

# URBAN SOLUTIONS

**UN HABITAT**  
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

April 2015





# URBAN SOLUTIONS

United Nations Human Settlements Programme  
Nairobi 2015

UN  HABITAT



New York City. © Donald Bowers Photography / Shutterstock.com

# INTRODUCTION

➤ UN-Habitat, the urban agency of the United Nations, was created when two-thirds of humanity was still rural.

For more than forty years, UN-Habitat has been working in human settlements throughout the world. The efforts of UN-Habitat have been focused on building a brighter future for developing villages, towns and cities of all sizes, which are most in need of support in guiding the process of urbanization. Towards this end we have created a new vision which makes a

shift in focus and incorporates three essential urban elements into a new, integrated working methodology: Urban Legislation, Urban Design and Urban Finance, as a three-legged strategy in advancing sustainable urbanization.

UN-Habitat has developed a unique position supporting urban development and the

➤ “Urbanization is a source of

planning and building of a better urban future for next generations. This key process supports economic growth and social development, and reduces poverty and inequalities.

We need a holistic approach to urban development and human settlements which provides for affordable housing and infrastructure, and prioritizes slum upgrading and urban regeneration. We are committed to improving the quality of human settlements, including the living and working conditions of both urban and rural dwellers. We believe this will reduce poverty, and increase access to basic services, housing and mobility.

As we move ahead to the 20-year Habitat III summit in 2016, UN-Habitat's priorities will focus on seven areas:

1. Urban Legislation, Land and Governance;
2. Urban Planning and Design;
3. Urban Economy;
4. Urban Basic Services;
5. Housing and Slum Upgrading;
6. Risk Reduction and Rehabilitation;
7. Urban Research and Capacity Development.

"Governments want us to promote an integrated approach to planning and building sustainable

cities and urban settlements. We are tasked with supporting local authorities, increasing public awareness and enhancing the involvement of local people, including the poor, in decision making."



### Time to Think Urban

UN-Habitat's vision of "urbanization" encompasses all levels of human settlements, including small rural communities, villages, market towns, intermediate cities and large cities and metropolises, i.e. wherever a stable community is continuously located and there are housing units together with permanent social and economic activities, common public space, urban basic services, and a local governance structure.



**Dr. Joan Clos**

United Nations Under-Secretary-General  
and Executive Director of UN-Habitat

development, not just an outcome



# THREE-PRONGED APPROACH

➤ Over the last few years, UN-Habitat has been refining its approach to implementing its normative and operational work.

Within the framework of the six-year strategic plan for 2016-2019, and building on the new vision of the role of urbanization in sustainable development which I have described, UN-Habitat has adopted a more strategic and integrated approach to addressing the challenges and opportunities of twenty-first century cities and human settlements.

This is in contrast to past approaches, which often addressed only the symptoms of the problems posed by urbanization in a piecemeal way. The new strategic approach is based on two premises.

The first premise is the positive correlation between urbanization and development, which I have already mentioned. Urbanization can be a powerful tool for transforming production capacities and income levels in developing countries. It can add quite a substantial input to growth of GDP. However, this requires a shift in the mind-sets of policymakers, away from viewing urbanization as a problem towards viewing urbanization as a tool for development.

The second premise is that the quality and quantity of urban output is highly related to the quality and characteristics of urbanization. Particularly important are the qualitative design of the urban legislation, the physical plan and the financial urban systems. The expected positive outcomes include increased employment, especially among the youth; improved social and economic integration, diminishing of slums, containment of urban sprawl, increased affordability of housing, containment in the proliferation of the informal sector, more sustainable energy consumption patterns and reduction in the emissions of greenhouse gases. Past approaches tended to address only the manifestations of the problems rather than the underlying systemic issues that, once corrected, can produce a substantial improvement.

The strategic and integrated approach adopted by UN-Habitat in the implementation of the new strategic plan for 2014-2019 is therefore more systemic, going beyond addressing only the symptoms of malfunctioning urbanization. It is

➤ of it. We must build a political

## Adequately linking space, processes and resources to nurture better cities through a three-pronged approach to urbanization:



integrated, rather than sectoral, transformative rather than fragmentary, and links urbanization and human settlements to sustainable development by focusing on prosperity, livelihoods and employment.

A three-pronged approach has been adopted that places emphasis on urban legislation, urban planning and design, and urban economy and municipal finance.

These correspond to the first three focus areas of the strategic plan for 2014–2019, and they can be seen as the levers for transforming cities and human settlements into centres of greater environmental, economic and social sustainability.

commitment to accommodate a rapid >



Santa Marta, Colombia © UN-Habitat/Alessandro Scotti

# URBAN LEGISLATION, LAND AND GOVERNANCE



Urban law is the collection of policies, laws, decisions and practices that govern the management and development of the urban environment.

UN-Habitat believes that urban legislation should be a priority area for sustainable urban development. Cities and local authorities must legislate to manage land, planning, financing, including taxation, housing, basic services, infrastructure, transport, economic development and social exclusion.

Obsolete, inappropriate and poor regulatory frameworks are among the major obstacles for urban management and governance. This gives rise to an informal economy and parallel systems to circumvent the system of governance. Good laws and institutions are therefore the basis of effective urban governance, management and planning.



