

# **Orientations for the Development of the UN-Habitat Work Programme 2022 and Prioritisation**

**(20 December 2020)**

## Introduction

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1. Globally, 56 per cent of the population live in cities, and this share is expected to rise to 70 per cent by 2050 thus continuing to make urbanisation one of the most significant trends of the twenty-first century. While urbanisation continues to be a global phenomenon, there are considerable regional and sociopolitical disparities as to who benefits from it. Some 90 per cent of urban growth takes place in less developed regions, where it is predominantly unplanned, and capacities and resources are most constrained.
2. Unplanned urban growth fuels the expansion of informal settlements and slums and often resulting in an increase in urban poverty, inequality and lack of adequate and affordable housing. Globally, more than 1.6 billion people live in inadequate housing and more than 1 billion live in slums and informal settlements. People living in slums and informal settlements often experience additional exclusion and suffer from poverty-inducing factors, such as a lack of land rights and tenure security, a reduced capacity – and lack of connectivity - to engage in decent livelihood-generating activities, limited access to quality education and health services, social exclusion and marginalisation, all of which disproportionately affect women, young people, older persons, migrants and other marginalised groups. In addition, 1.2 billion people lack access to clean drinking water, 2.5 billion lack access to safe sanitation and fewer than 35 per cent of cities in developing countries treat their wastewater. In 2019, there were 763 million internal migrants and 224 million international migrants globally, most of whom lived in urban areas, often under difficult conditions.
3. Cities are also hot spots for environmental and energy challenges, accounting for 60 to 80 per cent of global energy consumption, 70 per cent of global carbon emissions and more than 70 per cent of resource use. The urban poor, living in risk-prone and under-serviced areas, suffer the worst consequences of climate change-related disasters and natural and human-made crises and conflicts. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the systemic inequalities that exist across territories and urban areas disproportionately affecting the urban poor, who live in crowded and under-serviced environments and who are much more vulnerable to its social and economic impacts.
4. Under the leadership of the UN Secretary-General, the UN system has now fully recognised the need to support national, subnational and local governments in fully mobilising the transformative potential of urbanisation to deliver on the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, the related Sustainable Development Goals - the SDGs, the Paris Agreement and other global frameworks, while future-proofing cities, against pandemics and the climate emergency, as set out the Secretary-General's Policy Brief on COVID-19 in an Urban World and the UN system-wide strategy on Sustainable Urban Development. Also, with global economies going down and environmental degradation advancing, inequalities will rise, leading to further conflict for resources and livelihood opportunities. As strategies for the recovery of the COVID-19 pandemic are being developed and implemented, and the world is still urbanising, UN-Habitat should further focus its efforts on leveraging its expertise and adding its value to broader UN efforts, as called for also in the Decade of Action.
5. UN-Habitat's strategy for 2022 is guided by its Strategic Plan for the period 2020–2023, which has proven robust in responding to COVID-19. The Strategic Plan enables the organisation to advance its innovative, delivery-focused, partnership-oriented model of operation. Its recently developed organisational structure makes UN-Habitat a dynamic, fit-for-purpose organization for delivering the four interconnected and mutually reinforcing subprogrammes that are identified in the Strategic Plan 2020-2023:
  1. Reduced spatial inequality and poverty in communities across the urban-rural continuum;
  2. Enhanced shared prosperity of cities and regions;

3. Strengthened climate action and improved urban environment;
  4. Effective urban crisis prevention and response.
6. To deliver on the catalytic potential of SDG 11, renewed efforts are needed to scale the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, mobilising the whole UN system and urban stakeholders, through the Urban Agenda Platform and the World Urban Forum. This will also be highlighted during the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda in the second quarter of 2022.
  7. In addition, UN-Habitat’s flagship programmes have increasingly proven to be great vehicles to fast track integration between UN-Habitat’s normative and operational work and scaling the impact of the organisation. In 2022, UN-Habitat will primarily focus on the following flagship programmes:
    - (a) “Sustainable Development Goals cities” (SDG cities). Achieving the SDGs is the main objective for all four subprogrammes. This flagship is designed to advance the overall implementation of the Goals at local level by supporting cities to develop and implement transformative projects, designed to maximise impact against the SDGs.
    - (b) “RISE-UP: Resilient settlements for the urban poor”. The flagship will contribute mainly to subprogrammes 1 and 3 by leveraging large-scale investment to build urban adaptation and climate resilience in global hotspots of vulnerability and also address issues of spatial inequality;
    - (c) “Inclusive cities: enhancing the positive impacts of urban migration”. It will mainly respond to subprogrammes 1 and 4 by supporting local and national authorities in creating inclusive and non-discriminatory urban environments for all people.
  8. The flagship programmes on “inclusive, vibrant neighborhoods and communities” and “people-centered smart cities” will be mainstreamed across the four subprogrammes, strengthening the links across the outcomes of the Strategic Plan. In addition, a normative and capacity building approach to strengthen the operationalization of digital transformation dimension in sustainable urbanization contexts across the whole agency will be implemented. The work on smart cities will continue to focus on creating a global normative framework for fostering innovation and smart cities approaches, that are more people-centered, overcoming the digital divide and less technology driven.
  9. The flagship programmes will increase integrated approaches and enhanced thematic connectivity of activities to achieve impact on the ground. They will strengthen coherence among initiatives implemented in multiple locations through geographical convergence, facilitating the cross-fertilization of ideas, experiences and lessons within the programmes as well as with partners. Among the top priorities of all the flagship programmes is enhancing the capacity of urban actors at different levels, and the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders.
  10. The 2022 work programme will continue to streamline human rights, gender and social inclusion as a process and outcome to address key cross-cutting issues (relating to older persons, children and people with disabilities, as well as gender and youth), which will strengthen the programming of UN-Habitat towards leaving no one behind. It will be important to work further on the spatial dimension of exclusion. There is a similar need to further strengthen UN-Habitat’s crosscutting thematic areas, resilience and urban safety into its overall programming. UN-Habitat will develop guiding frameworks, tools and capacity-building materials, set standards, propose norms and principles and share good practices on social including issues. These will also cover UN-Habitat’s work on resilience and safety. In so doing, more systematic engagement will occur with global networks to develop and test these tools, such as the Global Land Tool Network, the Global Water Operators’ Partnerships Alliance and the Global Network on Safer Cities.

