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**Implementation of the normative and operational activities of
UN-Habitat, including reporting on the programmatic
activities of UN-Habitat in 2024 and the implementation of
UN-Habitat subprogrammes, flagship programmes and
technical cooperation activities**

UN-Habitat capacity-building strategy: implementation plan for the year 2025**

**Information complementing the report of the Executive Director on
normative and operational activities of the United Nations Human
Settlements Programme, including updates on the Ethiopia and Central
America programmes, capacity-development initiatives, urban crises
prevention and response, and activities for the period
July–December 2024 (HSP/EB.2025/6)**

I. Introduction

1. This implementation plan for the year 2025 supports and continues to operationalize the UN-Habitat Capacity Building Strategy for the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda adopted by UN-Habitat's Executive Board at its resumed session of October 2020.
2. The implementation plan for 2025 allows UN-Habitat to identify areas of focus and priority considering the needs as expressed by national and local governments and urban stakeholders and the resources that can be mobilized.
3. The activities highlighted in the implementation plan for the year 2025 aim at continuing and strengthening ongoing capacity development efforts across UN-Habitat, whilst supporting the transition towards the new Strategic Plan for the period 2026-2029. It considers currently available resources and global policy frameworks, mainly, the Pact for the Future, the Global Digital Compact and the Quintet of Change (UN 2.0). The implementation plan is intended to facilitate a forward-looking culture, from development to the transfer of knowledge, taking into consideration present and future generations and the major societal changes and crises of our times. This includes but is not limited to digital and data innovations, their impact on the generation and transfer of information, the application of foresight, evidence-based decision-making and behavioural sciences,

* HSP/EB.2025/1.

** The present document has not been formally edited.

and how all these potentially impact decision making and, consequently, the focus and means of capacity building and learning attention to the governments, local governments, urban professionals and other stakeholders.

4. The expected outcomes and specific objectives of the Strategy remain unchanged. The purpose of the Strategy, which is used to structure the annual Implementation Plan, is two-fold:

(a) Fill the institutional and operational gap within UN-Habitat for greater coordination, coherence and results monitoring of capacity building activities;

(b) Improve the delivery of capacity building services to Member States and local governments and other key urban stakeholders for greater impact and resource efficiency (to address capacity gaps).

II. Prioritization for 2025

A. Expected achievements, challenges and opportunities for the year 2025

5. The report of the Executive Director on Capacity Development (HSP/EB.2025/6) highlights major initiatives and developments which occurred during the period 2020-2024, as follows:

1. Fill the institutional and operational gap for greater coordination, coherence, and monitoring of results

(a) Support provided to strengthen capacity development as a cross-cutting function within UN-Habitat

2. Improve the delivery of capacity development services to Member States, local governments and other key urban stakeholders for greater impact and resource efficiency

(a) Scaling the understanding, implementing and reporting on the New Urban Agenda

(b) Digital innovation for knowledge management and learning offerings

(c) Strategic partnerships, coalition building and advocacy

(d) Building capacities across regions and contexts

6. The report also highlights the main areas of focus needed to sustain positive results and impact in 2025, and transition towards the Strategic Plan 2026-2029, in its third part:

3. Way forward for enhanced capacity development across UN-Habitat programmes

7. The Report by the Executive Director confirms UN-Habitat's intention to continue strengthening its capacity development function across its operations and in support of the agency's strategic priorities. Capacity development activities will continue to further innovation and impact across practices, regions and stakeholder groups, particularly aiming at: Strengthened capacity development as a cross-cutting function; Strengthened partnerships and coalitions; Strengthened innovation, advocacy and forward-looking culture for impact and scale.

8. The detailed Implementation Plan in the table provided further details the focus of activities for the year 2025 whilst reminding the initial proposition made in the 2021 version and underlines targeted activities for continued results and alignment with the ongoing Strategic Planning process.