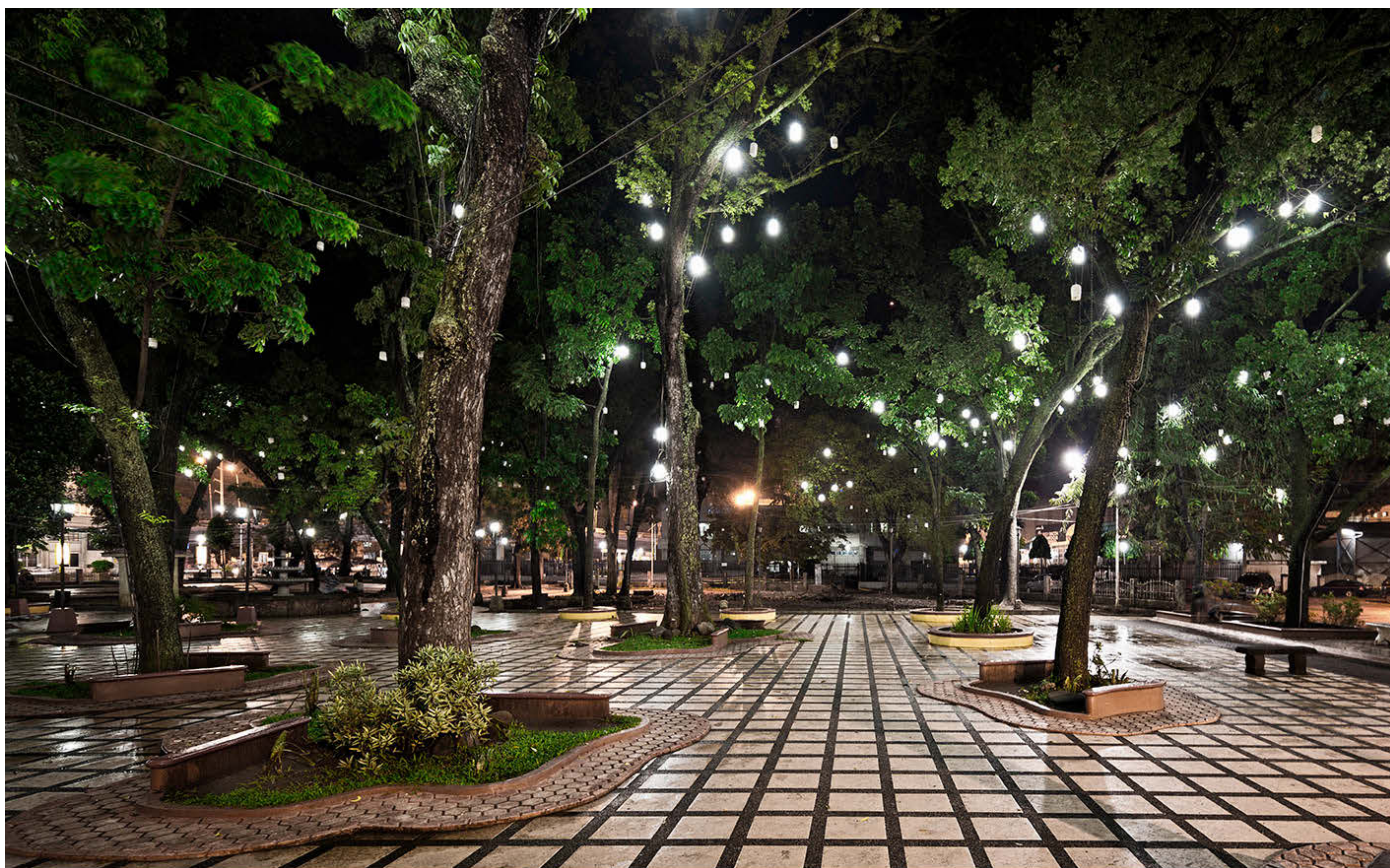
increase of the urban population, to

UN-Habitat can help cities identify and recommend reforms and strategic actions which can help urban expansion, while strengthening decentralisation and local democracy. The production of large scale serviced land can accommodate rapid urban growth, create more public space, and in some cases enable development cost sharing through land value capture.



### Global Land Tool Network

Conventional approaches to land administration and management have largely failed to deliver tenure security for poor and vulnerable populations. The technical solutions that are being used are often too expensive, inappropriate for the range of tenure options found in developing countries and unsustainable either financially or in terms of available capacity. The Global Land Tool Network develops and pilots normative approaches to sustainable urbanization in regard to access to land and tenure security, innovative residential tenures, affordable land administration and information systems, land policy, land-based financing, land management and planning, land-related regulatory/legal frameworks and tolls, particularly for women.



© UN-Habitat/Alessandro Scotti

prevent the emergence of slums, to





© Jim Havey / Alamy

# URBAN PLANNING AND DESIGN

➤ UN-Habitat supports governments at city, regional and national levels to improve policies, plans and designs for more compact, socially inclusive, better integrated and connected cities that foster sustainable urban development and are resilient to climate change.

The global urban population is currently 50 per cent urban but the figure is expected to grow with predictions showing that 6 out of every 10 people in the world will reside in urban areas by 2030.

