Livelihoods Improvement of Urban Poor Communities Project

Submitted By: Onushongo.Bangladesh



Organization Profile

Organization Name: UNDP

Organization Type: United Nations entity

Website: https://www.undp.org/bangladesh/projects/livelihoods-improvement-urban-poor-communities-project

Practice Details

Country(ies): Bangladesh

City(ies): Chandpur, Kushtia, Noakhali, Gopalganj, Rangpur

Start Year: 2020 **Ongoing:** Yes **End Year:** N/A

Main Adequate Housing Components:



Housing Thematic Areas:

- Housing Affordability & Financing
- Housing Rights & Social Inclusion
- Housing & Climate Adaptation
- Housing, Land & Spatial Planning

Relevant SDGs:



UN-HABITAT

Problem & Context

Bangladesh's rapid urbanization has led to severe land scarcity, unsafe informal settlements, and growing climate risks from floods, heat, and cyclones. Housing inadequacy is acute in both cities and secondary towns, where millions of low-income migrants face high construction costs, soaring rents, and no tenure security. Nearly half of urban dwellers live in poor-quality or temporary structures. Despite national commitments under SDG 11 and the Housing Policy to provide affordable, resilient homes by 2030, the housing backlog has expanded—from 1.13 million (2001) to 4.6 million (2010). Public housing remains costly and inaccessible to the poorest. Onushongo Bangladesh addresses these structural gaps through co-designed, low-cost, climate-resilient housing integrated with service cores, accessibility, and micro-infrastructure—complementing UNDP's LIUPCP initiative to reduce urban poverty and enhance resilience.

Solution Developed

Onushongo Bangladesh delivers a comprehensive and replicable housing framework encompassing digital site surveys, socio-economic profiling, participatory co-design, DPP/government guideline compliance, and full construction tender and BOQ documentation. The model emphasizes cost reduction through locally produced hollow blocks , prefabricated metal-frame doors and windows, and optimized spans that improve cross-ventilation and increase usable floor area by around 8%. Each design preserves traditional community courts or uthaan while integrating rainwater and greywater recycling, composting, stormwater drainage, and solar-ready roofs for long-term sustainability. Accessibility standards—such as ramps, barrier-free entries, and adjustable fixtures—are embedded at ground-floor levels. The program prioritizes low-income households in Gopalganj and Rangpur, as well as municipal sweepers and Horijon communities in Chandpur, Gopalganj, and Kushtia, with special attention to women-led and climate-vulnerable families.

Implementation

Actions. The project follows a structured and participatory process: (1) digital and physical site appraisals to assess land, drainage, and existing infrastructure; (2) focus group discussions and community mapping to understand needs and vulnerabilities; (3) concept and massing development with service cores and climate-adaptive layouts; (4) unit prototyping and cost optimization using hollow blocks, prefabricated components, and efficient spans; (5) alignment with DPP and government standards; (6) construction quality control and vendor coordination; and (7) post-handover training for operation and maintenance.

Actors & Roles. Onushongo Bangladesh leads architectural design, research, BOQ preparation, and vendor quality assurance. Municipalities provide land, approve designs, and oversee vendor selection. The Livelihoods Improvement of Urban Poor Communities Project (LIUPCP)—

implemented by UNDP in partnership with the Local Government Division (LGD)—executes the housing initiatives through local municipalities. Community organizations validate needs, promote inclusivity, and support local labour, while contractors carry out construction.

Timeline. 2020–2025, covering design, municipal coordination, and phased construction.

Resources/Financing & Partnerships. Funded by the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and implemented by UNDP under the LIUPCP framework, with land provided by municipalities and beneficiaries selected through community-based processes.

Enablers & Obstacles

Enablers. Strong institutional collaboration between UNDP, LGD, and local municipalities under the LIUPCP framework has enabled smooth project delivery and policy alignment. The use of community co-design, digital site assessment, and locally produced hollow blocks reduced both costs and construction time. Municipal land allocation, standardized design templates, and prefabricated components further accelerated implementation. Technical support from Onushongo Bangladesh and community engagement ensured inclusivity, accessibility, and cultural relevance.

Obstacles. Key challenges include fluctuating material prices, limited contractor skills in using new materials, and delays in municipal approvals. Some resistance emerged from communities regarding relocation and land tenure. These were mitigated through phased construction, hands-on technical supervision, and extensive stakeholder consultation to maintain trust and ensure quality delivery within cost targets.

Results & Impact

The Onushongo–UNDP collaboration under the LIUPCP program has made measurable progress in delivering affordable and climate-resilient housing across secondary cities of Bangladesh—Gopalganj, Chandpur, Kushtia, Noakhali, and Rangpur. To date, 646 units have been completed, directly benefiting over 600 low-income households, including municipal sweepers, Horijon communities, and women-led families. According to the masterplan, a total of 1,214 units will be delivered upon full implementation, with clusters planned as follows: Gopalganj (336), Chandpur (264), Kushtia (210), Noakhali (170), and Rangpur (234).

Each site integrates climate-adaptive measures such as elevated plinths, proper drainage, and improved ventilation to reduce vulnerability to floods and heat stress. In Noakhali, during last year's flash floods, beneficiaries took shelter in the under-construction buildings—an event that revealed the resilience and security these homes provide, fostering deep community trust.

Beyond structural resilience, the designs emphasize cultural continuity through shared uthaan spaces, accessibility for persons with disabilities, and local participation in construction. Together, these interventions enhance dignity, safety, and long-term adaptive capacity—showing

how inclusive design can bridge poverty reduction and climate resilience in Bangladesh's urban housing landscape.

Replication & Scale Up

The housing practice has been successfully replicated across Gopalganj, Chandpur, Kushtia, Noakhali and Rangpur, under the UNDP-implemented LIUPCP program. Replication was enabled by a standardized, low-cost, and climate-resilient design framework, strong coordination between UNDP, LGD, and municipalities, and active community co-design. The adaptable model's affordability, cultural relevance, and proven flood-resilient performance encouraged adoption in multiple urban contexts.

The practice can be scaled up through nationwide adoption by municipalities under the LIUPCP framework, using standardized design toolkits, prefab component libraries, and cost-efficient materials. Integration into national housing policy and DPP templates, combined with GoB–UNDP collaboration and community-led construction models, will enable rapid replication, lower costs, and expand access to climate-resilient housing for low-income urban populations.

Policy Uptake

This housing practice has informed or been partially integrated into policy discussions, strategies, or pilot-level policy instruments.

Onushongo packages are aligning with DPP and implemented under LIUPCP municipal partnerships (e.g., Gopalganj, Chandpur), informing standards on climate-resilient low-cost housing and service integration for urban poor. Recommend formal adoption of the component library (hollow-block walls, prefab frames, universal access) into municipal by-laws and LGD circulars for rapid replication.

Lessons & Takeaways

Co-design and micro-infrastructure matter as much as cost efficiency. Early vendor engagement reduces delays and ensures quality. Standardized details—such as doors, windows, and hollow blocks—yield the most savings when pre-approved citywide. Future iterations should strengthen operation and maintenance training and explore small-scale housing finance to ease post-handover challenges and support long-term sustainability.