UN⊕HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

FLAGSHIP PROGRAMME

People-Centered Smart Cities

Building smart cities that truly work for people

The world is rapidly urbanizing. In 2008, the important milestone of more than 50 percent of the world's population living in urban areas was reached, a figure that is estimated to rise to 70 percent by 2050. At the same time, the world is rapidly becoming more digital. Data, artificial intelligence, connectivity and the new digital economy are shaping the future of our societies.

Digital technologies have the potential to serve people, improve public services and working conditions. But persistent digital divides remain, and the digital revolution must be directed and governed in a democratic and inclusive way.

Today, while more than 50 percent of the world's population is online, there are still 3.6 billion people without affordable access to the internet. Among the world's 47 least developed countries, more than 80 per cent of the population is still offline. And the gender gap in connectivity continues to widen.

Only 2 per cent of women in Latin America and the Caribbean and in East Asia and the Pacific own a mobile phone with internet access. Worldwide, some 327 million fewer women than men have a smartphone and can access the mobile internet.

Women are also drastically under-represented in scientific education, information and communications technology jobs, and tech-related academic careers. **Connecting all the world's people by 2030 should be a shared priority, not only for sustainable development, but for gender equality.**

The United Nations is the essential platform where all relevant actors, including governments, along with companies, technical experts and civil society – can come together tow share policy expertise, and explore the possibility of a **Global Commitment on Digital Trust and Security.**

The UN Strategy on Sustainable Urban Development highlights digital transformation and new technologies as one of four frontier issues that require a special, coordinated response. The New Urban Agenda calls for the adoption of "a smart-city approach that makes use of opportunities from digitalization, clean energy and technologies."

In recent years, the smart city topic has grown in importance with many national and local governments across the world embracing this complex and evolving field.

While various approaches and definitions exist, there is a growing consensus that although smart cities are intrinsically linked with urban technologies, they need to be less focused on a narrow technological approach and align closer with national and local strategic priorities, the needs of urban residents, inclusion and human rights considerations and the sustainability ambitions set out in the New Urban Agenda and Agenda 2030.

Programme Goals

The main objective of this flagship programme is to make urban digital transformation work for the benefits of all, driving sustainability, inclusivity and prosperity and the realization of human rights in cities and human settlements.

UN-Habitat **supports governments** in their digital transition, employing a multi-level governance approach and building their skills to utilize digital technologies ethically and inclusively, ensuring no one is excluded.

Another vital task is **global advocacy**, amplifying the voices of marginalized groups like children, youth, older individuals, women in vulnerable situations, people with disabilities, and cities with limited resources in prominent global platforms such as United for Smart Sustainable Cities, Agile and Open Smart Cities, and the Cities for Digital Rights Coalition.

Finally, significant **financing must be mobilized for urban innovation projects** that make a direct positive impact on the planet and on people's lives in cities, prioritizing the Global

South and communities with less access to resources. Investment objectives will be guided by the achievement of higher socio, economic and environmental standards and increasing equality in the standards of living achieved, in line with the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights and the SDGs.

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Regional Projects

Locations implementing people-centered smart cities include: Albania, Brazil; Botswana, Cambodia; Cameroon, China, Colombia, Indonesia, Ireland, France, India, Kenya, Lao PDR, Mexico, Namibia, Netherlands,Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Saudia Arabia

South Africa, Spain, Tanzania, Tirana, Ukraine

Girls use Minecraft to improve safety in their neighbourhood in Hanoi, Vietnam @Lovestrandell

Key Asks

- International guidelines (1M two years)

The UN Secretary-Generals' *Roadmap on Digital Transformation* argues that digital technology has enormous potential for positive change, but can also reinforce and magnify existing fault lines and worsen economic and other inequalities. In recent years, the smart city topic has grown in importance with many national and local governments across the world embracing this complex and evolving field.

National governments are also increasingly taking responsibility for steering smart city development. While various approaches and definitions exist, there is a growing consensus that although smart cities are intrinsically linked with urban technologies, and align closer with national and local strategic priorities, the needs of urban residents, inclusion and human rights considerations and the sustainability ambitions set out in the New Urban Agenda and Agenda 2030.