This transition to a predominantly urban world is irreversible and brings with it equally irreversible changes in the way we use land, water, energy and other resources. How we manage this rapid urbanisation will be the key to our very survival and prosperity.

➤ face climate change adaptation and

UN-Habitat's approach to Urban Planning and Design emphasizes: (1) preventive planning; (2) planning at the scale of the problems; and (3) planning in phases, beginning with ensuring adequate physical access and basic urban services, especially water and sanitation, and linking planning with financial capacities.

Combined with modern technology, better urban planning can solve most of the problems that we are facing, and lead cities to prosperity. Cities are engines of wealth and employment, innovation and creativity, and provide the best opportunities to improve livelihoods. Cities give great economies of scale, and opportunities for efficient infrastructure development.



Future urban planning must address five major factors shaping 21st century cities:

1. Environmental challenges of climate change and the excessive dependence of cities on cars using fossil fuel;
2. The demographic challenges of rapid urbanisation, shrinking cities, large youth populations in some parts of the world and ageing in others, and increasingly multicultural cities;
3. Economic challenges of uncertain future growth and fundamental doubts about market-led approaches now endangered by the current global financial crisis, as well as increasing informality in urban activities;
4. Increasing socio-spatial challenges, especially social and spatial inequalities, urban sprawl, unplanned peri-urbanization and the increasing spatial scale of cities;
5. The institutional challenges related to governance and the changing roles of local government.

**The major initiatives that we use to achieve our overall objective are:**

1. National Urban Policies,
2. Regional and Metropolitan Plans,
3. Planned City Extensions,
4. Public Space and Placemaking,
5. Urban Patterns for a Green Economy,
6. Cities and Climate Change Action Plans,
7. Low Emission Urban Development Strategies.



Los Angeles, USA © iofoto/Shutterstock

to fight against urban poverty and





Recife, Brazil © Filipe Frazao / Shutterstock.com

## URBAN ECONOMY

➤ UN-Habitat promotes urban economic and financial development so that human settlements can reduce poverty, be more productive, provide better housing and municipal finance, regional economic development, and community-based initiatives.

Many cities and towns lack the resources to meet the ever-growing demand for more housing, more basic services, new public transport, and new infrastructure and maintenance.

Municipal authorities – with the backing of central government – are looking for new ways of generating resources. They need to be able to

raise revenue with the help of advisory technical and capacity building support, which UN-Habitat and its partners can provide. These mechanisms include land value capture, borrowing and access to capital markets, identifying bankable projects attractive to the private sector, and privatization of municipal and revenue collection. Options to generate income include the issuing of permits

➤ inequality.” “Urbanization is a source

to business operators, forming public-private partnerships, privatization of the provision of municipal services or obtaining grants or loans from multilateral financial institutions.

Cities and towns face constant pressure to be competitive and attractive to investors and talent. At the same time, unemployment is a major problem. In sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, more than 70 per cent of the labour force is vulnerable to unstable employment. Youth unemployment is a particular concern with young people more than three times as likely as adults to be unemployed.

UN-Habitat helps local governments, especially in secondary towns and cities, develop and exploit local assets and urban development opportunities for growth, jobs and increased tax revenue.

UN-Habitat brings expertise and networks in local economic development demonstrated through initiatives implemented with partners in a number of countries, including Canada, Egypt, Liberia, Philippines, Romania, Senegal and Vietnam.

Well planned and designed cities can generate better financing, higher levels of wellbeing, and better employment opportunities. UN-Habitat priorities are:

1. To help cities improve municipal finance;
2. To turn local assets into economic drivers;
3. To promote community empowerment;
4. To focus strongly on youth.



### Working with young people

There are more young people between the ages of 10 and 24 today than ever before in human history. Presently, 1.8 billion people - more than a quarter of the world's six billion people - are between the ages of 10 and 24, and about nine out of 10 people between the ages 10 and 24 live in less developed countries. (UNFPA/ Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs). These youth live, by and large, in cities and towns. It is estimated that as many as 60 per cent of all urban dwellers will be under the age 18 by 2030. UN-Habitat meaningfully engages youth so as to fully realize all the opportunities cities offer and thus create prosperity. UN-Habitat recognizes young people as the active participants in the future of human settlements, the UN parlance for towns and cities. UN-Habitat, through its Urban Youth Fund, and new Youth 21 initiative is actively involved with city youth projects around the world.



Antioquia, Colombia © Charlotte Kesi/World Bank

of development, not just an outcome





Guangzhou, China © GuoZhongHua / Shutterstock.com

## URBAN BASIC SERVICES

➤ Millions of people around the world still lack access to clean drinking water, basic sanitation, modern forms of energy, sustainable mobility and proper waste management. UN-Habitat works in the area of water, sanitation and drainage, mobility, energy and waste management; with the objective of increasing equitable access to urban basic services, and improving the standard of living of the urban poor.

As the world becomes more urbanised, urbanisation is increasingly viewed at the heart of the climate agenda. With half of humanity living in cities, urban areas now consume 75 per cent of global energy, and are responsible for the emission of more than 70 per cent of greenhouse gases.

