HABITAT UNI & CAPACITY-BUILDING EVENTS AT WUF11

KATOWICE, POLAND | 26-30 JUNE 2022

SUMMARY

This report summarizes the events organized by UN-Habitat's Capacity Development and Training Unit (CDTU) at WUF11. Five events in total were held focusing on engaging and collaborating with academia in sustainable urban development, financing and upscaling capacity development programmes, and innovations in learning.

Key takeaways

Academia Roundtable and Habitat UNI events:
- Universities are essential to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda due to their unique relationship with cities, role in training the next generation of urban professionals, position in instilling multidisciplinarity, innovativeness and inclusivity in tackling urban issues, and their access to vast knowledge and data.

- There is a shift towards more impact-driven and human centered solutions-based interventions in the way that academia engages in transformation in cities and adapts and responds to rising challenges and opportunities in sustainable urban development.

- There is an appetite from both universities and UN-Habitat to work together to advance the New Urban Agenda and close the gap between theoretical and practical knowledge in sustainable urban development. Potential collaboration pathways, whether through or outside of Habitat UNI, must be clear, streamlined, and funded to be sustainable.

Building a stakeholders' coalition to bridge the capacity gap – a dialogue on financing and upscaling capacity development programmes:
- There is a need to expand the professional pool of planners through educational programs, while ensuring in the intermediate term that local governments have improved access to adapted and innovative planning knowledge and practices.

- Governments, agencies, academic institutions, and other stakeholders should work together to fill gaps in urban development capacity, policy, human resources, data, and finance.

- There is an opportunity to scale up and better tailor capacity-building programmes on urban sustainability to increase the application of and better localize existing knowledge in urban development policies and programmes. Digital innovation is key to increase impact and inclusion of knowledge transfer.

- Innovation in urban sustainability is not just about technology but also about creative ways of working and collaborating. Universities can play a key role to drive innovation and support policy making for sustainable urbanization, for example through labs that combine education and technology development.

- National ownership and institutionalization of capacity-building on urban sustainability are vital for long-term impact.

Innovations in learning for a better urban future: The UN-Habitat Learn platform and the New Urban Agenda Illustrated toolkit:
- Innovative approaches to capacity-building on urban sustainability can increase the reach and impact of capacity-building interventions, as well as increase inclusion.

- UN-Habitat Learn, UN-Habitat's platform for online learning, democratizes learning resources on urban sustainability via online access, and helps to expand outreach and safeguard their future use, as well as to provide resilience in the context of crises such as pandemics. Strategic collaborations with urban stakeholders can help to increase the reach and impact of the platform.

- The New Urban Agenda Illustrated toolkit, which includes a handbook and an online course in two parts, unpacks the New Urban Agenda in a practical, visual and interactive way, contributing to a more impactful implementation of the New Urban Agenda. There is an opportunity to scale up the toolkit through localized interventions and further translations into different languages.

- Digital formats offer an opportunity for making learning more inclusive, but they also create a new barrier to entry which is access to technology

- Life-long learning should be designed to encompass the informal aspects of learning

Next steps

- UN-Habitat to strengthen its partnership with universities such as through Habitat UNI by creating a mutually beneficial and sustainable collaboration framework with academia to value education-based engagements and leverage on the advantageous positioning of universities in solving urban issues.

- UN-Habitat to seek strategic partnerships with urban stakeholders in governments, international agencies, academia and others to bridge the capacity gap on urban sustainability, to better localize and broaden the dissemination of existing knowledge, and increase impact of capacity-building efforts.

