



Children from Kabul design their ideal future city in a participatory strategic action planning workshop under the CFA programme © UN-Habitat/Afghanistan

Impact Story | 4

City for All: Increasing tenure security and land-based municipal revenues to upgrade informal settlements in Afghan cities

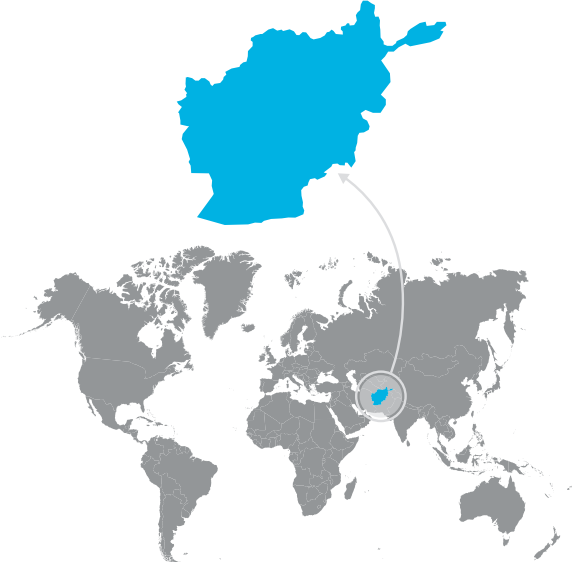
Unplanned urbanization brings challenges in land tenure security, land use planning, provision of basic services and protection of the environment. In Afghanistan, increasing urbanization during the last four decades of conflict has resulted in over 80 per cent of the urban population living in informal settlements. Because these settlements are not recognized or protected by law the municipal authorities tend not to invest in them. This in turn makes the households undervalue their properties and stop paying revenues to the local authorities.

To address this challenge, the government introduced a National Priority Programme to regularize urban informal settlements through

registration and the issue of occupancy certificates. In return, households pay a service fee to the municipality which enables investment in better infrastructure and facilitates the registration of land documents effectively. The settlements are also incorporated in the municipality's development plans and official maps which further ensures provision of basic urban services for all.

Strengthening state-society relations, municipal institutions and the urban economy

In 2016, the five-year City for All (CFA) programme was launched as a flagship action of the government's National Priority Programme.



A CFA revenue collector delivers a safayi invoice to a resident and records it on the municipality's system © UN-Habitat/Afghanistan



As part of the programme to regularize urban informal settlements, a worker installs a house number above a door in Kabul © UN-Habitat/Afghanistan

Harnessing Afghanistan's cities for state and peacebuilding requires three fundamental components:

- Effective land management including clear and increased land and property rights;
- Strategic urban planning to establish a common vision and guide investments in public infrastructure;
- Improved municipal finance and governance systems to increase local revenues and citizen engagement by municipal authorities.

CFA is underpinned on these actions which create the fundamental conditions for improved state-society relations, strengthen municipal institutions and stimulate the urban economy.

CFA supports 12 municipalities to survey and register all properties within their boundaries: communities are directly involved in the collection and verification of property data for registration. The programme has surveyed 912,000 properties and issued 30,000 occupancy certificates in informal settlements in the last four years. CFA contributes to SDG target 1.4 by providing reliable data to measure SDG indicator 1.4.2 on perception of tenure and legally recognized land documentation.

CFA is also undertaking strategic action planning at municipal district level using participatory methods to develop a common vision for local development. The survey data provides the baseline from which to carry out strategic planning, and the planning process is driven by local stakeholders, focusing on linking strategic plans with financing to ensure that the resultant action plans are realistic and get implemented.

Planning approach as an essential tool for managing urban growth

CFA has developed a property database that will revolutionize land-based services in Afghanistan. A complete and accurate register of property has improved the management of urban land and significantly expanded the revenue base of the municipalities. Based on updated property registers, the municipalities issued 720,000 municipal service charge invoices and collected USD 30 million in revenues from 2017–2020.

CFA has provided USD 15 million in grants to implement 150 infrastructure projects in the municipalities. The overall concept of the programme cements the direct connection between the formalization of property rights and sustainable urban development whereby strengthened property rights ensures tenure security. This in turn promotes investment in housing and business including payment of municipal service charges. Increased municipal revenues enables public investment in basic service delivery and infrastructure planning, enhancing controlled urban development and growth.

Country: **Afghanistan**
 City: **12 municipalities**
 Donor: **European Union, United States Agency for International Development**
 Implementing Partner: **UN-Habitat**
 Duration: **2016–2020**

“In the past I would take a whole day to pay safayi (property tax) fees for my house. Getting new safayi notebooks was even tougher. A property owner had to wait for days for the engineers to survey the house, pay for transport of the engineers and provide lunch. Through the CFA programme all properties are surveyed and an invoice is delivered to your doorstep. Getting a new safayi notebook now takes less than 15 minutes thanks to the CFA team.”

Aqa Mohamed, a 78-year-old resident of Kabul

USD 15 Million has been provided in grants through CFA to implement 150 infrastructure projects in municipalities.