Guidance for Multi-Partner Initiatives from the Global Future Cities Programme.](#)



# FOREWORD

In the Decade of Action, we need collaborative efforts to address emerging issues for a more prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable urban future. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides the roadmap for global action. To meet the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we need actionable and localised initiatives that spur sustainable urban development.

The UK-funded Global Future Cities Programme has over the last several years brought partners from different sectors together to collaboratively develop and deliver 31 transformative local projects to drive prosperity and alleviate poverty, in 19 cities across 10 countries. Five private sector consortiums have together with respective city authorities developed projects with a focus on improved urban planning, mobility and transport, urban resilience, and data management.

UN-Habitat, as strategic and capacity building partner to the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (UK FCDO), has supported delivery of the Programme through its urban lab. UN-Habitat has provided strategic advice and technical guidance to local authorities, while facilitating alignment of the projects with the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs, localising the global goals through the application of UN-Habitat's SDG Project Assessment Tool. The framework invites partners to guide the development of transformative urban projects collaboratively by measuring them against specific principles and performance criteria drawn from the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda.

Integrating the SDGs into the design of urban projects is an innovative practice that contributes to build capacity of city authorities, improve quality of delivery partners' outputs, and align short-term actions with cities' long-term objectives. This publication, the second in a series of two, offers hands-on recommendations for SDG-oriented project design, development and delivery based on the experience and lessons learned from projects developed under the Global Future Cities Programme. While every project and context is unique, this publication offers a benchmark for aligning future project development with the Sustainable Development Goals.

While this publication presents experiences and recommendations from a bottom-up approach, we also recommend using this publication in tandem with the first in this series, Partnering for Transformative SDG-Oriented Urban Development: Guidance for Multi-Partner Initiatives from the Global Future Cities Programme, which looks into the systemic issues, drivers and barriers associated with the setup and delivery of global, multi-partner urban development programmes that leave no one and no place behind.



**Shipra Narang Suri**

Chief, Urban Practices Branch - UN-Habitat  
Nairobi, Kenya, March 2022

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