- UN-Habitat to continue its efforts to upscale its digital innovation initiatives such as UN-Habitat Learn and the New Urban Agenda Illustrated, while seeking strategic partnerships for access to expertise, wider dissemination, and funding opportunities.
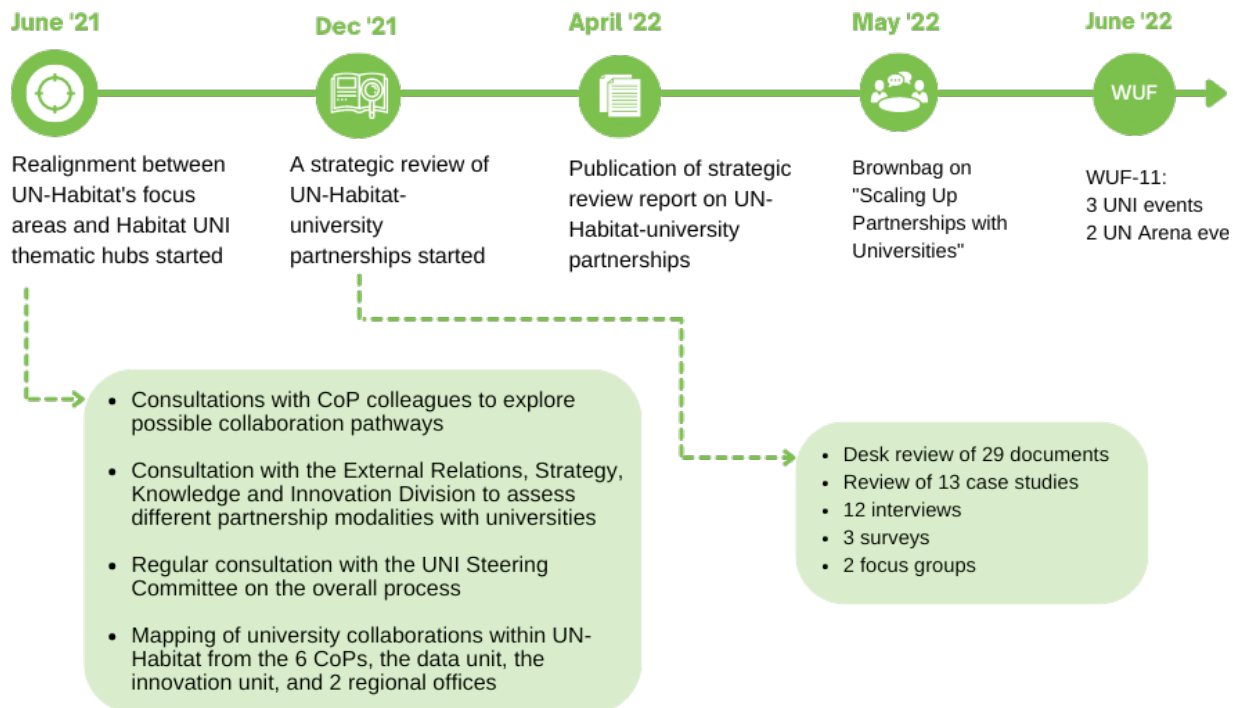
Table of contents

01

ACADEMIA AND HABITAT UNI EVENTS

1.1 Background

In 2022, UN-Habitat's Capacity Development and Training Unit (CDTU) produced a report analyzing the dynamics of partnering with universities, in view of strengthening its global partnership with universities and to leverage the potential for more joint knowledge creation and partnerships.

The analysis was prompted by the realignment process between UN-Habitat's substantive work areas and the focus areas of its network of university partners, Habitat UNI. Findings from the report became the basis of discussions with various stakeholders at WUF 11. The timeline below illustrates the process leading up to WUF 11 including the strategic review described by the report.

June '21

Realignment between UN-Habitat's focus areas and Habitat UNI thematic hubs started

Dec '21

A strategic review of UN-Habitat-university partnerships started

April '22

Publication of strategic review report on UN-Habitat-university partnerships

May '22

Brownbag on "Scaling Up Partnerships with Universities"

June '22

WUF-11:
3 UNI events
2 UN Arena eve

- Consultations with CoP colleagues to explore possible collaboration pathways
- Consultation with the External Relations, Strategy, Knowledge and Innovation Division to assess different partnership modalities with universities
- Regular consultation with the UNI Steering Committee on the overall process
- Mapping of university collaborations within UN-Habitat from the 6 CoPs, the data unit, the innovation unit, and 2 regional offices

- Desk review of 29 documents
- Review of 13 case studies
- 12 interviews
- 3 surveys
- 2 focus groups

BOX 1

Habitat UNI was initiated in 2011 to promote cooperation between UN-Habitat and institutions of higher education, as well as facilitate exchange and cooperation among universities globally. The global partnership promotes universities to become closer partners of cities, actively engaged in problem solving, closing the gap between academia and practice, and encouraging collaborative learning.