Cities also generate more than 70 per cent of the world's waste. Between 30 per cent to 40 per cent of urban dwellers in developing countries do not have access to modern forms of energy, such as electricity and clean cooking fuels.

➤ of it. We must build a political

UN-Habitat helps cities exchange views on ways of offsetting these problems, and primarily cutting our reliance on fossil fuels and energy consumption in general. It promotes more efficient, cleaner public transport; energy efficient buildings; and thus less reliance on the automobile; cleaner cooking fuel; access to affordable energy services; and the use of renewable energy sources in urban areas.

UN-Habitat supports efforts by governments in developing countries in their pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) for water and sanitation. This is achieved through city-level demonstration projects, institutional strengthening of service providers, and engagement in national policy and reform process.

It also promotes better waste management, drainage, and a range of other strategies whereby smarter and compact cities can deliver better services to their citizens, while at the same time reducing energy demand.

By improving basic services, reducing the urban impact of climate change problems, improving transport systems and using energy more efficiently, UN-Habitat promotes sustainability that is human-centred – cities which improve the relative quality of life of their people, cities geared towards the happiness, rights and fulfilment of their citizens.



### Drinking water - good progress

The 2014 update of the WHO/UNICEF JMP report gives a figure of 748 million people (325 million or 43% of who are living in sub-Saharan Africa) remains without access to an improved source of drinking water in 2012. At current pace 547 million people will still lack access by 2015. Some 2.5 billion people without access to improved sanitation in 2012, down from 2.7 billion in 1990, a decrease of only 7%. If current trends continue, there will still be 2.4 billion people without access to an improved sanitation facility in 2015, falling short of the MDG sanitation target by over half a billion people. In contrast, coverage remains very low in Oceania and sub-Saharan Africa, neither of which is on track to meet the drinking water target by 2015.



### Sanitation – a “global scandal”

Sanitation coverage increased from 36 per cent in 1990 to 56 per cent in 2010 in the developing world as a whole. Despite progress, almost half of the population in those regions—2.5 billion—still lack access to improved sanitation facilities. Progress has been greatest in Eastern Asia, where coverage of improved sanitation has increased by 40 percentage points since 1990, largely driven by China, which now represents 94% of this region's population. The level of open defecation in this region is only 1%. South-eastern Asia, Southern Asia and Northern Africa have also achieved a coverage increase that is higher than the average for the developing regions”. At the current pace, and barring additional interventions, by 2015 the world will have reached only 67 per cent coverage, well short of the 75 per cent needed to achieve the Millennium target. An analysis of data from 35 countries in sub-Saharan Africa (representing 84 per cent of the region's population) shows that over 90 per cent of the households in the richest urban quintile benefit from improved sanitation, while access in rural areas falls below 50 per cent even among the wealthiest households. In the poorest rural quintile, over 60 per cent of households practice open defecation.



### Urban mobility

What we call ‘sustainable urban mobility’ – the ability to move about town easily – is the key to a properly functioning town or city. The success of doing business and conducting productive relationships in towns and cities depends on sustainable, efficient mass transport systems. UN-Habitat pursues three objectives: First, mobility plans integrated within the overall urban plans for the city; second, how urban investments can decrease the demand for private vehicles and discourage urban sprawl, and third, the need to ensure a political and financial commitment for trunk infrastructure, including high capacity systems, which are environmentally friendly.

commitment to accommodate a rapid 



Rabat, Morocco © UN-Habitat /Jacob Ojwang

# HOUSING AND SLUM UPGRADING

➤ To achieve the goal of adequate housing for all, UN-Habitat has launched a Global Housing Strategy, a collaborative global movement, aiming at improving access to housing in general and the living conditions of slum dwellers in particular. Its main objective is to assist member States in working towards the realization of the right to adequate housing.

Urbanisation has offered both opportunities and challenges. Rapid spontaneous urbanisation has seen the absolute number of slum dwellers increase from 776.7 million in 2000 to some 827.6 million in 2010. Governments in all parts of the world grapple with the same problem: how to provide adequate and affordable shelter for all.

This cornerstone of UN-Habitat's relationship with governments, municipalities, its civil society partners; and the financial world, both public and private; as well as with those most in need of shelter, water, sanitation, electricity and other services that make for an acceptable standard of living.

➤ increase of the urban population, to

The Global Housing Strategy will (re)position housing within the global contemporary debate through a paradigm shift in thinking and practice in housing policy, and will bring a contribution to the global discourse on and definition of the post-Millennium Development Goals agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.



### Housing at the Centre

The global housing deficit is exacerbated by the increasing number of slums worldwide with about 860 million urban dwellers living in slum and inadequate housing conditions. This chronic housing deficit demonstrates the inability to integrate adequate housing strategies into urban policies, even if residential land occupies between 65 and 75 percent of urban areas.

The 'Housing at the Centre' approach reflects the come-back of housing as a priority in the development agenda, addressing the needs of the poorest, repositioning housing at the centre of national urban policies and at the (physical) centre of cities; the latter in reference to the need for housing to be in well-located areas and linked to livelihood opportunities.