B. Target groups

9. The focus of the Capacity Building Strategy and Implementation Plan remains on leveraging efforts and synergies to build the capacities of Member States, local governments and urban stakeholders broadly. Efforts shall, however, focus more deliberately on LDCs and fragile settings where the needs for immediate actions and capacity building support are high. In addition, there is a need to boost the internal capacity of UN-Habitat, to make sure that capacity building is systematically used as a key instrument to multiply impact both through UN-Habitat's operational and normative work.

III. Coordination and follow-up

10. The role of the Capacity Development and Training Unit in the Programme Development Branch (Global Solutions Division) is to improve quality control, support coordination, coherence and synergies, the mainstreaming and monitoring of capacity building across the organization, encourage innovation for learning, facilitate new initiatives at country level with potential to be scaled and replicated, and be a well-organized efficient repository of both internal and external best practices.

11. The Unit operates as a hinge between normative and operational activities by guiding further knowledge development and innovations for learning in line with capacity building needs, methods, approaches, and tools. The implementation plan identifies specific approaches, actions and activities to ensure the coherent institutional anchoring of capacity development as a cross-cutting function throughout the agency.

12. The Unit needs a minimum of sufficient human and financial resources for its core team. The current core capacity of the Capacity Development and Training Unit is one P3 (RB) and one P2 (RB). The Head of Unit P5 (RB) and one P2 (YPP – RB) are frozen. With the current capacity, constant prioritization is needed as not all the work can be covered, focusing on strategic elements of the Plan and pilot approaches. The Plan also indicates what can be done if additional resources are mobilized.

Detailed implementation plan – UN-Habitat Capacity Development Strategy (2021–2024)

Actions for implementation
2025 activities and focus

1	Objective: Fill the institutional and operational gap within UN-Habitat for greater coordination, coherence, and monitoring of results	
1.1	Institutional anchoring of capacity building as a cross-cutting function to enable effective horizontal and vertical coordination and collaboration and incrementally broaden scope, outreach and quality of the capacity building services delivered by UN-Habitat	
1.1.1	Coordinated corporate messaging, adapted approaches and skills that support mainstreaming of capacity building and learning throughout UN-Habitat's work	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine and mainstream capacity building objectives and good practices throughout UN-Habitat's work: production of internal guidelines and organization of internal workshops • Develop the capacity building component of an agency-wide knowledge management system to strengthen knowledge, create, adapt, and maintain capacity of UN-Habitat staff and their offices 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continued efforts on knowledge management and coordination of capacity building, including through the Capacity Development Community of Practice meetings, the internal helpdesk, and the continued scale-up of the UN-Habitat Learn platform as UN-Habitat “one stop shop” for accessing key learning products aligned with the New Urban Agenda transformative commitments. [INCREASED PRIORITY]
1.1.2	Policy and guidance for the establishment of capacity building as a cross-cutting function in project development and implementation	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designation of capacity building focal points in sections/units of UN-Habitat • Set up processes and establish standards: assign clear functions, staffing, resources and protocols across the agency in order to ensure effective cross-sector and cross-branch collaboration • Ensure a harmonized agency-wide capacity building portfolio and prepare a program of backstopping and engagement focusing on initiatives that can have a catalytic strategic value: map demand for capacity building and initiatives already earmarked/programmed under the yearly work programme and sub-programmes of UN-Habitat specifying the specific thematic areas, targets and types of tools. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Further institutionalization of the capacity development function, particularly as a key component of one of the five proposed means of implementation of the draft Strategic Plan [INCREASED PRIORITY]
1.1.3	Capacity building requirements to facilitate project assessment and approval and ensure coherence throughout the different activities of the agency	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of capacity building markers into programme development and Project Review Committee processes 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Continued strengthening of capacity building as a cross-cutting function in project development and implementation, including through Project Review Committee. Can be scaled through the mobilization of dedicated capacity. [INCREASED PRIORITY]
1.1.4	Capacity Development and Training Unit fully operational and coordinates the effective implementation of the Strategy, with perspective for growth to support the "Center of excellence" function of the agency	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource mobilization to expand the team of the CDTU • Feasibility study to explore how the Capacity Building and Training Unit can further develop into a virtual center of excellence, known and recognized both internally as externally, scaled in line with capacity building needs expressed by Member States 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Prioritize unfreezing the frozen Regular Budget P2, in line with growing corporate prioritization 5. Aim to fill in the JPO position 6. Resource mobilization continues through In-House Agreements, project development and strategic partnerships. After 4 years of development of the UN-Habitat Learn Platform, <i>the feasibility study needs to be expanded to a full scale-up feasibility study and needs to be prioritized and projectized. It shall focus on scaling up the UN-Habitat Learn Platform, identifying opportunities for sustained and strategic development, both in content and infrastructure, for more outreach and impact</i>