Habitat UNI currently has 8 thematic hubs: Informal Urbanism, Gender, Safer City, Urban Accessibility, Urban Form, Urban Regeneration, Urban Governance, MetroHub

1.2 Realigning Habitat UNI with UN-Habitat's Communities of Practice (CoP)

In mid 2021, an effort to realign the thematic hubs of Habitat UNI with UN-Habitat's normative work through the CoPs was started based on the following observed challenges and opportunities:

Challenges	Opportunities
• Disconnection between the existing hubs and the actual normative and operational work of UN-Habitat • A large number of universities working with UN-Habitat are not member of Habitat UNI and UN-Habitat doesn't have a comprehensive database • The current hub list leaves out various areas of importance in the current UN-Habitat work program	• Sections within the Urban Practices Branch are engaging with universities and willing to create new Habitat UNI hubs in line with their current work and partners • Universities are eager to engage with UN-Habitat • Tremendous need to strengthen the capacities of universities in the South to accelerate training new generations of urban professionals • Universities are laboratories for urban innovations and knowledge creation • Partnerships with universities is a strong component of the Center of Excellence approach, and a key highlight of the Capacity Building strategy approved by Member States in October 2020 • An integrated and coordinated global partnership with universities can trigger new projects and partnerships and support a better cross-fertilization of approaches to strengthen education, capacity building and practices

BOX 2

After the development of its 2020-2023 Strategic Plan, UN-Habitat created Communities of Practice internally, which bring together colleagues from across the organization to exchange and learn on a given topic. The CoPs provide opportunities for co-creation and collaboration; bring together people with similar interests to learn and improve their work; provide spaces to share new ideas; drive UN-Habitat's policy positions; and refine approaches, tools, and products.

The 6 CoPs are: Land, Housing & Shelter, Human Rights & Social Inclusion, Urban Basic Services, Planning, Finance & Economy, Policy, Legislation & Governance Section, Climate Change

1.3 Linking UN-Habitat and Universities Report: Harnessing the Potential of Knowledge Partnerships

Rationale

UN-Habitat has collaborated, experimented, and engaged with university partnerships across a vast array of programs. Yet, this variety has to date **lacked clear and systematic identification as to its modalities, challenges, and possibilities.**

The report provides an assessment of both challenges and opportunities to strengthen university partnerships. It also takes a deeper dive in one such formal and explicitly university-focused initiative, that of Habitat UNI, as UN-Habitat's "main mechanism for partnerships with academia", seeking to input explicitly into its direction (henceforth also referred as 'UNI').

⬇ **Download full report**

Key insights

Five **major themes** recurred throughout the study:

1. Re-balancing and reconciling individual and institutional-level engagements in university partnerships
2. Focusing on the 'next' generation of urban thought leaders
3. Understanding how the location of these partnerships within broader circuits of knowledge and wider academic networks shape UN-Habitat's university collaborations.
4. Recognizing both how to leverage academic expertise but also to value education-based engagements.
5. Tackling endemic and enduring resource challenges hindering university partnerships.

The table below summarizes the survey responses from UN-Habitat staff and academics engaged in Habitat UNI, complemented by 2 focus groups. It highlights the opportunities and challenges of UN-Habitat-university relations from their respective perspectives.

Academics	UN-Habitat
Engagement barriers include contracting challenges, short timelines	Institutional collaborations a more effective format (instead of individual level)
CoP work areas more influential than UNI hub	Most successful collaborations are project-based
Desire to engage with Habitat UNI but not sure how	
"Next generation" urbanists engagement is a critical area of development	
Funding is a crucial barrier in UNH-university partnerships	

Universities and the New Urban Agenda

The report stresses **3 opportunity points** on how UN-Habitat-university partnerships can be leveraged for the NUA:

- Leveraging educational networking opportunities to strengthen visibility of the NUA
- Valuing the boundary positioning of universities, which could be able to provide valuable bridging and brokering governance functions to better mainstream the NUA
- The urgency of enhancing the profile of university-city partnerships in NUA practices, marketing and implementation.