Santa Marta, Colombia © UN-Habitat/Alessandro Scotti

prevent the emergence of slums, to





Milton, Canada © Brisbane / Shutterstock.com

## RISK REDUCTION AND REHABILITATION

➤ In recent years, the world has witnessed an increasing series of disasters which have resulted in the dramatic loss of human life, the destruction of homes, property, infrastructure, services and indeed the displacement of entire communities.

With an estimated 130 international staff and more than 2,300 national staff in crisis and post-crisis situations around the world, UN-Habitat's experience shows that in most post-crisis situations, the sudden disruption of service provision and the destruction of critical infrastructure represent a major threat to recovery for urban survivors and reduces resilience.

A key area of work for the agency is ensuring prevention, protection and early recovery of basic service provision and critical infrastructure for transport, water, sanitation, waste management and hygiene systems. This also includes immediate support for health provision, education, and governance systems.

➤ face climate change adaptation and

To achieve this, UN-Habitat practices the philosophy of sustainable reconstruction. It is able to show that the best ways to help survivors get back on their feet again is by involving them in planning, managing and rebuilding their homes and neighbourhoods, within a longer term development strategy. Prevention can be greatly enhanced through the adoption and enforcement of better land use planning and building codes, and facilitating compliance through training and capacity building.

The rapid restoration of homes and livelihoods, on the other hand, is more complex and difficult to achieve. It requires that humanitarian

relief operations be conceived from the very start as a bridge to development.

The number and plight of internally displaced persons and refugees living for months, sometimes years in situations of prolonged dependency argue in favour of more sustainable solutions that combine short-term emergency efforts with the longer-term development. During reconstruction after a disaster or conflict, we advocate special attention being paid to the environment, women's secure tenure, rights to land and adequate housing among other matters. UN-Habitat advocates that the survivors should be treated as assets and partners in the rebuilding.



In concert with other UN humanitarian bodies, UN-Habitat's Strategic Policy on Human Settlements and Crisis enables it to provide expert support as part of a carefully coordinated humanitarian response, and early recovery. Our added value is the agency-wide unique capacity to deploy urban specialists in the immediate aftermath of emergency events.

UN-Habitat believes that governments and municipalities must have early warning systems for cities, towns and villages. Our experience tells us that the smartest, most sustainable solutions combine short-term emergency efforts with longer-term development.



Manica province, Mozambique © UN-Habitat

to fight against urban poverty and





Malawi © UN-Habitat

# URBAN RESEARCH AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

➤ UN-Habitat helps cities learn, know and understand their own needs.

Good urban policy and planning requires accurate information. From finding out how many people in a given street may have water and sanitation, to what local non-governmental and civil society organizations might think about a city, or how women's views should be taken into account, and helping exchange information and best practice ideas world-wide, the agency

provides the facts, figures and studies that can help decision makers at every level, and even assists local residents make optimum choices.

The agency publishes *The World Cities Report*, which today is considered among the most authoritative reports on urban affairs. A set of regional biennial reports supplement the flagship reports: *The State of African Cities*, *The State of*

➤ inequality.” “Urbanization is a source

*Arab Cities, The State of Asian Cities, The State of Chinese Cities, The State of European Cities in Transition, and The State of Latin American Cities.*

UN-Habitat's Global Urban Observatory helps also cities get a bird's eye view of their situation and their needs.

The City Prosperity Initiative has been designed to assist cities in moving towards economically, socially, politically and environmentally prosperous urban futures through clear policy interventions. This is done by using "the City Prosperity Index" that focuses on individual cities and measures prosperity across five dimensions - productivity, infrastructure quality of life, equity and environmental sustainability.

UN-Habitat will continue to offer technical support to institutions for innovative training programmes which target local governments and non-governmental and community-based organizations.



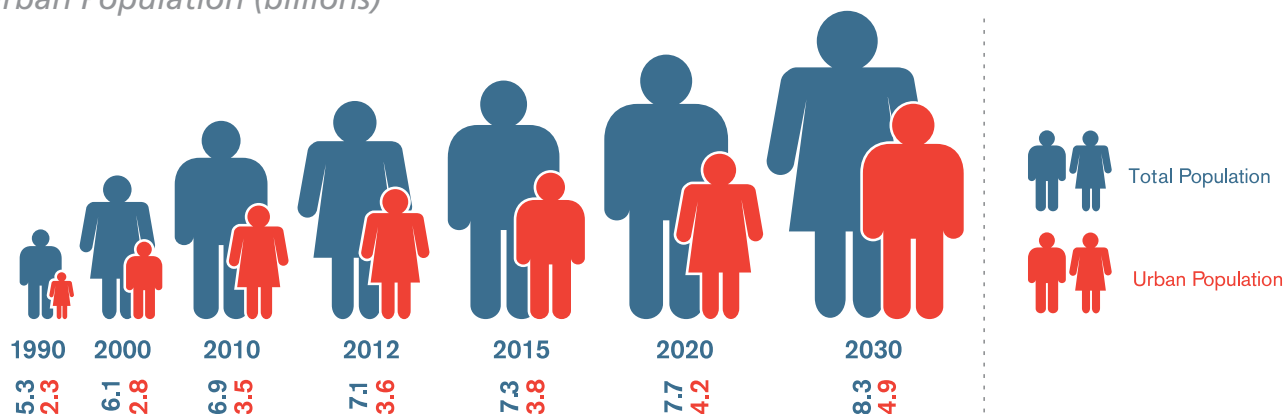
### Gender Mainstreaming

The agency strives to broaden gender equality and women's rights into all its activities by supporting and strengthening gender awareness. It seeks to ensure more accountable, participatory and empowering urban development practices through a gender sensitive approach.