11. Through its normative work and research, UN-Habitat will also monitor global progress on urbanization and support intergovernmental, regional, national and subnational bodies in the formulation of policies related to sustainable cities and human settlements, based on evidence. Going forward, UN-Habitat will continue to focus on the development and roll out of the Global Urban Monitoring Framework, ensuring that data captures well the local and subnational levels, generating evidence on the status of urban areas and their contribution to the SDGs.
12. To better meet the needs of Member States and to engage a wider audience, UN-Habitat will strengthen capacity building initiatives, digitization of tools and virtual E-Learning programmes. UN-Habitat will further continue to develop tailor-made country programmes in partnership with member states.
13. More than ever, UN-Habitat will prioritise and focus its efforts on where it can have a catalytic impact and clear added value, leveraging the work of other UN agencies and the broad field of urban stakeholders.

### **Subprogramme 1: Reduced spatial inequality and poverty in communities across the urban-rural continuum**

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Subprogramme 1 contributes to the objective of reduced spatial inequality between and within communities and reduced poverty in communities across the urban-rural continuum, through:

1. Increased and equal access to basic services, sustainable mobility and accessible and safe public space;
2. Increased and secure access to land and adequate and affordable housing;
3. Effective human settlement growth and regeneration.

14. UN-Habitat's work for achieving outcomes 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 has great potential to drive integration and leverage a wider impact across the Strategic Plan. Therefore, subprogramme 1 will be further prioritized, in particular when it comes to tailoring the existing normative frameworks to local contexts or specific circumstances and through a strong focus on technical cooperation.
15. The strategy for subprogramme 1 in 2022 builds on the one developed in 2021, with the following emphasis:
  - An even stronger focus to create co-benefits for climate action (outcomes 2.1 – 2.2) while:
    - Expanding the provision of basic services, access to sustainable mobility and ensuring a higher percentage of public space, integrating nature-based solutions (outcome 3.2) and enabling social cohesion (outcome 4.1); and improved living conditions for migrants and refugees (outcome 4.2);
    - Expanding guidance on how planning for urban expansion and regeneration (co-relation with urban morphologies) can contribute to climate mitigation and adaptation and make urban growth inclusive and sustainable;
  - As part of the strategy for recovery from the social and economic impacts of COVID-19, a greater effort will be put on:
    - Overcoming systemic inequalities in terms of access to adequate housing, including a renewed focus on supporting national housing policies, advancing cities without slums, and fighting against forced evictions and homelessness;
    - Scaling access to basic and social services in particular in urban slums and informal settlements and for people in vulnerable situations;

- Accelerating progress on SDG 11, including through its flagship programme on SDG Cities, to leverage greater impact against the urban dimensions of targets across other SDGs. This requires a return to more integrated and inclusive urban development programming, building on lessons from the pandemic and integrating for instance health in urban and territorial planning and ensuring proximity to jobs and basic services and infrastructure;
- A new focus on digital transition and addressing the “digital divide”, online learning and capacity development of critical services and tools relevant to subprogramme 1, to continue expanding UN-Habitat’s impact and catalytic role beyond its own direct support role. This will target medium and small-sized cities in regions that are rapidly urbanizing;
- Achieving the objective of this subprogramme will require a stronger focus on strategic partnerships with sister agencies, including the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), development partners and coalitions with grassroots organisations, the private sector, foundations, and international financial institutions (IFIs).