Main recommendations for Habitat UNI

It is evident that there is a **need for a series of reforms** aimed at enhancing Habitat UNI's capacity and influence. It calls upon UNI to project a clear identity and offer a simplified mission to those keen to engage, whilst sharpening what the 'ask' for support is by UNI and what the possibilities for fundraising might be.

a) Focus the purpose of UNI explicitly as the official university partnership program of UN-Habitat,
b) with its main activities aimed to connect directly UN-Habitat programming and services to university expertise and education, and vice-versa
c) and its governance designed to be a shared commitment by UN-Habitat staff and scholars with a clear eye at institutional and 'next generation' engagement

1.4 Academia Roundtable: Exploring the innovative contributions of academia to urban sustainable development

Event overview

Location	The Press Conference Centre	Participation	Public
Time	29 June, 13:30 - 15:30	No. of attendees	40

Download speakers' presentations   **Watch recording**   **Read the concept note**

This event brought together representatives from academic institutions around the world to discuss the role of academia in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, specifically SDG 11 and components of SDG 4, in line with the global frameworks for urban sustainability and education. It provided a platform for exchange amongst academic entities and other stakeholders in their efforts to trigger policy changes in urban development practice through evidence-based and innovative approaches such as digital innovation in learning.

Objectives
- Showcase the impact of innovative research programs on urban policy making
- Uncover how digital innovation for learning and capacity building can help to improve access to educational resources by scaling up academic programs and creating new partnership opportunities.
- Share concrete initiatives and opportunities for North/South, South/South (triangular cooperation) in academia to accelerate the implementation of global frameworks and agendas.

Programme

Panel 1: **Transforming our cities for a better urban future, innovative research that informs policy making**

1. Metropolitan science and academic policy. Showcase of the impact of innovative research on urban policy making
   (Robert Pyka, Head of Observatory on Urban and Metropolitan Process, University of Silesia)

2. Integrating Climate Change Action Across Built Environment Sectors *(Anna Hurlimann, Associate Professor, Urban Planning Assistant Dean, Graduate Research, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning, The University of Melbourne)*

3. The Gap *(Montaser Hiyari, Founder at iPlan jo, Planners for Development and Engineering, Assistant Professor, Applied Science Private University)*

4. Transforming our cities for a better urban future, innovative research that informs policy making
   (Antonella Contin, MSLab Coordinator Department of Architecture and Urban Studies, Politecnico di Milano)

5. La Universidad, un ente impulsor de la transformación *(Héctor García Curiel, Coordinator for General Heritage, University of Guadalajara)*

Panel 2: **Higher education and life-long learning for urban sustainability: opportunities for innovations and partnerships**

1. Designing Impactful Solutions
   (Svafa Grönfeldt, Professor of Practice at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Faculty Director of MIT's innovation accelerator DesignX)

2. Partnerships for Impact in Education Digital Inclusion
   (Hassan Yakubu, Researcher and PHD candidate, Mohammed 6 University)

3. A provocation for urban interdisciplinarity *(Menatullah Hendawy, Digitalisation and sustainability consultant, Research and Innovation Specialist, HCI-VIZ Lab, CICS, UMass Amherst)*

4. SEANNET Collective *(Rita Padawangi, Senior Research Fellow at the Asia Research Institute, Singapore University of Social Sciences)*

5. Professional Development for Fiscally Healthy Cities
   (Enrique Silva, Director of International and Institute-Wide Initiatives, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy)

Key discussion points

Academia has the potential to enact real urban transformation through collective learning

Transformation requires mitigation that is deep and anticipatory rather than reactive planning. In transforming cities, large data gaps hinder evidence-based policy creation. Data is also highly aggregated at the national level, and collected by people who work in silos. Academia's role can evolve by being directly included in data collection and policy design processes at the local level. Experience during the research process itself contributes to collective learning.

Decision-making demands a mixed policies approach. Rather than just evidence-based approaches, it also requires community, place, and experience based approaches. Communities can also be empowered to collect their own economic and social data which can incentivize the government to engage directly with communities in need.

Impactful innovations must be interdisciplinary and inclusive

The academic world has moved away from the lived reality of small spaces, and there is a need to refocus on the role of small level dynamics in cities. Digital innovation can impact the way urban knowledge is brought to communities and affect the resultant outcomes. Low income neighborhoods are particularly impacted by the negative effects of the digital divide.