To realize this, governments need to put in place regulations and policies that govern smart city development, including on issues such as equality and inclusion, interoperability, procurement, public-private partnerships, and issues to do with privacy and security raising from the use of digital platforms and data collection.

- Technical advice to local governments to plan for smart cities (50,000 per city)

An effective smart cities or digital transformation strategy will enable local governments to take control of the digitalization process and ensure that they are proactively engaging with new technologies and establishing the right data governance frameworks.

A growing number of cities around the world are starting to develop these kinds of strategies and we see for example the Barcelona Digital City Plan, the New York Internet Masterplan, the Johannesburg Smart City Strategy and Reimagining Pune: Mission Smart City.

Over the last few years, UN-Habitat has worked with both cities and countries to develop such strategies, for example producing the Rwanda Smart City Masterplan, the Chengdu-High-Tech Zone Smart City Guidelines and smart city strategies for Yangon, Mandalay and Nay Pyi Taw in Myanmar. This work needs to continue and be expanded to many more cities that currently do not have a strategy in place to also create a global community of practice and learning on smart cities.

- Delivering trainings to mayors on people-centered smart cities (100-200,000 per region)

UN-Habitat's research and practical experience show that the capacity of many local governments - including in developed and middle-income countries - to make effective use of new technologies for the benefit of all is often limited. The pace of change in digital technologies is moving so fast that local government officials and leaders cannot keep up, let alone ensure they have an adequately skilled workforce.

Cities and local governments need guidance ranging from digital transformation, procurement and selecting appropriate vendors and technology to the development of appropriate policies related to open data, open standards, interoperability, transparency and privacy.

Recognizing the key issue of capacity building, Member States highlighted in the New Urban Agenda the importance of capacity building programmes, policies and strategies to make ICTs accessible to the public, with a special focus on marginalized groups.
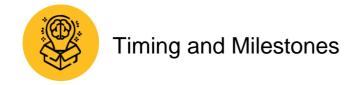
Partnerships and Alliances

UN-Habitat will engage strongly with external actors, including, amongst others, United for Smart Sustainable Cities, the Global Smart Cities Alliance, Smart Africa, Open and Agile Smart Cities and the Cities Coalition for Digital Rights Coalition. Strong partnerships with universities, research institutions and civil society, including organizations representing the urban poor and the private sector will also be established. There is an opportunity for UN-Habitat to take a convening role and bring many of these actors together in a coordinated way that could be further strengthened by the establishment of a smart city reference group.

Partnerships already exist with the following actors: UNDP, OICT, ITU, UNECE, ESCAP, Open Society Foundations, Vinnova, Viable Cities, CAF – Latin American Development Bank, BMZ, the Smart City Expo, Edinburgh Napier University, Hafen City University, MILA – Quebec AI Institure, UNU-EGOV, the Cities Coalition for Digital Rights, EUROCITIES, United Cities and Local Governments, Microsoft, Mojang, ESRI, Challenge Works

Timing and Milestones

This flagship programme is intended to run for at least 8 years and provides an overall umbrella which will include a variety of pilot projects, coordination mechanisms, policy and normative tools, technical advisory services and the financing facility.

2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027

The issues of urban equality, social inclusion, human rights and environmental sustainability are mainstreamed in the global dialogue on smart cities

Investment and financing are directed to inclusive smart cities for accelerated achievement of the SDGs with a specific focus on the developing countries and small and medium size cities

Enhanced capacity among all levels of government to use frontier technologies for inclusion and sustainable urban development.

Budget

The flagship programme, given its scope (global, regional, national and local) and the range of activities, is estimated at around **$30 million USD** over a period of 10 years. UN-Habitat will drive the development, implementation and monitoring of the programme in conjunction with a wide range of credible and experienced partners.

The purpose of the multi-stakeholder digital urban innovation fund and challenge-driven innovation programme is to create a proposition that is sufficiently interesting and relevant for member states and private sector companies to join forces. The aim is to raise **$10 million USD** in funding and get soft commitments of **an additional $1 billion USD** from development banks, philanthropists and private capital that can be invested in identified bankable projects.

A better quality of life for
 all in an urbanizing world

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FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

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