The implementation of women's rights to land, property and housing remains a formidable challenge facing the world today. The problem persists despite a host of international human rights instruments such as *Millennium Development Goal 3* (Promote gender equality and empower women), and the 2005 *World Summit Outcome*, where women's land, property and inheritance rights are seen as an important indicator of women's empowerment and human development.

In an effort to strengthen gender mainstreaming in its activities, UN-Habitat produces resource materials on gender and post-crisis governance, reconstruction and land administration, gender in local governance, and best practices in gender mainstreaming in human settlements development.

### Total Urban Population (billions)



Source: United Nations (2010).

of development, not just an outcome





> of it. We must build a political

# ALL AROUND THE WORLD

UN-Habitat teams work in more than 70 countries around the world.



UN-Habitat is a UN global agency that marries normative work with technical cooperation in the field. As a result, UN-Habitat works in more than 70 countries in five continents, as part of the larger UN team, on the principle of “Delivering as One”.

UN-Habitat’s development work depends on close partnership with national and local governments. UN-Habitat will seek to increase its cooperation based on larger scale programmes delivering results at outcome level, on the principles of replication and scaling up.

At the country level, UN-Habitat helps governments improve the quality of urban planning, so that cities are more resilient against disaster, the impacts of rapid urbanisation and climate change.

The many climate-related disasters, humanitarian emergencies such as the tsunami in Japan,

devastating floods in Pakistan, the on-going conflict in Afghanistan, housing problems in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the continuing reconstruction programme in Haiti, constantly test our resolve and our mission.

UN-Habitat manages this work through its Project Office at headquarters in Nairobi, and its Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean in Rio de Janeiro, its Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in Fukuoka, the Regional Office for the Arab States in Cairo, and the African States in Nairobi.

Our mission as the urban agency is to ensure sustainable, equitable cities of the future able to plan for and manage the world’s growing urbanisation. It is also to help respond with our partners to alleviate the worst of suffering, and help urban communities rebuild and strengthen resilience for the future.

commitment to accommodate a rapid 

## UN-Habitat work in the Region of Asia and Pacific



The dynamic and populous Asia-Pacific region is home to 3.7 billion people and represents 56% of the world's population. The region is perhaps the most diverse in terms of economy, society, culture, environment and human settlements. Half of the world's urban population now lives in Asia. Over the next two decades, this region will come to account for 60% of the demographic expansion of all urban areas across the world.

UN-Habitat is currently active in 28 countries in Asia and the Pacific region, with projects representing 45 per cent of the current total global portfolio of the organization as the result of our response to the climate-related disasters, humanitarian emergencies, violent conflicts and economic turbulence experienced by the region.

More than 47 per cent of the current UN-Habitat portfolio is concentrated in Afghanistan, followed by significant engagement in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Mongolia, Philippines, Japan, and other countries.. While post-disaster and post-conflict recovery and reconstruction are a predominant feature, UN-Habitat's coverage of the region is diverse and its engagement with countries spans an entire spectrum of human settlements issues, increasingly strengthening

city climate and disaster resilience as well as linking cities to green infrastructure financing. Its implementing partners are also extensive, ranging from civil society organizations, to government departments, regional banks, academic institutions and regional networks.

UN-Habitat's activities in the region are driven by three forces: the first, and probably largest and most powerful is recovery and reconstruction after disasters, whether natural or human-made; the second is those that are a consequence and driven by global or regional agendas, such as climate change or regional watershed management; and the third is providing or improving basic services at the settlement level. Most of the work is also descriptive rather than normative and by-and-large applying lessons and practices which are tried and tested to new locations.

While the region's over-all economic dynamism over the past decades have been at a scale and speed that are impressive, even greater challenges have arisen for UN-Habitat to look into it, such as: addressing economic disparities and poverty reduction, managing the regionalization of cities and towns, preventing the proliferations of slums and informal



increase of the urban population, to

settlements, addressing environmental challenges, and re-building communities ravaged by wars and conflicts. Most importantly, we are also endeavouring to support the region to enhance and link urban planning and development to support and sustain the rapid economic development in the region, and integrating innovative approaches into on-going and new project development and implementation.

The rapid and consistent growth of middle income countries (MICs) in Asia-Pacific also requires UN-Habitat to work with national and local governments institutions, civil society partners and the private sector in providing key strategic advice in coping with challenges of sustainable urbanization.



### **The “People’s Process”**

UN-Habitat’s philosophy and principles in providing support to countries in the region are founded on the belief that people are at the center of development. It has established various mechanisms that activate community-based responses to addressing various issues in different contexts. Support to post-conflict reconstruction and post-disaster recovery programmes in Afghanistan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Indonesia are examples of operational projects founded on the people’s process, which promotes seamless transition from recovery to development, forming resilient communities as a result. This has also been proven effective in urban poverty reduction context such as Myanmar, Bangladesh, Cambodia and Mongolia.