Interdisciplinary knowledge is important for planners to be able to speak to the multiplicity of issues at the urban level. Planning also needs to be intercultural.If education is to shift to emphasize the multidisciplinary, this needs to be both in the design of the course, with different experts contributing to its content, and also in the action of the participants, with them being present for all teaching and listening to the learnings of other students. Academics in these spaces should admit what they do not know, and be open to listening to the findings of others.

1.5 Networking Event: From theory to practice - universities and researchers contribute to the NUA

Event Overview

Location	ICC Multifunction Hall Room 11	Participation	Public
Time	30 June, 14:00 - 15:30	No. of attendees	40

Download speakers' presentations

Read the concept note

This event drew together eleven planning school associations under the Global Planning Education Association Network (GPEAN), active UNI institutional partners, other academic and professional networks in the same field, UN-Habitat staff, and representatives from allied international development agencies from both the Global North and South. Panelists shared lessons on what works best to build knowledge and capacity in harmony with UN-Habitat's work, especially through UN-Habitat's Communities of Practice. The audience joined the panelists in identifying promising changes to increase the value added of university and research institution contributions to the work of UN-Habitat.

Objectives

The event sought to bring together diverse stakeholders to discuss new innovative ideas in localizing the New Urban Agenda and enhancing the engagement of academia in the effort, by:

- showcasing and reflecting on the work involving Habitat UNI and other successful UNH-university collaborations, and documenting the impact and best practices for research and capacity building in solving challenges of human settlements globally;
- proposing policy and organizational changes to UNH-university partnerships to strengthen collaborations with universities and other existing academic and professional network in the same space;
- proposing a road map and outcomes until the next WUF while addressing expected future challenges to be met.

Programme

Opening statement
(David Evans, Head of Unit, Capacity Development and Training Unit, UN-Habitat)
(Paulo Silva, GPEAN liaison to UN-Habitat)
(Shipra Narang Suri, Chief, Urban Practices Branch, UN-Habitat)

Linking UN-Habitat and Universities: Report & Discussion
(Michele Acuto, Director of Melbourne Centre for Cities, Associate Dean of Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning, University of Melbourne)
(Raphaelle Vignol, Programme Management Officer, UN-Habitat)
(Rafael Forero, Urban Policy, Governance and Metropolitan Expert, UN-Habitat)
(Lara Kinneir, Design and Urban Futures - Associate Professor, The London Interdisciplinary School)

Good practices in knowledge-based partnerships:
1. Experience in networking German and African Universities for cooperative teaching programs, PhD studies and research
   (Genet Alem, Professor, International Planning Studies, TU Dortmund)

2. Knowledge-based partnership on ongoing work on urban expansion planning in Sub-Saharan Africa
   (Patrick Lamson-Hall, Researcher, International Urban Planner, NYU)

3. Possibilities of cooperation between North and South Universities with the pandemic and interest in online education
   (Roberto Rocco, Associate Professor of Spatial Planning, Delft University of Technology)

4. UNESCO Maghreb office and the Union for the Mediterranean: How universities can work together with local authorities to problems that matter to people, and then scale up the local learning
   (Giulio Verdini, Associate Professor in Urban University Planning, University of Westminster)

Key discussion points

Academia is a key partner in the implementation of NUA

We need to bridge the physical spaces between academic and municipal government institutions. As the world continues to urbanize, we need more trained urban practitioners and universities are important training grounds. However, in universities, there is a gap between what is learned and the skills needed to do the job. UN-Habitat can contribute to closing this gap. On the other hand, what UN-Habitat does not have in human resource capacity, they make up for in their range of partners. This mutual partnership can be leveraged to achieve NUA implementation.

Habitat UNI as a valuable resource and platform for universities and UN-Habitat to collaborate

UNI is a great way to connect across countries with people of like mind. Great for knowledge sharing, including sharing and improving curriculums and teaching, good way to open doors for funding, bringing together universities, civil society and other stakeholders. Practical projects need to be embedded into university courses, and there needs to be more sharing between national and international universities. Academics and researchers are in themselves valuable resources for UN-Habitat to work with. The value in interdisciplinary processes: connections and teaching students how to apply their skills. There is huge future potential for getting the academic research being produced in such abundance into the documents UN-Habitat is producing.

