

Strategic Plan 2020-2023

Annex 2: Communicating Impact - UN-Habitat as a Catalyst for the 2030 Agenda

Introduction

The Strategic Plan for UN-Habitat 2020 – 2023 presents a transformative vision for the way the Agency works with a strong change narrative focused on scaled-up impact and inclusivity. Advocacy and communication as drivers of the Strategic Plan play a key role giving voice and visibility to its ambitious vision and the ongoing implementation of the four domains of change:

- Reduced spatial inequality and poverty in communities across the urban-rural continuum.
- Enhanced shared prosperity of cities and regions.
- Strengthened climate action and improved urban environment.
- Effective urban crisis prevention and response.

The Strategic Plan calls for “a robust communication strategy that uses messaging and branding to raise awareness on sustainable urbanization challenges and opportunities and the unique contribution of UN-Habitat as a thought leader, a centre of excellence and innovation.”

The Communications Strategy builds on and amplifies the recognized strengths of UN-Habitat – its mandate, its global presence, the impact of its field work, its knowledge leadership and powerful convening role to mobilize action and resources for sustainable urbanization.

It will widen opportunities for participation through global platforms where partners’ progress in sustainable urbanization is recognized (especially best practices), where Member States can track their performance in advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, particularly the urban dimensions of the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda (NUA). Communication and Advocacy will be a force to bring about change by promoting sustainable urban policies and legislation through targeted campaigns, events and messages.

UN-Habitat’s Vision & Mission

The Communications Strategy aims to bring into action UN-Habitat’s vision of “***a better quality of life for all in an urbanizing world***”. The Strategy revolves around building, developing and operating an open network of information-driven platforms engaging Member States, local governments, private sector partners, NGOs and the public. The strategy also contributes to the UN-Habitat’s mission to “***promote transformative change in cities and human settlements through knowledge, policy advice, technical assistance and collaborative action to leave no one and no place behind***”.

The Communications Strategy, based upon UN-Habitat’s various global and local platforms, will ensure the widest possible dissemination, socialisation and development of UN-Habitat’s unique mandate to develop normative products, apply urban solutions on the ground and partner with Member States in the implementation and monitoring of the New Urban Agenda within four main areas:

Think – Communication will ensure wide dissemination and recognition of UN-Habitat’s role as the centre of excellence and innovation that provides best practices and cutting-edge thinking and research on sustainable urbanization. This will be carried out through the publication and dissemination of key data, flagship reports and research, use of easily understood infographics and social media

Do - As one of the few UN agencies focusing on development as well as humanitarian work, it is important to showcase and demonstrate the wide range of transformative positive change. UN-Habitat’s initiatives will be used to demonstrate impactful urbanization practices to inspire changes in policy and urban practices and provide a feedback loop to channel ideas to Member States, local governmental and other important stakeholders. This will be carried out through human interest stories, photos and video on UN-Habitat platforms and in the media to show the impact of projects in the field

Partner - To be truly catalytic, it is important that UN-Habitat provides wider opportunities to participate in its global programmes. Communication will attract key partners to collaborate, share resources and devote time and effort in an integrated matter through campaigns, messages, and multi media stories developed with partners including UN agencies, development banks, private sector and Member States. The material will be disseminated through UN-Habitat and partner platforms and in the media.

Share – Communication will ensure the sharing of accurate, verified and cutting-edge information and best practices on sustainable urban solutions with Member States and other urban stakeholders through a wide variety of outlets including international and local media, social media, the website, publications, campaigns, interviews and events.

The Advocacy and Communication Strategy builds on four key UN-Habitat strengths:

1. **Mandate** – UN-Habitat has a strong mandate through the SDGs, New Urban Agenda and other platforms and is the UN focal point on urbanization, widely recognized as the key to achieving the 2030 Agenda. The global campaigns and UN-Habitat’s global platforms such as WUF are widely recognized. UN-Habitat’s ability to deliver impact on the ground reinforces the mandate. The hybrid approach to operational/normative is a key feature allowing UN-Habitat to develop policies and then implement with impact
2. **Networks** – UN-Habitat has a well-recognized convening power around urban issues. It has several networks of partners, including grassroots and local authorities often developed through field offices.
3. **Centre of Excellence** – The high quality and ground-breaking nature of UN-Habitat’s research, data, normative products and work is widely recognised as are the publications, particularly flagship reports.
4. **People and organization** - UN-Habitat has a wide range of highly competent and qualified professionals with a variety of skills from research, strategy, programme management and implementation in 90 offices globally. The Executive Director will be a key champion in this.