### **Urbanization and economic growth**

Despite the turbulent global economic environment in recent years, growth in Africa remained robust at around 5 per cent. Excluding South Africa, which accounts for over a third of the region’s GDP, growth in the rest of the region was even stronger at 5.9 per cent, making it one of the fastest growing developing regions in the world. Urbanisation in Africa is providing vital opportunities for positive economic development such as industrialization and entry into exports markets, as well as social and human advancement. Cities generate economies of agglomeration important to sustain economic growth and generate jobs and opportunities.

prevent the emergence of slums, to



## UN-Habitat work in the Region of Africa



UN-Habitat has worked in many African countries for the past 39 years. UN-Habitat's portfolio in Africa is very diverse in terms of geographic coverage and development partners. It is attracting support from various countries and multilateral organizations interested in promoting sustainable urban development and recovery in the continent. More than 20 per cent of the project portfolio is concentrated in the East Africa, primarily for the Lake Victoria Water and Sanitation Initiative. UN-Habitat also has a significant portfolio in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in the area of land reform and management; Somalia for post-crisis recovery and rehabilitation, and Egypt and Libya in planning and capacity building.

UN-Habitat's key accomplishments in the region in the past decade include, among others: urban safety; good urban governance and improvement of housing; addressing post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation, slum upgrading, water, waste management and urban services; supporting decentralization programmes; land tenure and spatial planning.

As the urban population almost doubles in the next two decades the imperative of steering and guiding the growth process through urban

planning becomes a priority undertaking.

Equally urgent is the need to improve liveability and increase productivity of the city through expanding access to basic services. Indeed, Africa's increased urban population is a powerful asset for the continent's overall transformation. However, it can only attain its full potential when cities are properly planned and managed. A major change is needed in the course of Africa's urban development - a re-examination of the planning process and the delivery of basic services.

UN-Habitat remains committed to Africa. With the support of the African Development Bank and other development partners, UN-Habitat is keen to strengthen positive collaboration and partnerships with all levels of governments, non governmental organizations, private sector and regional economic communities such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), etc. to eradicating urban poverty and in transforming Africa's urban development agenda.



face climate change adaptation and



Rusizi, Rwanda © UN-Habitat /Julius Mwelu

to fight against urban poverty and



## UN-Habitat work in the Region of the Arab States



UN-Habitat has been engaged with the Arab States region for over 30 years, and over this period UN-Habitat has expanded its operation to more than 10 countries in the region.

The urban population in Arab countries grew by more than four times from 1970 to 2010, and will more than double again from 2010 to 2050. As of 2010, they had a total population of 357 million people, 56 percent of whom lived in cities; by 2050, they will have a total population of 646 million, 68 per cent of whom will live in cities. Most of this growth has taken place on the peripheries of the larger cities although, today, secondary cities are experiencing the fastest rate of growth. Across the region, around 20 per cent of residents live under each country's national poverty line, with certain countries where urban poverty at more than 35 per cent. Urbanization in the region has been shaped by the population movements induced by conflict, drought and unequal levels of economic development both within and among the countries of the region. Arab countries have among the scarcest water resources per capita in the world. Desertification and the associated threats of future water and food security for ever-larger urban populations are among the key defining problems of the region.

Within the last three years, UN-Habitat has provided technical support to national, regional and local governments in several countries within the region. The support has included:

1. Assisting the national bodies to prepare national urban strategies, housing policies and legislations related to urban planning, development and governance.
2. Preparing strategic urban plans for towns and cities and detailed plans for cities extensions, land readjustment and upgrading of informal settlements and deteriorated inner-cities.
3. Developing practical solutions for improving the living conditions of Internal Displaced Persons (IDP) communities in conflict areas.
4. Urban recovery for damaged neighborhoods and rehabilitation of urban historical areas.
5. Promoting local economic development and adopting participatory planning, empowering youth and women in decisions making.
6. Improving urban information and databases to support decision making processes through establishing urban observatories.
7. Advocating the agenda for sustainable urban development through regional activities such as issuing the first State of Arab Cities report.



inequality.” “Urbanization is a source

# UN-Habitat work in the Region of Latin American and the



## Caribbean

Latin America and the Caribbean is the most urbanised region in the world, with 80 per cent of its population in towns and cities. Despite economic advances and initiatives to combat poverty, there have not been significant improvements of equality. Latin American and Caribbean cities often remain strongly divided, and segregated spatially and socially. This division is expressed in high urban inequality coefficients and the persistence of informal settlements.

UN-Habitat has been engaged in Latin America and Caribbean for many years. This engagement was consolidated in 1996 with the establishment of our regional office for Latin America and the Caribbean in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

This region has often been referred to as a global laboratory for many innovations related to urban planning and management. UN-Habitat launched last year its first report on the region, *The State of the Latin American and the Caribbean Cities 2012*. This report brings together current and varied information about the main urban centres in the region, resulting in a useful tool to approach public-policy making and allowing us to move towards cities that enjoy a higher quality of life. UN-Habitat has offices in nine countries: Mexico, Costa Rica,

Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Haiti, El Salvador, Bolivia and Brazil. Sixty-two per cent of the portfolio focuses on three main programmes: Reconstruction in Haiti, projects under the Water and Sanitation Trust Fund and participation in nine Millennium Development Objective Funds Projects.