1.6 Wider UNI Steering Committee Meeting

Event Overview

Location	Science and Education Zone, University of Silesia in Katowice	Participation	Habitat UNI partners, UNH Staff, other partner universities within UNH, prospective UNI members
Time	27 June, 17:00 – 19:00	No. of attendees	65

Download speakers' presentations

Read the concept note

In the wake of the analysis of the Linking UN-Habitat and Universities Report, the Habitat UNI Steering Committee has committed to reforming its mandate. The event brought together stakeholders in the initiative to discuss the future of UN-Habitat collaboration with universities. It invited attendees to review and reach a consensus on the repositioning and structural reorganization of Habitat UNI. It also gave an overview to university partners on how to better engage on a substantive and normative level with the work of UN-Habitat and vice versa.

Objectives

- UN-Habitat staff to better understand how to successfully cooperate with Habitat UNI Hubs and university collaborators
- UNI Hubs to gain insight into collaboration pathways
- The new Terms of Reference for UNI to be finetuned based on discussion with stakeholders
- The new Steering Committee membership and structure to be confirmed
- Next steps and responsibilities to be identified

Programme

Opening statement & Presentation on UNI activities
(Bruce Stiftel, Habitat UNI co-chair)
(Sahar Attia, Habitat UNI co-chair)
(Raphaelle Vignol, Capacity Development and Training Unit, UNI secretariat)

UNI Hub Activities 2020-22
(Andres Borthagaray, UNI Hub Urban Form lead)

Reflections on current and the future of UN-Habitat-university collaborations
(Naomi Hoogerverst, Planning, Finance, Economy CoP lead)
(Jean Du Plessis, Land, Housing, Shelter CoP)
(Christine Auclair, External Relations, Strategy, Knowledge and Innovations Division)

Key discussion points

Collaboration pathways for UNI must be clear and simple for it to be attractive

Many universities find it difficult to have an agreement with UN-Habitat. MoUs for example are administratively challenging. Partnerships can also take place with departments instead of with the whole institution as the legal aspect for the latter is complex and can take years. Funding will always be a challenge but there are different modalities of partnership that can work without funding with the network remaining sustainable.

Rethinking UNI's vision can start from reimagining its expected impact

There is a need for a stronger, bottom-up approach to vision and direction shaping and room for informal connections. UNI has the potential to generate new knowledge mixing the practical knowledge of UN-Habitat and the theoretical knowledge from academia. UNI can rethink what impacts it is trying to have, whether impact "on the street", creating projects, or producing research and publications. They must be anchored to SDG 11 and the NUA. They must also leave room to promote the work of universities.

Identified next actions

- Repositioning of UNI within UN-Habitat and mobilization of resources for the sustainability of its operationalization
- Reorganization of UNI's structure such as its hubs to reflect and integrate UN-Habitat's focus areas of work better
- Call for nomination for a new UNI Steering Committee

02

BRIDGING THE CAPACITY GAP

2.1 Background

While many cities have undergone substantial social, economic, spatial, and physical transformation, the human and administrative capacities of municipal/local governments have failed to keep pace. This is particularly true in fragile settings and for intermediate cities and towns, often characterized by high urbanization rates. A recent survey by the Commonwealth Association of Architects pointed out that Commonwealth countries with the highest urbanization rates and which are among the most vulnerable have the lowest number of planning professionals per capita compared to the most urbanized developed countries.

In addition, there is a need to ensure that curriculums and training programmes deliver the right knowledge and practical solutions to respond to the challenges faced by urban practitioners.

This points to a longer-term strategic need to radically reassess capacity building efforts to meet the urgency and scale of the problems at hand. This is exemplified by the need to expand the professional pool of planners through educational programs, while ensuring in the intermediate term that those local governments have improved access to adapted and innovative planning knowledge and practices.

2.2 Building a stakeholders' coalition to bridge the capacity gap: a dialogue on financing and upscaling capacity development programmes

Event overview

Location	UN-Habitat Arena	Participation	Public
Time	28 June, 11:00 - 12:00	No. of attendees	130

Watch recording

Read the concept note

In this event, experts from both the academia and practical field had a dialogue on building a stakeholders' coalition to finance and upscale capacity development programme. The event was hosted by Claudio Acioly, Team Leader and Programme Manager, ACCIONA Engenieria. Six panelists shared their views on the urgency to scale up capacity building programmes, the capacity gap in urban development of cities in commonwealth countries, universities, academic and education's role in filling urban development capacity gap, and regional experience of urban capacity building.