<i>Actions for implementation</i>	<i>2025 activities and focus</i>
1.2 Development and implementation of consistent, integrated and long-term capacity building programs that can be monitored on their results over time	
1.2.1 Day-to-day support provided to the capacity building component of programme development agency-wide to implement a consistent and coordinated approach	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support all requests from programme managers from headquarters, regional and country offices related to capacity building and keep track of needs and upcoming initiatives or projects • Integrate efficient capacity building components into UN-Habitat's flagships and other global programmes to leverage and sustain activities and impact 	<p>7. Agency-wide engagement continues in 2025 as staff time permits</p> <p>8. Alignment and strengthening of tools development in line with new strategic priorities</p>
1.2.2 Consistent monitoring of capacity building objectives and activities set up at the programme development level	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize internal training sessions on capacity-building with the support of specialized training institutions • Set-up processes for systematic information sharing between project leads and the Capacity Development Training Unit • Engage in discussions with relevant sections and focal points to identify areas of collaboration as well as capacity building needs according to the objectives of each programme • Support coherent development of capacity building within the sub-programmes 	<p>9. Continued engagement in programme development on a demand basis. A more systematic, anticipated and comprehensive engagement requires additional resources.</p> <p>10. Updated mapping of ongoing and future learning activities across the agency, at headquarters and in the regions, through the helpdesk and community of practice meetings</p>
1.2.3 Corporate capacity building offering identified and easily accessible agency-wide to develop and deliver programs	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and promote good practices and methods in capacity building • Review and assess the potential of normative products, for example tools and guidance notes, to support the needed capacity building activities • Build and maintain a database of existing capacity building services and tools, and advise on the needs and opportunities for the development of new tools 	<p>11. Continued mapping of tools and good practices through the internal helpdesk, the Capacity Development Community of Practice and other Communities of Practice</p> <p>12. Identify gaps in core high impact knowledge and capacity development tools in line with the impact areas of the new Strategic Plan and in line with a renewed strategic narrative [INCREASED PRIORITY]</p> <p>13. Continued digital transformation of main guidance and normative products, aligned with the transformative commitments of the New Urban Agenda and strategic priorities (Housing, Land and Basic Services): identify high-impact methodologies and innovations to be scaled-up [INCREASED PRIORITY]</p>
2 Objective: Improve the delivery of capacity building services to Member States and local governments and other key urban stakeholders for greater impact and resource efficiency (to address capacity gaps)	
2.1 Capacity building "Suite of services" developed, widely disseminated and available to partners and beneficiaries	
2.1.1 Keep capacity needs under constant review to focus on where the greatest impact can be achieved	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase collaboration with the regions including the Regional Economic Commissions • Set up a mechanism to keep track and map capacity building needs (Capacity Building Needs Database) 	<p>14. Continued engagement with Regional Economic Commissions and other key regional stakeholders, including on the implementation, monitoring and reporting on the NUA</p> <p>15. The survey on Capacity Building needs is conducted on an annual basis across the organization.</p>