The communications team will be working closely with both internal and external subject experts to offer the appropriate platforms and mediums to communicate cutting-edge ideas; highlight urban solutions on the ground; opportunities to link up with partners and a global platforms to share normative products and financing opportunities to scale pilot initiatives into global programmes.

UN-Habitat Communications key roles

1. Inform and engage

UN-Habitat plays the main UN role in raising awareness and interest about urban issues, sustainable development and best practices, informing, educating and stimulating participation. The public as well as local, regional and national authorities will be provided with a wide range of material and information about the challenges, opportunities and future of sustainable urbanization.

Tools

Effective Story telling: Compelling stories whether written or told through photographs or video centred on people create an impact on everyone from the general public, to donors and Member States. Such stories in clear jargon-free language incorporate important information on urbanization and UN-Habitat’s work.

Timely, ground breaking Research: Communication will help ensure UN-Habitat’s recognition as a knowledge leader and centre of excellence. Themes of flagship reports and other key research materials and data will be synchronized with themes of key events such as WUF and campaigns to ensure real change.

Messaging: Communication will work across the Agency to ensure agreed cohesive messaging aimed in a timely manner at relevant audiences also form the basis of speeches, Q and As, briefs and social media.

Creative materials: Communication will produce high-quality creative materials for campaigns including publications, booklets, infographics, presentations, videos, exhibitions and events. This includes guidance and services, including translation, maps and infographics. Communication also creates eye catching, informative exhibitions and organize other interesting, dynamic exhibitors and performers.

Media engagement: Communication will continue to target the most influential or relevant media, whether traditional or social, for stories on projects, op eds or interviews ensuring regular interaction with the Executive Director and training for media on urban issues.

Social engagement: Outreach and engagement with the public can be expanded through social media, discussions on radio or television, forums with the Executive Director and campaigns. Urban October is a prime moment for engaging with the public and authorities who organize a wide range of events and this could be expanded

Authoritative Voice: UN-Habitat should be ready to provide timely authoritative comments and quotes on current relevant events to raise the Agency’s profile in the media. For high level media this is preferably carried out by the Executive Director or Deputy Executive Director but the Chief of Communication and relevant technical staff can also do so. This will ensure UN-Habitat is the ‘go to’ agency on urbanization.

Expected results

This enhanced engagement and role as a leading voice on urbanization will lead to a better educated and informed public who can engage on urban issues, inform others put pressure on their leadership at all levels for change. This will increase UN-Habitat’s reputation as a knowledge leader and centre of excellence and raise the profile of sustainable urbanization leading to increased donor, public and partner trust, facilitating resource mobilization, allowing the organization to more effectively pursue its mandate.

2 Inspiring change through communication and advocacy

Public advocacy and communication work together to bring about changes in attitudes and transform this into action. When audiences are well informed, they are more likely to take action to put sustainable urbanization and the rights of all at the heart of the social political and economic agenda. Advocacy can work to support changes in public policy and legislation and increased national and local funding for key urban issues but also at an individual level in social behaviour social attitudes and beliefs.

Key areas

Campaigns and themes: Communication will be closely involved in organizing and promoting key events such as World Habitat Day and ensuring the theme is linked to ongoing priorities, flagship reports and data and research. Campaigns will be limited in number, reflect UN-Habitat’s main priorities and have a clear aim, indicators and timeframe.

Flagship meetings, In addition to the UN-Habitat platforms below there are key meetings, events and moments for UN-Habitat to maximize its messaging such as the High-Level Political Forum, the UN General Assembly, UN Climate Change Conference (COP), regional and national Urban Forums.

Partnerships: UN-Habitat has a vast range of partners to amplify and drive campaigns and messages. Relevant agencies including UNICEF, UNDP, and UN-Women can work with UN-Habitat on specific issues, while UNHQ’s Division of Global Communication provides essential support. NGOs, community and youth groups often have dynamic social media along with networks such as United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), C40, the private sector and other leading actors, many of them part of the World Urban Campaign

Expected Results

UN-Habitat’s mission statement refers to promoting transformational change – and communication and advocacy are the drivers behind the knowledge, policy advice, technical assistance that pushes for change to policies and legislation.

3 Positioning UN-Habitat

UN-Habitat’s role and the impact of its work should be recognized at every level from the public and beneficiaries in countries where UN-Habitat works, to donors, Permanent Representatives and leaders. This ensures that UN-Habitat is seen as the agency that partners want to work with, donors want to fund and the media wants to cover. -Habitat’s role as a centre of excellence and innovation and its new vision and mission statements, will be widely publicized.