Objectives
- Define and bring capacity-building at the heart of the urban sustainability conversation
- Inform and exchange about UN-habitat capacity-building strategy and concrete mechanisms for its implementation
- Discuss capacity-building gaps and identify priority needs to support sustainable urbanization and resilience; identify ways to keep capacity needs under review
- Build a coalition of partners and donors for global implementation

Programme

Opening statement
(Claudio Acioly, Team Leader and Programme Manager, ACCIONA Engenieria)

1. UN-Habitat perspective on capacity-building: driving a radical shift and leverage impact *(Raphaelle Vignol, UN-Habitat)*

2. Assessing and bridging the capacity gap (Peter Oborn, Commonwealth Association of Architects)

3. Strengthening capacity-building approaches: Academic institutions and innovation for learning
(Gesa Ziemer, UNITAC)
(Bruce Stiftel, Habitat UNI)
(Alexander Jachnow, IHS)

4. Regional perspectives on Capacity-Building needs for practitioners *(Edlam Yemeru, UNECA)*

Table of contents

Key discussion points

Existing gaps and the need to upscale capacity-building programmes

Capacity gap is a combination of individuals lacking skills to understand and implement plans, and institutions being not prepared to provide the space and mechanism for people to perform what they need to do.

Knowledge is of no value unless it is put into practice. There is a tremendous amount of good knowledge produced but not enough application of the knowledge into policies and programmes. The existing capacity building programmes are mostly done in a scattered manner.

For instance, the commonwealth countries are witnessing a rapid urbanization process and there is a serious situation in the countries in terms of lack of urban development capacity, with mismatch between numbers of urban professional and urbanization rate, lack of educational capacity, and weakness in environmental policy making. There is a huge capacity gap, coming with a human resources gap, a data gap, a policy gap, and a finance gap.

Roles of different stakeholders

We need to have good cooperation to keep developed technologies and tools running in the cities. It is important to identify good use cases and match beneficiaries with the right tools. We need to understand the needs of people locally when we do capacity building programmes. We need to tailor to on-the-ground situations because cities are very different. We should institutionalize the knowledge and skills we transfer and build up and make trainees become trainers so that the capacity building work can continue itself.

Universities can play a role as tool makers with a "lab culture", and combine education and technology development. They can make contributions by letting students know what they can do for urban sustainable development. Education and research should support the policy work of sustainable urban development.

National ownership and national institutionalization of urban capacity building and training is key. Building capacities at institutions and at individuals are not always disconnected but sometimes are. There are still problems that relate to hardware and infrastructure when we do capacity building today. It is important to think about how adaptable and flexible capacity building programmes are and what skillsets are really needed to deal with the rapid urbanization.

03

INNOVATIONS IN LEARNING FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

3.1 Background

Although technology has been progressively transforming education worldwide for a number of years, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this transformation. Innovative tools enable the delivery of completely new learning experiences and the dissemination of learning products to a much broader audience. Online learning in particular allows anyone with internet access to gain knowledge and skills outside of the typical classroom or meeting room setting.

In UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan 2020–2023, capacity-building is included as a key enabler to achieve the objective: Sustainable urbanization is advanced as a driver of development and peace, to improve living conditions for all in line with the SDGs.

Increasing our ability to use digital innovation for capacity-building responds to the ongoing global adjustment to new ways of working induced by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as to the broader strategic direction of UN-Habitat and the UN system.

3.2 Innovations in learning for a better urban future: The UN-Habitat Learn platform and the New Urban Agenda Illustrated toolkit

Event overview

Location	UN-Habitat Arena	Participation	Public
Time	28 June, 15:30 - 16:30	No. of attendees	60

▶ **Watch recording**

The event presented and discussed innovative approaches, challenges and opportunities related to digital innovation for capacity-building on urban sustainability. The discussion was based on UN-Habitat's learning platform UN-Habitat Learn as well as the flagship capacity-building toolkit the New Urban Agenda Illustrated, available both as a handbook and an online course in two parts.