<i>Actions for implementation</i>	<i>2025 activities and focus</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthened innovation, advocacy and forward-looking culture for impact and scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Targeted research and projects are ongoing to improve methodologies to identify capacity building and skills gaps and results will be shared in 2025 This includes: - Development of analysis papers with the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies to advance capacity building methods: Paper 1 – Development of a Competency Framework Methodology for urban sustainability; 2- Analysis of the SDG Cities Diagnostic tool <p>16. Pilot testing of a competency framework approach in three countries (LDCs) for urban and climate resilience (UNDA Project 2025-2027; Budget: USD 750 000) [INCREASED PRIORITY]</p> <p>17. Build UN 2.0 Capabilities at UN-Habitat and across knowledge, methodologies and tools: develop briefing notes on the pillars of the UN 2.0 to advance UN 2.0 capabilities across UN-Habitat’s work and programming (Forward looking culture, Innovation, Foresight, Behavioral sciences, Digital and Data Innovations); This will support the Culture change process and systematic framing and integration of strategic innovations in the process of conceptualizing and implementing programmes and activities. Internal Communities of Practice will be considered. [INCREASED PRIORITY]</p> <p>18. Strengthened innovation in knowledge and capacity building also suggests the identification and integration of high-impact approaches related to social innovation, such as Community-led Collaborative Urbanism, Place-making, (etc.) and pilot civil society/academia-led initiatives to support accelerated sharing of knowledge and practices, including through universities and students as local changemakers;</p>
2.1.2 Optimize existing capacity building tools and leverage digital innovation for capacity building	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify existing and up-to-date capacity-building tools throughout the organization which can be enhanced and further disseminated • Coordinate the development of e-learning products and integration to a broader agency-wide digital strategy • Further assess the potential of technology and innovation in the planning, design and implementation of online capacity building activities • Identify and align existing or ongoing e-learning products, map experiences, learn from their results, unfold technical viability, and ensure articulation with existing related initiatives at UN-Habitat • Pilot different approaches to digital capacity building • Agency-wide Digital Strategy integrates online learning and digitization of specific tools and strengthens coordination throughout the agency to maximize knowledge management for capacity building and digital presence 	<p>19. Continues in line with strategic priorities for 2026-2029. Strengthen and scale-up digitalization and the ‘UN-Habitat Learn’ platform: improve structure, review content and identify gaps in themes, priorities and opportunities in line with the above and upcoming Strategic Plan. Further development of online capacity building tools [INCREASED PRIORITY]</p> <p>20. Maintenance and further development of the Online Management System (“UN-Habitat Learn” Platform) launched in 2021</p> <p>21. Continued pilot initiatives and innovations for capacity building and learning, including the exploration of AI for learning; Enhance the knowledge and learning dimension of the agency’s Digitalization Strategy</p> <p>22. Continue strategic partnerships with UN organizations, such as United Nations University, UNDESA, ICTILO, UNSSC and other major partners in capacity building and learning at the UN and across key partner groups</p>

<i>Actions for implementation</i>	<i>2025 activities and focus</i>
2.1.3 Adapt or complete capacity building and training packages to develop and maintain a full capacity building corporate package / suite of services	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with regional and country offices to identify priority areas for capacity building • Match identified capacity gaps with priority development of capacity building tools at UN-Habitat • Develop a global capacity building programme to seek funding for the development of new tools and update of existing tools: Preparation of a project document developed through a consultative and inclusive process which includes dialogue with the Executive Board and units and branches across UN-Habitat 	<p>23. Continued and strengthened connection between normative knowledge, capacity development and programmatic activities, including through the Means of Implementation of the new Strategic Plan [INCREASED PRIORITY]</p> <p>24. Continued pilot initiatives, projects and partnerships to advance measuring and monitoring capacity gaps at the local and global levels, leading to the production of methodologies and guidelines designed to accelerate targeted capacity development initiatives</p>
2.2 Cross-cutting capacity-building approach implemented as outlined in the UN system-wide Strategy on sustainable urban development	
2.2.1 As a core UN function, capacity building is further prioritized as part of (sub-) regional and country level programs and designed as sustained systemic efforts that accompany work in key thematic areas	
<p>The roll out of the UN system-wide Strategy on Sustainable Urban Development, Common Country Analysis and the elaboration of United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks offers concrete opportunities to ensure integration of capacity building in a coordinated manner with other UN agencies. Focus is needed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building requirements related to urban data to provide strong evidence base and understand the interrelations among global agendas, goals and targets • Strengthen the domestic resource mobilization potential, the fiscal capacity and the development of strong and accountable institutions and mechanisms for participatory governance • Support the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals • Increase consultations and collaboration with regional and country offices to optimize UN-Habitat's contribution to country level strategic programming through capacity building 	<p>25. Development of learning materials to strengthen the urban dimension of UNSDCFs and Common Country Analysis (potential partnership with the United Nations System Staff Colleagues and DCO)</p> <p>26. Enhanced learning toolkits on the SDG Localization process in connection with UN-Habitat Strategic Plan</p> <p>27. Tailored support to regions and countries depending on resources available</p> <p>28. Continued efforts to develop capacity development materials for the implementation and monitoring of the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs</p>
2.2.2 Capacity building for urban data to provide strong evidence base and understand the interrelations among global agendas, goals and targets	
<p>Strengthen corporate level capacity building efforts related to urban data</p>	<p>29. Further development of learning materials supporting the use of data, data innovation and people-centered smart cities [INCREASED PRIORITY]</p>
2.2.3 Strengthen partnerships with UN learning and training organizations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish long-term cooperation programmes with UNSSC, UNITAR, UNU, etc. 	<p>30. Continue and strengthen engagement with UNSSC, ITCILO, UNITAR, the UNU and other relevant knowledge and learning organizations, including think tanks and local governments networks</p>

<i>Actions for implementation</i>	<i>2025 activities and focus</i>
2.3 Strengthened engagement with training institutions and universities	
2.3.1 Expanded and coordinated collaboration with universities worldwide	
<p>Dissemination and utilization of UN-Habitat’s normative and operational tools and instruments in curricular activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with research, joint research ventures, technology and innovation hubs for capacity building, e-learning, webinars as well as UN-Habitat certified pedagogical products • Design an open call for universities to express interest in specific thematic areas of capacity building where they fit and can provide strong services in thematic areas linked to the NUA, SDG11 and the Strategic Plan. • Design a UN-Habitat Chairs Programme for Sustainable Urbanization to lead the development of regular learning, teaching and research on relevant thematic issues related to global urbanization, including curriculum, modules, extra-curricular activities 	<p>31. Continued support to a coordinated engagement with academia, including through the implementation of a University Partnerships Framework across the agency</p> <p>32. Creation of Advisory expert groups to advance the five strategic dimensions of the University Partnership Framework and develop a detailed action plan</p> <p>33. Coordination of the UN-Habitat UNI network and Roadmap to coordinate engagement with universities towards WUF; Continued mapping and strategic analysis of engagement with knowledge institutions across the organization</p> <p><i>Note: further engagement with research, joint research ventures, technology and innovation hubs for capacity building requires additional resources</i></p>
2.3.2 Support regional and sub-regional centers of excellence and UN-Habitat offices	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map training institutions, their profile, capabilities, strengths and areas of capacity building service provision and prepare an expert group meeting to define common agendas and develop joint projects. Conduct an in-house inventory of institutions that are or have worked with the different units of UN-Habitat, including Regional Offices. This includes but is not limited to the engagement of national centers to create domestic capacity in the developing world, which should generate locally implemented processes to strengthen capacity of cities, local and national governments. • Within the framework of the Global Programme (2.1.3), engage these institutions in a partnership agreement based on an open competitive call for expression of interest to develop, fund raise and implement national, regional, and global capacity building activities in support of the implementation of the NUA and SDG11. • Continuing direct implementation of projects of regional or sub-regional Centers of Excellence 	<p>34. Continued support to ongoing collaborations with Centers of Excellence and the delivery of training programmes in the regions</p> <p>This includes: the WAEMU Center of Excellence on Housing (West Africa). A UNDA 15 Project is ongoing (2023-2025), with the aim to leverage key methodologies and capacity building tools to strengthen capacities in the francophone LDCs; The multi-year partnership with the International Urban Training Center in Korea continues with the delivery of 6 trainings</p> <p><i>Note: Additional support is deprioritized in the absence of additional resources in 2025</i></p>
2.4 Build broad coalitions to mobilize the necessary capacities and resources to maximize impact, leverage and scale the capacity building efforts in line with the capacity needs to ensure sustainable urbanization and the achievement of the urban dimension of the SDGs	
2.4.1 Priority and leverage partnerships with global, regional and national city networks and institutions engaged in urban-related issues and capacity building	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders’ engagement and partnership and funding strategy • Produce a targeted and result-based capacity building process that would support countries and cities to align their local policies with the NUA and the SDG11, helping them to prepare their Voluntary Local Reviews • Design a global coalition for capacity building focusing on city leaders e.g. mayors, city managers, senior executives to support the implementation of the NUA and the SDG11, including resource mobilization 	<p>35. Existing initiatives and partnerships will be continued including through the capacity building dimension of the SDG Localization and preparations for the NUA mid-term reviews</p> <p><i>Note: Additional support is deprioritized in the absence of additional resources in 2025</i></p>