## **Subprogramme 2: Enhanced shared prosperity of cities and regions**

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Subprogramme 2 contributes to the objective of enhanced shared prosperity of cities and regions through:

1. Improved spatial connectivity and productivity;
  2. Increased and equitably distributed locally generated revenue;
  3. Expanded deployment of frontier technologies and innovations.
16. UN-Habitat’s work targeting outcomes 2.1 and 2.2 will be more narrowly focused on elements that can have a catalytic impact when integrated into broader strategies (not as standalone).
  17. Based on the work programme 2021, the strategy of subprogramme 2 in 2022 will include the following:
    - National urban policies are to be integrated into national planning and financing instruments, enhancing urbanisation’s contribution to productivity and inclusive economic development, providing a territorial framework for the socio-economic recovery from COVID-19 and climate action, and safeguarding the environment and biodiversity (outcomes 3.1 and 3.2);
    - Additional normative work is needed to contribute to policy support to national and local governments, building on the Secretary-General’s Policy Brief on COVID-19 in an Urban World, ensuring that urban economic recovery helps drive climate action and impact against the SDGs;
    - A further focus is needed on increased and equitable distributed locally generated revenue (including land-based financing), as a way to help alleviate the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 and accelerate the achievement of the SDGs at the local level. This is a key component of the flagship on SDG Cities, which leverages blended financing;

- A new focus on the digital transformation, online learning and capacity development will help to scale UN-Habitat’s impact beyond its own direct support role. This will target medium and small-sized cities in fast urbanising areas.
18. The above will require stronger collaboration with the UN system, including the Economic Commissions, UNDP, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT), the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), foundations, IFIs, and the private sector.

**Subprogramme 3: Strengthened climate action and improved urban environment**

Subprogramme 3 contributes to the objective of strengthened climate action and improved urban environment through:

1. Reduced greenhouse gas emissions and improved air quality;
2. Improved resource efficiency and protection of ecological assets;
3. Effective adaptation of communities and infrastructure to climate change.

19. Progress in achieving outcome areas 3.1 and 3.2 will benefit from synergies created with the outcomes of subprogramme 1. On the other hand, new approaches and more concerted efforts are needed to achieve outcome 3.3. Outcome area 3.3 in turn will be further developed to incorporate outcome areas 3.1 and 3.2 through integrated climate action addressing mitigation and adaptation concurrently and by harnessing nature-based solutions for urban climate resilience. Synergies between outcome area 3.3 and 4.3 will also be further developed.
20. The strategy for Subprogramme 3 in 2022 builds on the one developed for the work programme 2021, in particular:
- The work of UN-Habitat under this subprogramme will focus further on the integration of low-emission development and air quality (outcome 3.1) strategies into urban mobility, public space (outcome 1.1) and urban development strategies (outcome 1.3);
  - A broader engagement is needed to scale up the urban dimension of Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptations Plans, while strengthening the evidence base (follow up to IPCC Cities in Edmonton) and promoting urban solutions, taking into account the increased acknowledgement of the critical contribution of cities to climate action and the implementation of the Paris Agreement;
  - There is an urgent need for new approaches to scale the affective adaptation of communities and infrastructure to climate change (outcome 3.3, flagship on Resilient Settlements for the Urban Poor) in response to the Decade of Action, which should include, amongst others, scaled access to planning and technology solutions as well as climate finance for cities;
  - Additional work need to be considered in urban areas with high economic potential, such as coastal and riverine urbanized regions, but vulnerable to sea-level rise and extreme weather events.
21. Achieving the outcomes above will require stronger collaboration with the UN system, including UNDP, UNEP, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), as well as with local government and city networks, climate funds, and the urban climate knowledge and innovation communities.

#### **Subprogramme 4: Effective urban crisis prevention and response**

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Sub-programme 4 contributes to the objective of enhanced urban crisis prevention and response through:

1. Enhanced social integration and inclusive communities;
  2. Improved living standards and inclusion of migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees;
  3. Enhancing resilience of the built environment and infrastructure.
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22. UN-Habitat’s work under outcome areas 4.1 and 4.2 will be more narrowly focused on elements that can have a catalytic impact when integrated into broader efforts of the UN community in promoting stability and sustaining peace, strengthening social cohesion and building resilient cities and communities.
  23. The strategy for sub-programme 4 builds on the work and lessons learned of past years and will focus on the following:
    - Increasing the focus of UN-Habitat on overcoming land-related challenges as a driver of conflict, including support to housing, land and property rights in the humanitarian and development contexts and advancing fit-for-purpose land administration towards the achievement of tenure security for all in crisis-affected areas. This will be done through further mobilising UN efforts as set out by the Secretary-General Guidance Note on Land and Conflict;
    - Advancing the work on urban profiling, urban recovery frameworks and reconstruction efforts after man-made and natural disasters and conflicts and increasing the resilience of cities and communities for future disasters;
    - Supporting local actors as key players for increasing social cohesion between communities, reducing discrimination and xenophobia and advancing human-rights-based approaches in urban crisis situations;
    - Tailoring UN-Habitat’s normative guidance and operational support in urban displacement contexts, framed by flagship 4 on migration, in coordination and close cooperation with other key actors and sister UN agencies and advancing the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.
  24. Achieving the outcomes above will require stronger collaboration with the UN system, including UNDP, IOM, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), as well as local government and city networks, focusing on resilience, such as the United Cities and Local Government (UCLG), the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), the Mayors Migration Council and the Resilient Cities Network.

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