The portfolio in Latin American and the Caribbean is characterized by strong partnerships with local governments, providing support in municipal governance, urban planning, urban safety, cities and climate change, and public-private partnerships for local development. Recent activities in the region are concentrated on capacity development for intermediate cities as well as urban sprawl of metropolitan areas. Private sector activities in these activities has also witnessed an upward trend.

UN-Habitat key accomplishments in the region in the past decade include: the formulation of urban sector policies; advocating participatory urban and strategic planning; promoting good urban governance; local economic development; land regularization and policies; slum upgrading and prevention; disaster management and reconstruction and improvement of basic urban services and housing.

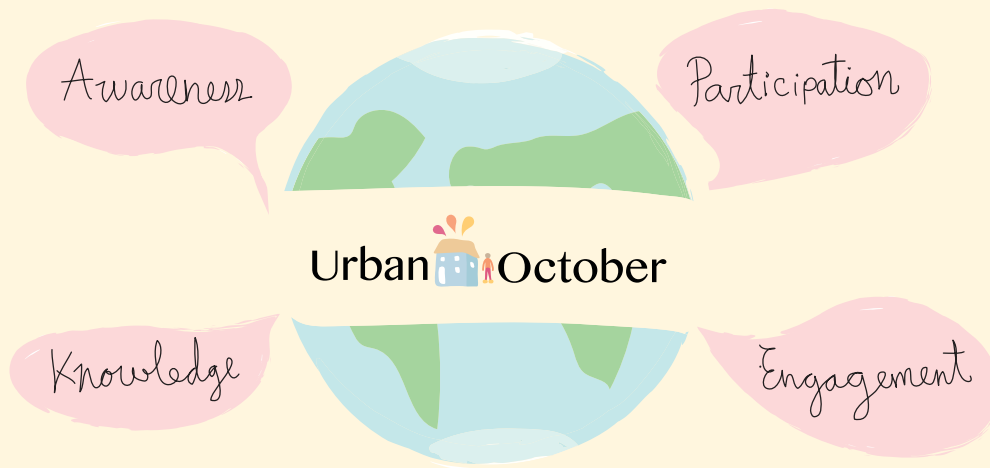
of development, not just an outcome



## » URBAN OCTOBER

Encompassing both **World Habitat Day** and **World Cities Day**, Urban October is the month for *promoting a Better Urban Future*. It is the overarching platform in which UN-Habitat and its partners raise awareness, promote participation, share knowledge, converge and debate on urban issues, and engage the international community towards a New Urban Agenda.

**#UrbanOctober #Action2015**



Let's celebrate it.  
And all over the world

> of it. We must build a political

## » WORLD HABITAT DAY

The United Nations has designated the first Monday of October of every year as World Habitat Day. The purpose of World Habitat Day is to reflect on the state of our towns and cities, and on the basic right of all to adequate shelter. It is also intended to remind the world that we all have the power and the responsibility to shape the future of our cities and towns. This year, World Habitat Day will be celebrated on 5 October 2015.

**#HabitatDay**



commitment to accommodate a



## » WORLD CITIES DAY

The United Nations has designated 31 October of every year as World Cities Day. The Day was created to meet opportunities and challenges in urbanization and contribute to sustainable urban development. The general theme of World Cities Day is *Better City, Better Life*, while this year's theme is *Designed to live together*.

#CitiesDay

# World Cities Day

October 31

BETTER CITY, BETTER LIFE

*Designed to live together*



> rapid increase of the urban population, to

## » WORLD URBAN CAMPAIGN

The World Urban Campaign is a global advocacy platform to promote a positive vision of cities in the twenty first century. Coordinated by UN-Habitat and driven by a large number of partners. It is designed as an essential platform for partners to propose solutions towards a better urban future and to build synergies, knowledge, and consensus on sustainable urban development.



prevent the emergence of slums, to face



## » I'M A CITY CHANGER

'I'm a City Changer' is the raising-awareness initiative of the World Urban Campaign. 'I'm a City Changer' is about giving the voice to people and cities to propose positive solutions to urban challenges. 'I'm a City Changer' local campaigns and National Urban Campaigns engage citizens in actions towards sustainable cities. Become a City Changer for a better urban future.



➤ climate change adaptation and to fight

## » WORLD URBAN FORUM

The World Urban Forum is one of the most open gatherings on the international stage. It brings together government leaders, ministers, mayors, members of national, regional and international associations of local governments, private sector, media, non-governmental and community organizations in open dialogue and exchange. The Seventh session of the World Urban Forum took place in Medellin, Colombia from 5 - 11 April 2014.

© UN-Habitat/Julius Mwelu



against urban poverty and inequality.”





# **"Join us"**

UN-Habitat needs your support to continue improving the quality of life of millions of citizens around the world.

HS Number: HS/013/14E

United Nations Human Settlements Programme  
P.O.Box 30030, Nairobi 00100, Kenya  
Tel: +254-20-7623120  
[infohabitat@unhabitat.org](mailto:infohabitat@unhabitat.org)  
[www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org)

**UN**  **HABITAT**

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