Branding: UN-Habitat, through the Strategic Plan, has a stronger sense of identity with a vision and a mission for everyone to promote. While every activity carried out by UN-Habitat contributes towards the brand, the proper use of the brand, meaning the name and logo would lead to UN-Habitat becoming a widely-recognized name as a leader in urbanization.

Fund raising: Communication about UN-Habitat’s work and impact, its transparency and expertise are critical to fundraising. In addition, visibility is extremely important for donors and will enhance funding of the Strategic Plan 2020-2023, in general. Visibility guidelines have been produced by Communication and Donor Relations.

Monitoring Transformative Change - the Communications Strategy will also provide opportunities for donors and champions to track the implementation of the Strategic Plan as the latter contributes to the wider achievement of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and the urban SDGs. As UN-Habitat is the custodian of the SDG 11 indicators, the communications platform will also provide opportunities for local governments and district-level governments to participate by contributing data to measure the effectiveness of the normative products being implemented at the local level.

The **Existing and Future Platforms** - UN-Habitat currently has a set of platforms that have been designed to support the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and to advocate for, promote and support the localising of the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, a monitoring system associated with the Strategic Plan will be developed.

Table 2: Existing and future communication and advocacy platforms

		Type of Platform	Target Audience	Estimated Reach	Timing
1	World Urban Forum	Global Premier platform – non decision making. 1-week meeting with huge array of events	Govt, Private Sec, civil society, UN, subject experts, general public	Direct participations - 20K; More than 5 million in-direct	Every two years in selected location
2	UN-Habitat Assembly	Universal assembly – largest decision-making body on urbanization	Member states, local governments, policy makers	Direct participation - 4000; More than 1 million in-direct	Every four years in Nairobi
3	World Habitat Day	Global Awareness campaign focusing on specific theme linked to campaign	National and city governments, civil society, general public	Direct participation 500; more than 1 million in-direct	Every year – worldwide with a global observance
4	World Cities Day	Global Advocacy focusing on specific theme	City governments, experts, general public	Direct participation 500-800, more than 1 million in-direct	Every year – worldwide with a global observance
5	World Urban Campaign	Global Advocacy	Development partners	n.a.	
6	Urban City Campus Programme	Global Advocacy	Cities and communities (in 2019, some 120 ‘communities’ have applied to host urban city campuses)	n.a.	Talks available on website
7	UN-Habitat Scroll of Honour	Global (Leadership)	Award for thought leaders, city managers given at UN-Habitat Day	Awarded at World Habitat Day Direct participation 500; more than 1 million in-direct	Every two years

		Type of Platform	Target Audience	Estimated Reach	Timing
8	State of the World Cities Report and Flagship Regional Reports	Global (Knowledge leadership)	Experts, governments, media, public	n.a.	Every two years
9	City Prosperity Initiative	Global (Rating of sustainable development)	500 cities worldwide	n.a.	Every year
10	UN-Habitat global website	Global	Governments, stakeholders, donors, NGOs, experts, public	n.a.	On-going
11	NUA Platform	Global (Monitoring platform for Member States)	Monitoring tool for Member States and city governments	n.a.	To be launched at WUF 10
12	SDG 11 Indicators	Global (Monitoring platform for human settlements)	Tracking tool for local and district level participation in sharing data	n.a.	To be launched at WUF10

Public Engagement Strategy

A key factor in the success of this communications network will be the involvement of Member States, local governments, the private sector and local communities in the processes of the development of key programmes. The communications strategy will provide information and will provide opportunities for people to be involved in decision-making as UN-Habitat already does through its “Cities for All”, “Safer Cities” and “Public Spaces” programmes. The engagement strategy here is to transform the process whereby the community has ideas imposed upon it, to a community who are leading the transformations.

Expected outcomes

The impact of this communications strategy will involve all three key dimensions where positive change can be seen, felt and quantified. They include the following:

- Heightened awareness about SDG 11 and all related SDGs, the New Urban Agenda and sustainable urbanization among the general public and all levels of government
- Increased awareness about the work of UN-Habitat, its role as a centre of excellence, its impact in the field and key issues.
- Increased participation with specific reference to selected targeted stakeholders including Member States, local governments, the civil service, the private sector, civil society and special interest groups. The level of participation can be measured against the number of policy changes, the level of co-investments catalysed and changes in attitudes and commitment

Conclusion

The Communications Strategy takes into account the role of UN-Habitat as the premier UN-agency working on sustainable urbanization. It is an integral component in the implementation of the UN-Habitat Strategic Plan as will help galvanise partners, the public and governments to promote transformative change and ensure a better quality of life for all.