



THE INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATORY CHARTER to Deliver the UN-Habitat New Urban Agenda

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Habitat Professionals Forum in support of UN Habitat

World Urban Forum 2024: Cairo Egypt

CONTEXT OF THE CHARTER

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) asserts the rights to life, health, food, water and sanitation, which are all critically affected by urban development.

The lack of effective civic participation in urban and rural development is resulting in a growing democratic deficit.

The 'doomsday clock' is ticking. Unacceptable territorial inequalities together with human-created and natural disasters threaten all communities, especially disadvantaged and displaced peoples.

There is an urgent need to transform planning and development practices to secure the rights of all people to shape the planning, design, and management of urban and territorial change.

The International Participatory Charter established by the Habitat Professionals Forum (HPF) therefore sets out the Outcomes, Principles and Articles for action that are needed to ensure that the voices of all are heard and acted on in shaping urban and territorial development, regardless of social status, age, gender, or limitations.

OUTCOMES OF THE CHARTER

The application of the principles and articles in the International Participatory Charter will have the following Outcomes in the delivery of urban and territorial strategies, policies, programmes and projects:

- **Promoting effective democracy** by embedding local knowledge, experience and data into policy-making processes as well as strengthening legal frameworks.
- **Promoting social justice, equity, dignity and inclusivity** by ensuring that the voices of all, especially marginalised and vulnerable groups and communities are included, heard, valued, and acted on.
- **Enabling decisions to be better informed contextually** by the input of a greater diversity of perspectives, ideas, experiences and data.
- **Enhancing legitimacy, acceptability, and deliverability** of plans, policies and programmes by supporting and creating
• consensus and accountability, and through localised resolution of dispute and conflict.
- **Increasing the attractiveness** for investment by providing confidence in the longer-term stability and commitment to decisions and ensuing actions.
- **Empowering local communities** to take on responsibilities, and to know, and effectively exercise their human rights, as well as initiating and implementing change, thereby building and maintaining social capital.



PARTICIPATORY PRINCIPLES OF THE CHARTER

Foundational Principles.

Principle 1: Human Rights with Dignity: To protect the inviolable rights of all humans to be treated with dignity.

Principle 2: Ecological Respect: To align with the goal of ensuring harmony, sustainability, and resilience between natural and human environments.

Principle 3: Open Participatory Processes: To establish open, accessible, inclusive, meaningful, measurable and transparent processes whereby people's voices are effectively heard and acted on.

Outcome-Oriented Action Principles

Principle 4: Delivery on Rights to Engage: To embed rights to engage throughout plan and project lifecycles, at varying scales and in diverse forms, with legal mechanisms to guarantee their effectiveness.

Principle 5: Priority Actions for Recovery: To target participatory action where there is the greatest and most immediate need.

Principle 6: Transformative Change: To drive long-term change in behaviours and outcomes.

Context-Sensitive Action

Principle 7: Removing Barriers: To remove barriers within statutory & non-statutory processes for the informed, active, and measurable participation of the community and stakeholders.

Principle 8: Intersectional Interests and Lived Experiences: To embrace and respect plurality of intersecting identities and lived experiences of communities and stakeholders.

Principle 9: Structural and Institutional Differences: To take account of the cultural, legal and social characteristics in participatory arrangements, particularly for engagement between formal and informal settlements.

Evolving Knowledge

Principle 10: Sharing of Knowledge: To ensure equal access to knowledge and information, including harnessing the potential of digital technologies through:

- Spatial databases linked to data observatories and agreed standards and
- Integrated open data frameworks and linked digital tools with public consultation functions.

PURPOSES OF THE CHARTER

Article 1 – Definition: To promote participatory processes which facilitate and guarantee effective decisions, minimise conflicts, balancing interest and rights by identifying the needs and aspirations of all people, and to enhance transparent governance, accountability and local democracy.

Article 2 – Aims: To achieve shared ownership and a common acceptance of strategies, plans, policies legal regulations and programmes of action through collaborative engagement, which will resolve conflicts recognise and guarantee rights, as well as achieve co-produced solutions that serve all.

Article 3 - Building Trust and Hope for Residents of Informal Settlements: In support of the Global Action Plan, upgrading programmes of informal settlements need to go beyond conventional participatory approaches by building capacity for community governance, collective self- advocacy and representation through more local community place-based pathways and resources for engagement, and building trust between authorities and the community, in accord with the Guidelines in Schedule 1 of the Charter.

Article 4 - Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples: Having regard to their historic harm and ongoing exclusion, participatory processes must go beyond the securing of legal rights and provide a voice for them in accord with the United Nation's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and having regard to the Guidelines in Schedule 2 of this Charter.



TRANSFORMATIVE PROCESSES OF THE CHARTER

Article 5 – Involvement and Representation: Participatory processes must go beyond provision of information by raising awareness and enabling effective participation of all from the outset whatever the circumstances, tailored to their specific political, cultural, social and environmental concerns. Action should be taken to redress shortfalls in processes measured against the Benchmarks in Schedules 3 & 4 of the Charter.

Article 6 – Information and Education: Participatory processes must, at all stages, actively foster and provide collective, complete and accessible information, and legally enforceable mechanisms of the right to information and transparency, as well as the means of communication in order to ensure parity in understanding, the capacity to contribute by all, and to redress democratic deficits by applying the Guidelines in Schedule 5 of the Charter.

Article 7 – Operational Rules: Rules of operation must be responsive to local circumstances and place, in relation to the scope and scale of the plans, programmes and projects. The competent public authorities must consult on in advance, in defining and enabling the means by which people or individuals can engage with the legal procedures, and which recognise and guarantee the right to engage, and require it from administrative or judicial authorities.

Article 8 – Access and Expression: There must be respected, comfortable, safe and free choices as to how needs, concerns and opinions can be expressed, and which allow deliberative, multi-modal, and multi- directional exchanges. New technologies should be used where they are available, but they must be fit for purposes.

Article 9 – Continuity: All the participants should be fully enabled and integrally involved not only in the conception and implementation, but also the monitoring and updating of strategies, plans, policies and programmes.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CHARTER

Article 10 – Benchmarking Participatory Practices and Processes: All authorities should benchmark the effectiveness of their practices and processes in terms of the Benchmarks in the Schedules 3 & 4 of the Charter, to identify changes in existing regulatory and legal frameworks needed to redress identified shortfalls.

Article 11 – Relevant Experts: All professionals should acquire skills in facilitating and assessing the representation of participants' arguments and proposals including, for example, engaged tactical urbanism in disaster recovery.

Article 12 – Decision-making Authority: All levels of authority must recognise, guarantee and support participatory planning processes through an understanding of the specific context, communication skills, and technical assistance. All processes should be open, fair by having recourse to an independent appeal process.

Article 13 – Monitoring of the Implementation of the International Participatory Charter:

The HPF, in partnership with UN-Habitat and relevant bodies, will assist in the promotion, implementation and monitoring of the International Participatory Charter and in enabling the dissemination of experience about both good and bad practice.

Article 14 – Rewarding Good Practice: Signatories to the Charter are encouraged to celebrate good practice and encourage exchange of experiences, including awards of excellence in promoting the International Participatory Charter.

Article 15 – Relationship with Other Instruments: The implementation of the Charter must be consistent with the SDGs, the New Urban Agenda and the HPF Roadmap to Recovery, and other international human rights frameworks.