*Actions for implementation**2025 activities and focus*

- Creation of a NUA Champions initiative with an initial call for applications sent to networks identified, whereby selected interested cities, based on demonstrated commitment to urban sustainable practices, need for capacity building, geographical and income-level diversity, will receive a year-long capacity support from UN-Habitat. This may include invitations to exclusive tailored workshops for mayors and city leaders during major UN-Habitat convening events, access to webinars on emerging topics, 1-to-1 expert online sessions, as well as access to information sharing across cities through a dedicated platform that can be hosted on the NUA Platform. These cities will be expected to replicate the lessons learned through their departments and relevant networks as well as share positive practices and the propositions of the New Urban Agenda

2.4.2 North-South, South-South and Triangular Cooperation

- Promote North-South and South-South cooperation in education, research and capacity building through exchange of educational programs, secondment, dual-degree programs, joint research, and create centers of excellence and innovation at the regional or sub-regional levels. This can be part of the global programme for capacity building

Note: Deprioritized in the absence of additional resources in 2025

2.4.3 Increase private sector participation, mobilize their expertise, knowledge, human capital and additional funding for capacity building, establish forms of contractual relations for the design, plan, delivery, follow-up and monitor of capacity building programs.

- Standardized guidelines to outline the ways of UN-Habitat engagement with private sector in capacity building, including but not limited to partnership models that can be used for expanding this strategic focus.
- Undertake an inventory of private sector engagement within UN-Habitat, across the various units, branches and regional offices, assess potentials and limitations, including lessons learned and recommendations
- Enlarge and consolidate ongoing partnership with Arcadis, now completing its 10th year anniversary and structure it as a role model that links capacity building and follow-up technical assistance jointly implemented

Note: Deprioritized in the absence of additional resources in 2025

2.4.4 Engage with NGOs, people-centered institutions for capacity building, and community professional groups with experience in the provision of technical assistance

- Create a database of capacity building partners and urban trainers from community groups and non-governmental organizations to facilitate exchange and partnerships in various stages of the project cycle, as well as response to capacity building needs at the local levels
- Organize a global meeting to gather the community of non-governmental organizations that have a track-record of working with urban communities and with local and national governments (focused on SP Impact areas)
- Development of standardized guidelines for UN-Habitat engagement with non-governmental and community sectors in capacity building, including both UN-Habitat accredited and not-accredited members. The guidelines should contain the respective procedures for establishing new partnerships in-house but also

Note: Deprioritized in the absence of additional resources in 2025

<i>Actions for implementation</i>	<i>2025 activities and focus</i>
step-by-step checklists for maximization of the partnership opportunities in the full project cycle	
2.4.5 Support Member States in their efforts to mobilize human and financial resources to develop and implement capacity building programmes (Cf. Resolution)	
Hold a capacity development “financing dialogue” at the World Urban Forum	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support the definition of projects of urban focused training institutions (centers of excellence) upon demand of Member States• Scale the financing of capacity building, in particular in developing countries and fragile settings, reviewing different sources to finance and leverage capacity building efforts.• Sub-regional or country level capacity building assessments and financing dialogues	<i>Note: Deprioritized in the absence of additional resources in 2025</i>