Objectives

- Promote UN-Habitat Learn as UN-Habitat's new corporate learning platform, and highlight specific tools on the platform that can be used in capacity-building interventions for sustainable urbanization
- Hold dialogue with stakeholders on how innovative capacity-building and learning approaches can contribute to stronger implementation of the NUA and urban dimensions of the SDGs.
- Launch the NUA illustrated handbook and crash course in 6 languages,
- Discuss further localization of NUA Illustrated toolkit at the regional and national levels

Programme

Panel 1: Digital Innovation for Learning

1. How can innovative capacity-building approaches contribute to strengthening the implementation of the NUA and urban dimensions of the SDGs?

2. How is digital innovation able to change the prospects of education for urban stakeholders in Africa?
   (Hassan Radoine, Mohammed VI University)

3. What are the innovative pathways for lifelong learning that can positively contribute to the capacities of urban decision makers and professionals?
   (Raul Valdez, UNESCO)

Panel 2: NUA illustrated toolkit

1. With regard to the translations of the NUA-Illustrated, what are the next steps for ensuring that the toolkit is accessible to and used by its target audience? Where are the opportunities to scale up its use? *(Sukaina Al-Nasrawi, ESCWA)*

2. What do you think should be the best approach for building capacities on the implementation and monitoring of the New Urban Agenda in your region? *(Horacio Urbano, Centro Urbano)*

Key discussion points

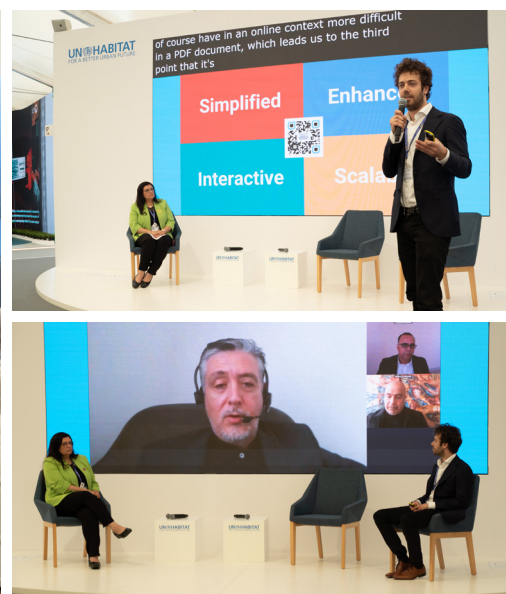### Inclusivity as the driver for digital innovation for learning

Learning doesn't just take place in the classroom. Family and community settings provide different modalities of learning experience which can be considered "informal". The COVID-19 pandemic exposed a greater demand for understanding of these informal learning processes. By placing the learner at the centre of all pedagogical processes, UNESCO moves to implement a culture of life-long learning in which informal learning is recognised as a key piece of the puzzle.

Meanwhile, uploading courses to online platforms is not the final step of democratizing education. As the experience of Mohammed VI University has demonstrated, the new barrier to inclusivity is in fact finding means of connecting people to digital networks so that they too can engage in this new era of smart digital transformation. Where online learning materials can create a gap between the those who have access to the digital sphere and those that don't, it can also help to bridge the gap between physical infrastructure disparity, for example the difficulty of funding the construction of a new university campus in Africa.

Accessibility means availability of content in the language of local authorities

The format and design of the NUA Illustrated is the first step in making a policy document accessible. The next is to ensure that, through translation, people across the urban spectrum are empowered to engage with the subject matter. Translation into the official UN languages is also not sufficient. The exercise should go further by identifying communities who have a barrier to access, such as indigenous communities, and prioritizing the translation into their local languages.

The next step is ensuring that the dissemination and outreach is sufficient that all urban stakeholders can be reached. In many political contexts, the large turnover of local authority staff means that easy access through digital platforms is essential. Furthermore, truly sustainable outreach includes creating partnerships with academia and civil society, as well as advocating for the intersectionality of the NUA by mainstreaming urban issues into wider development conversations.

HABITAT UNI & CAPACITY-BUILDING EVENTS AT WUF11

KATOWICE, POLAND | 26-30 JUNE 2022

UN@HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME
P.O. Box 30030, Nairobi 00100, Kenya
unhabitat-info@un.org
www.unhabitat.org

@UNHABITAT

IMPLEMENTING THE NEW URBAN AGENDA

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES