

# Socially Inclusive National Urban Policies

## *A Guide*



UN-HABITAT





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## Foreword

I am pleased to introduce the Guide on 'Socially Inclusive National Urban Policy (NUP)' prepared by UN-Habitat's Policy and Legislation Section. In the spirit of driving goal of the United Nations to 'Leave No One Behind', this guide proposes a practical approach and tools for Member States to adopt when undertaking a National Urban Policy process to support the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and SDG 11.

The 'Socially Inclusive National Urban Policy' Guide suggests how national and local governments can mainstream social inclusion in the National Urban Policy process, including the Feasibility, Diagnosis, Formulation, Implementation, and Monitoring and Evaluation phases, and through the three pillars of participation, capacity development and acupuncture projects. The approach considers social inclusion issues from the perspective of persons with disabilities, young people, women, older persons, and marginalized or vulnerable communities. It encourages the use of a human rights based

approach and mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment aspects. A number of case studies from across the world highlight inspiring practices on social inclusion in affordable and inclusive housing for all, and national urban policy and urbanization processes linking closely to the goals and targets of SDG 11 and aspirations of the New Urban Agenda

We believe the recommendations in this guide will be valuable for leaders in national and local governments and institutions, for urban experts and policy makers in the private and public sectors and community leaders and organizers. It seeks to help them take conscious steps to achieve more inclusive, integrated, and sustainable urban development processes and to overcome the negative externalities of rapid urbanization.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Raf Tuts', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

**Raf Tuts,**  
Director, Global Solutions  
Division, UN-Habitat

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## List of Acronyms

<b>AFINUA</b>	Action Framework for the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda
<b>AGRUPAR</b>	Participatory Urban Agriculture, Ecuador
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>CRPD</b>	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<b>CS</b>	Cabinet Secretary
<b>EGMs</b>	Expert Group Meetings
<b>GC</b>	Governing Council
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>GIS</b>	Geographic Information System
<b>GPEDC</b>	Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation
<b>GSNUP</b>	Global State of National Urban Policy
<b>HRBA</b>	Human Rights-Based Approach
<b>ICED</b>	International Centre for Evidence in Disability
<b>ILO</b>	International Labor Organization
<b>ITU</b>	International Telecommunication Unit
<b>LNOB</b>	Leaving No One Behind
<b>MDGs</b>	Millenium Development Goals
<b>NCPWD</b>	National Council for Persons with Disabilities, Kenya
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Governmental Organizations
<b>NUA</b>	New Urban Agenda
<b>NUP</b>	National Urban Policy
<b>NUPP</b>	National Urban Policy Programme
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SMART</b>	Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic Time-bound
<b>SNUPs</b>	Sub-National Urban Policies
<b>SWOT</b>	Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats
<b>UDHR</b>	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
<b>UNDESA</b>	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
<b>UN-Habitat</b>	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

<b>UNHRC</b>	United Nations Human Rights Council
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
<b>UNRISD</b>	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
<b>UNOPS</b>	United Nations Office for Project Services
<b>UNOSD</b>	United Nations Office for Sustainable Development
<b>UNSDG</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Group
<b>VLRs</b>	Voluntary Local Reviews
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

# Glossary of terms



## Acupuncture projects

Quick-win projects that utilize entry points with a ripple effect upstream and downstream, throughout dynamic, and interrelated economic, social, or environmental systems. They are also known as demonstration projects.



## Jua kali sector

Refers to the informal sector generally in Kenya, where small-scale business owners operate along the streets or open shops. This constitutes about 83% of the private sector working population in Kenyan economy (ILO, 2022).



## National Urban Policy (NUP)

a coherent set of decisions derived through a deliberate government-led process of coordinating and rallying various actors from a common vision and goal that will promote more transformative, productive, inclusive, and resilient urban development for the long term.



## New Urban Agenda (NUA)

The NUA was the negotiated outcome of the 2016 UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development in Quito, Ecuador (Habitat III) with emphasis on integrated urban and territorial planning and development.



## NUP Phases

The five phases of NUPs are feasibility, diagnosis, formulation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. These are done continuously in an iterative process.



## NUP Pillars

The three pillars of NUP include participation, capacity development, and acupuncture projects.



## Social Inclusion

The process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for the marginalized population groups, excluded and marginalized, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice, and respect for rights (United Nations, 2016). Inclusion ensures that every individual benefits from prosperity brought about by achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by enjoying the minimum standards of living.



## Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The SDGs are a central part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development launched in 2015 to succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This guide focuses on how socially inclusive NUPs lead to realization of the global goal for sustainable, resilient, safe cities and communities (SDG 11) while linking it to the other sixteen (16) SDGs.

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## Executive Summary

This guide is mainly addressed to local, national, and global leaders as well as policymakers, urban experts, civil society and other actors in the public and private sectors to support them in mainstreaming social inclusion in the urbanization process.

The guide illustrates how social inclusion, embedded in the National Urban Policy (NUP) process (Feasibility, Diagnosis, Formulation, Implementation, and Monitoring and Evaluation), and through the three NUP pillars (participation, capacity development and acupuncture projects) can contribute to a more integrated, inclusive and sustainable urbanization strategy. This is in line with the New Urban Agenda (NUA), and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11- Sustainable Cities and Communities, as well as the overall SDGs, which emphasize 'Leaving No One Behind' (LNOB).

Urbanization remains a megatrend in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with 68% of the population projected to live in urban cities and communities by 2050 (UNDESA, 2023). Social inclusion thus constitutes an essential fabric of the urbanization process as the life of a city or community is determined by the people in it. Member States, therefore, mandated UN-Habitat to address social inclusion through NUP towards the implementation of the NUA.

This, therefore, includes development and dissemination of socially inclusive policy approaches to sufficiently address the

challenges of integration and inclusion in a world currently facing rapid urbanization.

Social inclusion advocates for the need to integrate perspectives of all city and community residents, especially those most at risk of exclusion, throughout the NUP process. From the 2024 edition of the Global State of NUP report, 62 out of the 78 countries surveyed across the globe have a NUP in place (UN-Habitat & OECD, 2024). In addition, only 63% of the 62 countries have explicit NUPs and less than 50% of the surveyed countries have policies and structures addressing social inclusion issues. As Member States approach the mid-term review on progress made on NUA, social inclusion takes the centre stage as a means of implementation for UN-Habitat's new strategic plan 2026-2029 and catalyst to achieving SDG 11 through NUA.

This guide therefore gives a quick overview of selected social inclusion approaches with case studies from various countries and how they can be incorporated throughout the NUP process.

Building on the gap to address inclusion in urban development from the GSNUP report, this guide aims to help Member States through various levels of government to ensure that their national and subnational urban policies integrate/mainstream gender-responsive and human rights-based approaches towards the realisation of social inclusion.

This mainstreaming process supports Member States to build and maintain sustainable, resilient, safe, inclusive cities and human settlements. The main themes of social inclusion addressed in this guide include; the human rights-based approach (HRBA), persons with disabilities, women and girls, young people, and older persons.

The guide presents case studies and good practices on how different countries have mainstreamed social inclusion in various urban development initiatives to implement their urban policies in collaboration with the communities, and various national and international partners.

These categories are not exhaustive due to the broad social inclusion perspectives across the globe hence, Member States can contextualize the guide to respond to their needs and priorities.

Through the key questions and recommendations for each NUP phase and pillar, including the selected case examples, and a **ten-step recommendation**, the guide hopes to better enable Member States to mainstream social inclusion in their urban policies and by extension achieve key global policy frameworks like the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), New Urban Agenda (NUA), Sendai Framework for Disaster and Risk Reduction, and the Paris Agreement.



# 1. SECTION ONE



## 1.1. INTRODUCTION

The negative impacts of today's rapid urbanization are evident, especially in the global South. This manifests through rapidly growing informal settlements and slums, impacts of climate change, and increasing inequalities due to restricted access to or unavailability of urban basic services such as transport, water and sanitation, and access to healthcare. This emphasizes the need to position socially inclusive approaches as important to the achievement of sustainable development, towards ensuring no one is left behind.

Today's rapid urbanization is a significant development problem and if not well managed, a worrying phenomenon. It needs careful consideration, especially in terms of the ability to predict its intended and unintended consequences while looking at the resultant positive and negative impacts. Well planned

and managed urbanization transform cities and communities into livable spaces making them safer, inclusive, resilient, and healthier. Hence, urban planning and governance at both city and community levels must not merely focus on spatial, economic, social organization or structure but equally on progressively achieving an adequate standard of living for all – a right enshrined in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948).

International human rights standards further recognize the right to equality and non-discrimination, as per, for example, Article 2 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights that states that everyone "is entitled to all the rights and freedoms without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, place of birth or other

status.” To address intersectionality and how different characteristics related to a person’s identity can lead to compounding exclusion and discrimination, the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda has taken pledge to ensure ‘no one is left behind’ and to ‘reach the furthest behind first’ in the sustainable development process.

Though traditionally considered the responsibility of the national government, the role of cities in the promotion, protection and fulfillment of human rights is increasingly being recognized at all levels. For example, the United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 45/7 illustrates “that, given its proximity to people and being at the grass-roots level, one of the important functions of local government is to provide public services that address local needs and priorities related to the realization of human rights at the local level” (UNHRC, 2020). The Quito Declaration point 5 and commitment 14 also emphasize the need for concerted efforts by Member States to readdress how cities and human settlements are planned, designed, financed, managed, and governed to promote inclusive sustainable urbanization (NUA, 2016).

“Professionals, local, and national officials in collaboration with the people need to do a better job managing this planet of cities over the next decades by being more deliberate and employing more dynamic strategies, effectively translating policies to impactful actions.

The next half century represents humanity with the last and only opportunity to get urbanization right. As we welcome hundreds

of millions of people into our cities in the coming decades, there is a growing demand to use the best tools to craft them into the cities that people, and the planet need” (Angel et.al. 2016)

The NUP codifies governments’ strategies to shape urbanization through structured, long-term frameworks. Indeed, NUPs should be part of “our best tools”, considering their potential to be a transformative catalyst to engage diverse groups co-existing in urban, peri-urban, and rural areas towards socially inclusive cities and communities for sustainable and inclusive urban development. NUPs support governments to shape sustainable urbanization while aligning with global development agenda (Kundu et.al., 2020).

As cities become central to fulfilling human rights, failure to address social inclusion problems through a coordinated urban policy risk not only failing to deliver on the SDGs but also further entrenching existing inequalities that leave parts of the city population excluded. For example, rising inequalities, inadequate housing conditions, increasing gender-based violence (GBV) and the proliferation of informal settlements should be understood as symptoms of a larger deficit in the realization of human rights in cities and communities and a failure of public policy.

As such, NUPs must be inclusive and based on the right of equality and non-discrimination for all in order to contribute to the implementation of the SDGs. To achieve such a policy, the process of developing it must equally be inclusive and participatory.

Only when those most at risk of being excluded get an opportunity to participate in urban decision-making will NUPs truly have contributed to leaving no one behind.

This thematic guide therefore illustrates how to develop socially inclusive, gender responsive and human rights based NUPs, not only in terms of the final urban policy, but also in the process of developing and implementing it.

This document is divided into three main parts:



1. The first part gives a quick overview of key principles of social inclusion in relation to NUPs and NUA. It further explains how socially inclusive NUPs/SNUPs contribute to UN-Habitat strategic plan 2026-2029, NUA, and SDGs. The section highlights the various perspectives through which social inclusion can be integrated in NUPs for more sustainable, human rights-based and gender-responsive cities and communities.



2. The second section presents approaches for implementing social inclusion through the five phases and three pillars of the NUP process. It answers the 'how' of socially inclusive, human rights-based and gender responsive NUPs using demonstration of projects and case examples from selected countries across the globe. The section suggests key questions and recommendations to be considered by various stakeholders for mainstreaming social inclusion in NUPs/SNUPs



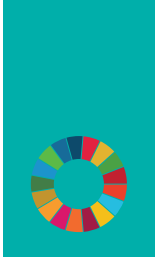
3. The third and final part contains key recommendations and takeaways on the present situation concerning social inclusion based on the first two sections. It further expounds how such findings can be best applied to realize maximum possible benefits of socially inclusive NUPs for sustainable urbanization. The third section also provides a quick checklist and ten quick steps that stakeholders and policy makers can use to guide in mainstreaming social inclusion in their respective NUPs/SNUPs.

The annex highlights statistical extracts from the third edition of the Global State of National Urban Policy (GSNUP) on how and the extent to which Member States have incorporated various social inclusion aspects into their urban policies (UN-Habitat & OECD, 2024).

### 1.1.1. Objectives of the Guide

This guide's objective is to support Member States to develop socially inclusive strategies and mainstream them in their NUPs. A socially inclusive NUP should enable countries to adopt approaches towards sustainable, human

rights-based and gender responsive cities and communities. This document is expected to serve as a normative guide in formulating and implementing socially inclusive urban policies.



## 1.2. THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDAS



### 1.2.1. Socially Inclusive NUP and the Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Building on the principle of “leaving no one behind” and grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights treaties, the SDGs emphasize a holistic approach to achieving sustainable development for all.

The concept of Leave No One Behind (LNOB) is the central, transformative commitment of the 2030 Agenda. “It represents the unequivocal commitment of all UN Member States to eradicate poverty in all its forms, end discrimination and exclusion, and reduce the inequalities and vulnerabilities that leave people behind and undermine the potential of individuals and of humanity as a whole,” (UNSDG, 2024). As such, LNOB involves addressing discrimination, exclusion and inequalities (recognizing that these may be multiple, compounding and intersecting) and their root causes at all levels – from international to local level.

At local levels, LNOB recognizes that being unable to, for example, access services and participate in local-level decision-making is often not simply due to unavailability of services and processes, but a result of barriers certain persons or groups face through discriminatory laws, policies and social practices. If unaddressed, these will leave those marginalized further and further behind and thus undermine the entire Agenda 2030.

The pending task is to deliver the SDGs, for everyone, in every country and every city. SDG 11 aims to “Make cities and human settlements safe, inclusive, resilient and sustainable.” Action at all planning levels is required to successfully meet this objective. The transformative power of urbanization cannot be ignored as it has a positive ripple effect on achievement of other SDGs while upholding the human rights and social inclusion aspect in each dimension.

A socially inclusive NUP contributes to the SDGs both directly and indirectly. For instance, it will directly impact SDG 11 by ensuring that cities and communities develop in a manner that is inclusive and thus is human rights-based, gender responsive, resilient, safe, and sustainable.

SDG targets and indicators like 11.2 and 11.7 place special focus on marginalized groups, children, women, and older persons. SDG target 11.3 expressly highlights commitment to ‘enhance inclusive and



sustainable urbanization and capacity to realize participatory and integrated human settlement planning and management (UN-Habitat, 2016). Other SDGs directly supported by socially inclusive NUP include SDG 3, 5, 10, 15, and 17.

On the other hand, effective implementation of a socially inclusive NUP will indirectly accelerate achievement of SDGs 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, and 16. This is simplified in the image and table below;



**Figure 1:** Social inclusion and SDGs

**Source:** Author’s analysis, 2025

SDGs	Description of how Socially Inclusive NUP contributes to the SDG
<b>Direct Link</b>	
	<p>Participatory advocacy and education during NUP process</p> <p>Reduced inequalities in healthcare services through inclusive policies</p> <p>Reduced mortality rates related to pregnancies and childbirth in cities and communities</p>
	<p>Reduced spatial inequalities, increased participation, capacity building, and acupuncture projects help achieve gender responsive cities by empowering women and girls and addressing structural inequalities that exclude them.</p>

	By extension, a focus on intersectional participation for all will ensure that children and youth as well as marginalized groups can engage for inclusive, sustainable urbanization
	Adopting socially inclusive NUP aims to reduce inequalities at national and local levels
	Socially inclusive NUPs contribute to achieving sustainable, inclusive, resilient, and safe cities through all the indicators of SDG 11.
	Socially inclusive NUPs ensure a participatory engagement in terrestrial ecosystem on land management at local and national levels
	Effective implementation of socially inclusive NUP requires partnerships with all stakeholders at local, national, regional, and global levels to achieve the SDGs.
<b>Indirect Link</b>	
	Improved access to basic services counters extreme poverty Creation of more employment opportunities improves purchasing power of residents in cities and communities
	Policies promoting sustainable agriculture, linking urban and rural areas to ensure food security
	Socially inclusive capacity development programmes on urban policies at national and sub-national levels
	Socially inclusive NUPs will support provision of quality water and sanitation services to all inhabitants of cities and communities (acupuncture projects).
	Socially inclusive NUP contributes to improved access to reliable, affordable, sustainable energy
	Reduced social inequalities through socially inclusive NUP will advance inclusive economic growth. Equal opportunities in employment and decision making for all in society cultivates decent work environment for all (NUP pillars)

	<p>Participatory and inclusive infrastructural development. Residents in cities and communities contribute to innovative infrastructural solutions</p>
	<p>Through socially inclusive NUP, the population is aware of value of resources at their disposal and are guided on responsible consumption.</p>
	<p>Acupuncture projects in implementing socially inclusive NUP help mitigate the effects of climate change</p>
	<p>Socially inclusive NUP helps cities and communities conserve aquatic life which is a source of livelihood to a large population globally.</p>
	<p>Socially inclusive NUP indirectly addresses structural inequalities Effective monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation ensures accountability of respective institutions and stakeholders</p>

**Table 1.** Linking Socially Inclusive NUP and SDGs



### 1.2.2. Socially Inclusive NUP and The New Urban Agenda

During the Habitat III conference in 2016 in Quito Ecuador, Member States agreed that realization of SDG 11 and other SDGs within the remaining timeframe requires more concerted efforts in improving existing planning, implementation, and governance processes related to urbanization. This led to the adoption of the New Urban Agenda (NUA), which presents a paradigm shift on how to better plan and manage cities thus making urbanization a dependable tool for sustainable development across the globe.

NUPs is one of the key five pillars for implementing the NUA as member States committed to:

“Establish legal and policy frameworks, based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination, to enhance the ability of Governments to effectively implement NUPs as appropriate, and to empower them as policymakers and decision makers, ensuring appropriate fiscal, political and administrative decentralization based on the principle of subsidiarity.” (NUA, 2016, paragraph 89).

Furthermore, NUA acknowledges the leading role of national governments and the importance of engaging relevant stakeholders such as sub-national and local governments as well as civil societies, avoiding a top-down approach (15.b).

The NUA specifically highlights NUPs as important for achieving sustainable urban development, particularly in the following paragraphs: 15(b), 15(c) i, 21, 87, 130 and 149 (UN-Habitat, 2017).

The NUA calls on leaders to consider the needs of marginalized groups, including ‘Women, youth, children, persons with disabilities, marginalized groups, older persons, Indigenous Peoples, among other groups.’ In this regard, the New Urban Agenda calls for ensuring sustainable and inclusive urban economies and as such, recognize the central role of national governments in implementing effective and inclusive urban policies (NUA, 2016).

The NUA showcases a framework of achieving sustainable and inclusive urbanization through specific core dimensions and means of implementation alongside continuous monitoring and reporting. Social inclusion therefore advances social sustainability, which compliments the economic, environmental, and spatial dimensions. NUP on the other hand plays a pivotal role as a NUA means of implementation by addressing how the various social inclusion perspectives are integrated in the urbanization process.

Statistics show that over 75% of the world cities and urban centers have grown more unequally in the last two decades (UN-Habitat, 2023). There is evidence of increased urban poverty and spatial inequalities especially in the emerging and developing economies. Poorly planned cities without NUPs face multiple risks like poor infrastructure, insecurity, and

competition between metropolitan areas which can result in overcrowding and delays in service delivery vandalism, and further inequalities.

The 2021 report on Global State of NUP notes that NUP thus remains a key to sustainable urban and territorial development, creating inclusive cities (OECD/UN-Habitat/UNOPS, 2021).

The NUA also highlights the shared vision of ‘cities for all, referring to the equal use and enjoyment of cities and human settlements, seeking to promote inclusivity and ensure that all inhabitants, of present and future generations, enjoy the benefits of urbanization without discrimination of any kind’ (par 11). Throughout the Agenda there is consistent highlighting of the importance of socially inclusive policymaking and programming, particularly targeting women, youth and children, low-income groups, the older persons, persons with disabilities and other minorities.

To successfully implement the New Urban Agenda, UN-Habitat proposes following a holistic approach. Socially inclusive NUPs will ensure the realization of the ‘NUA’s objectives not only at national and local level, but also at the grassroot levels by fostering sustainable development that promotes women’s empowerment and gender responsiveness, the progressive realization of the right to an adequate standard of living and shared prosperity for all through active participation of all parts of the different communities throughout all the five NUP phases.



## & SOCIAL INCLUSION

### 01

#### The core dimensions of the new Urban Agenda transformative commitments



##### Social sustainability

Empowerment of marginalized groups  
Gender equality

Planning for migrants, ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities

Age-responsive planning



##### Economic sustainability

Job creation and livelihoods  
Productivity and competitiveness



##### Environmental sustainability

Biodiversity and ecosystem conservation

Resilience and adaptation to climate change

Climate change mitigation



##### Spatial sustainability

Spatial sustainability and equity

Spatial sustainability and urban density

### 02

#### Means of implementation



##### Intervention mechanisms

National urban policies

Land policies

Housing and slum upgrading policies

Urban legislation and regulations

Urban design

Municipal finance

Urban governance



##### Hard measures for infrastructure and services

Transport and mobility

Energy

Solid waste

Water and sanitation



##### Soft measures

Culture

Education

Health

Urban safety



##### Technology and innovation

Technology

Transportation

Construction and building technology

Mapping and spatial data

### 03

#### Monitoring and reporting



##### Global governance and means of implementation

Global governance

Mobilization of financial resources

Capacity development, knowledge exchange and partnerships



##### The New Urban Agenda and the urban dimensions of the SDGs



##### Monitoring and reporting

Guidelines for reporting

Monitoring framework

Urban Agenda online Platform



##### UN-Habitat's role in driving the New Urban Agenda

UN-Habitat Assembly and governance structure

The World Urban Forum

Figure 2: NUA and social inclusion

Source: UN-Habitat, 2016



### 1.2.3. Socially Inclusive NUP and the UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2026-2029

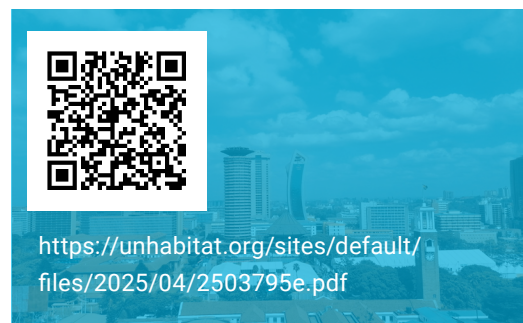
Development and implementation of socially inclusive urban policies will equally enable achievement of UN-Habitat Strategic Plan (UNHSP) (2026-2029). UNHSP highlights that, in all means of implementation, special attention must be given to “eliminating all forms of racial discrimination and empowering women and girls, children and young people, older persons and persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and local communities, refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants, in particular the poorest and those in vulnerable situations who are disproportionately affected by the global housing crisis and other urbanization-related hardships,” (UN-Habitat, 2025) By ensuring inclusion of the various groups highlighted in this guide in the NUP process, stakeholders will fast track realization of the first Impact Area ‘equitable and inclusive prosperity for poverty eradication’ at national and local levels. This in the long run will enhance development of functional institutional frameworks to reduce inequalities. By addressing aspects like affordable housing, equitable and sustainable land use, NUPs will resolve to a great extent, key inclusion focus areas like health and education thus creating a society where everyone thrives.

Socially inclusive NUPs will also support realization of the other Impact Areas of the Strategic Plan through proactive response and reconstruction to humanitarian crisis, climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Socially inclusive NUPs play a crucial role in fast tracking the UNHSP’s Means of Implementation and Outcomes in two direct ways. First, implementation of socially inclusive NUPs through the process and pillars embody meaningful engagement of all stakeholders thus promoting participatory multi-level governance and localization of SDGs alongside local development agenda for the country or territory in question.

Secondly, availability of disaggregated data and strengthening stakeholder capacity through NUP pillars will contribute to the third Outcome Area.

This includes improved knowledge and capacities for evidence-based, innovative policies on adequate housing, land, and basic services for all. On the other hand, socially inclusive NUPs will strengthen partnerships and coalitions by increasing awareness on key components of urban basic services, land and housing and harness effective resource mobilization.





## 1.3. THE GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK AND LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND



### 1.3.1. An Overview of the Basics of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Human Rights Framework and Treaties

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948 is the foundation of the international human rights framework. Resulting from different legal and cultural backgrounds from across the world, it is the first document of its kind that sets out fundamental human rights, applicable to everyone, everywhere, to be universally protected.

It sets out important international norms such as the right to be free from discrimination (Article 1), and the right to an adequate standard of living (Article 25). Many of these norms have subsequently been codified by international treaties that are legally binding on the States that have ratified them or where the contents of the relevant provisions have been accepted as customary international law. Out of the nine core international human rights instruments, particularly noteworthy for this guide is the International Covenant on

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Article 11 sets out the components of the right to an adequate standard of living (UN, 1967).

Its monitoring mechanism, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, has, over the years, issued important interpretations and guidance on States' obligations under Article 11, such as on Land and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (General Comment No. 26), the Right to Adequate Housing (General Comments 4 and 7). The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women condemns "discrimination against women in all of its forms" (Article 2) and demands for States to guarantee women's equality through law "and other appropriate means".

The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes, for example, the "right of the child to participate fully in cultural aspects of their life" (Article 31), while Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities guarantees, among other rights, equality, and effective participation and inclusion in society for persons with disabilities (Article 3).

It must be noted that all human rights are indivisible and interdependent, thus one set of rights cannot be enjoyed without the other being in place.



### 1.3.2. Localizing Human Rights: From the National to the Local Level

Governments have the primary responsibility to respect, protect and fulfill human rights. This essentially means that the obligations of national governments are three-fold, namely, to respect human rights by refraining from interfering with their enjoyment; to protect individuals and groups from human rights violations including by third parties; and to take positive action to achieve access to human rights (UNOSD, 2023).

At the same time, a “whole-of-government-approach” is essential to ensure the respect, protection, and fulfillment of human rights at all levels (UNOSD, 2023). As such, the role of cities and local authorities has been increasingly recognized in the international human rights framework.

Local authorities are often those closest to rightsholders and act as the first point of contact for human rights concerns. They are also often most aware of local challenges impeding the realization of human rights, for example, in the context of an adequate standard of living, including adequate housing, as well as other rights, such as education and health care.

Local authorities thus have a critical role in upholding and implementing human rights obligations and principles, for example, through local laws, policies and programmes, including human rights action plans, impact assessment and human rights monitoring. Well-developed, socially inclusive NUPs and SNUPs have the potential to transform access to the enjoyment of human rights for all at the local and national levels as shown throughout this document. This includes, from protecting populations from human rights violations such as forced evictions, to fulfilling human rights standards by, for example, ensuring adequate housing for the most marginalized while supporting sustainable urbanization.





## 1.4. SOCIAL INCLUSION

Social inclusion is defined as the ‘process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for the disadvantaged and marginalized, by enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for human rights.’ (UN, 2016).

In practice and in the context of NUPs, social inclusion means equality and non-discrimination, i.e. ensuring that every person, regardless of, for example, gender, age, disability, religion, race, ethnicity, migration status, socio-economic status, etc. has an equal voice and opportunity to participate in urban governance and planning.

Furthermore, city residents must have equal access to the benefits of urbanization. This includes education, employment, public transport, basic services such as healthcare and sanitation, public space, and other social amenities.

As such, both the development process of NUPs, and the NUPs themselves, must be inclusive. As NUPs become a significant urbanization tool for national and sub-national governments, they must be developed, implemented, and evaluated in consultation with the people. These consultations, ‘like through urban youth councils, participatory designs, feasibility and diagnosis surveys, and validation workshops must include all groups of society, and as such, must be:



Meaningful and evidence-based, not symbolic



Well-advertised in relevant languages to accommodate everyone



Held both online and in person



Regular and iterative, not a one-off process



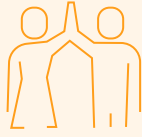
Accessible to all (both in terms of physical and technical accessibility, translated in local languages, and providing a space where the marginalized can effectively contribute)



Held in various locations of a country



Incorporates capacity building initiatives to ensure all can contribute



### 1.4.1. Why Social Inclusion?

Social inclusion plays three pivotal roles as an outcome and a process. First, engaging all stakeholders translates into increased buy-in of the final policy by the local community as well as local and national government (UNRISD, 2019). Secondly, inclusion from the onset of policy formulation ensures that different needs, experiences, knowledge and local solutions are considered on how best to implement urbanization-related policies to fit the cultural and social context of an area. In the long run, social inclusion fosters the policy's chances to realize expected output as resources are congruent to needs, and the partners and urban communities are ready to execute, maintain, and scale-up executed projects.

The third role is that social inclusion is essential to promoting a sense of belonging in cities and urban communities, thus improving social cohesion, which is highly relevant for development work because it demands that research and policy reflect context-specific societal dimensions, as well as analysis of both individual and social factors.

To improve social inclusion, social exclusion needs to be measured first. In terms of data for evidence-based urban decision-making, the marginalized are often excluded from

household surveys and other data gathering exercises, as they may be living in informal settlements, working in the informal sector or are fearful of engagement with authorities due to, for example, their migration status. The risk is that the needs and experiences of such groups are often invisible to the local authorities, who, in turn, are unable to address their urban concerns, for instance on access to urban basic services.

Notably, the multidimensional, intersectional nature of social inclusion coupled with inadequate standard data across the globe makes it difficult to measure. Stakeholders thus need to collect and use more updated, and quality disaggregated data to give a clearer picture of the extent of social exclusion and inequalities in cities and communities. Disaggregated data is essential therefore, at identifying gaps caused by exclusion and thus enable policy makers and stakeholders to make informed decisions on where to invest more resources and capacities (OECD et.al., 2021). For instance, to ensure the inclusion of women in city leadership and city-level decision-making, there is still a large gap in the availability of quality data measuring different aspects of exclusion and discrimination. Without sufficient high-quality and disaggregated statistics, the different intersectional factors that can lead to for example, women being excluded will remain invisible, thus more difficult to address and remedy. For more information on data gathering, please see [GuidanceNoteonApproachtoData.pdf\(ohchr.org\)](#).



## 1.5. NATIONAL URBAN POLICY (NUP) FRAMEWORK

NUP is an integral component of UN-Habitat's strategy for sustainable urbanization. This is supported by UN-Habitat Governing Council resolution HSP/GC/24/L.6 which requested the development of guiding frameworks for the development of NUP (where appropriate) to further support Member States when developing and improving their urban policies (UN-Habitat, 2013).

**NUP is defined as a coherent set of decisions derived through a deliberate government-led process of coordinating and rallying various actors for a common vision and goal that will promote more transformative, productive, inclusive and resilient urban development for the long term** (UN-Habitat, 2014).

A national urban policy is both a process and an outcome that harnesses the dynamics of cities and urbanization. It sets the principles from which urban policy interventions are formulated, and implementation is conceived. It results from a clear strategy and effective coordination between policies that affect national territorial concerns across and supranational scales. (UN, 2016)

The NUP therefore embodies an integrated transformative approach to countries on their urbanization process, to direct and manage urbanization.

It recognizes the central role of social inclusion in eradicating poverty, addressing urban inequalities, as well as urban policy making (UN-Habitat, 2018).

One of the key NUP roles is to support the alignment of multi-sectoral policies to develop compact, connected, integrated, and inclusive cities (Kundu et al., 2020). To benefit the entire city population, everyone should be included to achieve sustainable, inclusive, human rights-based, gender responsive, safe and resilient cities.

ANUP also has a key role in connecting all levels of governments and other stakeholders to co-create a shared urban development vision and move jointly towards the implementation and achievement of the international development agendas.

With active engagement at the different planning levels and with the relevant stakeholders, and a coordinated effort from the national level government through the NUP process, provides one of the best opportunities for the development of a nation-wide urban development plan (UN-Habitat & OECD, 2024). Social inclusion in the NUP can be achieved in various ways, which will be detailed in the later sections of this document.

UN-Habitat has conceptualized the process of NUP into five key phases, through all of which social inclusion should occur from an intersectional perspective.

The NUP phases are feasibility, diagnostic, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. However, the process should not be linear but iterative and cyclical, in which stages overlap and are intrinsically interconnected. OECD's diagnostic framework on NUPs also assesses the degree of policy coherence with respect to five areas including money, places, connections, people and institutions (OECD, 2016).

Throughout the NUP process, and at each, there are three core pillars: participation, capacity building and acupuncture projects. An intersectional perspective in the NUP process addresses inequalities in cities and communities (UN-Habitat, 2018). These are key crosscutting elements in the development of a NUP.



**Figure 3:** National Urban Policy process

Source : UN-Habitat (2015)



## 1.6. SOCIAL INCLUSION PERSPECTIVES IN CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Cities are made up of diverse communities and groups of people, all of whom have equal rights to participate in urban life. To achieve an inclusive city, each of these groups must have their voices heard and their priorities equitably considered. A comprehensive NUP process should be preceded by a thorough human rights and gender analysis, accessibility audit, to understand where most effort is needed to overcome entrenched exclusions and persistent barriers to ensure that everyone, especially those most at risk of being marginalized, can participate (Biswas 2019).

Indeed, inclusion is about promoting growth with equity where everyone, regardless of their economic status, disability, gender, race, age, ethnicity, religion or other such factors is enabled and empowered to fully participate in the social, economic and political opportunities that cities can offer (UN-Habitat, 2015). This section briefly discusses some prominent social inclusion perspectives, focusing on case studies from selected countries across the globe. These perspectives apply globally and can be locally contextualized.



### 1.6.1. A human rights-based approach

“The human rights-based approach (HRBA) is a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. It seeks to analyze inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress and often result in groups of people being left behind” (UNSDG, 2024).

As such, all of the following examples of human rights and inclusion are not mutually exclusive. These examples use a human rights-based approach with different nuances based on the specific human rights and social inclusion needs in the relevant context.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948, while legally non-binding, gives a guideline upon which all other human rights standards are based, including, for example, the International Covenant on Civil

and Political Rights (1976), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976) and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) (see section 1.3. on the international human rights framework above for more details on this). Grounded in the principles set out by these standards and treaties, the New Urban Agenda aims to promote greater inclusion, leveraging the role of cities and local governments, as framed in SDG 11 on inclusive and sustainable cities.

Integrating social inclusion when implementing NUPs will contribute to the fulfillment of human rights as well as the achievement of the SDGs. Specific rights whose progressive achievement an inclusive NUP process and final NUP document can support include, for example, the right to equality and non-discrimination as well as participation, the right to an adequate standard of living (including the right to adequate housing) and the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

As such, ensuring social inclusion means policies are created and geared to equality and non-discrimination for everyone irrespective of their race, gender, age, social status, migration status, and other factors that could contribute to intersectional exclusion and discrimination.

For NUPs, the aim of a human rights-based approach includes engaging cities, municipalities and local governments to address laws, policies and practices related to the exclusion of marginalized communities and persons as a human rights issue, with values-oriented lenses, advocating policy reforms, community engagement, informed by national human rights obligations and priorities.

Recent research indicates that cities and communities striving towards urban equality perform better on nearly every measurable health and social indicator than those at best taking no action towards addressing inequality or at worst using human rights-blind policies that exacerbate existing inequalities (UN-Habitat, 2023).



## CASE STUDY 1

### Lebanon: Tripoli

Source: UN-Habitat, 2023



View of Tripoli, the second-largest city in Lebanon © Leonid Andronov/ AdobeStock

## **Tripoli, Lebanon's most marginalized city, sees positive impact of basic services**

Tripoli ranks as one of the Lebanese cities with highest poverty rates while Syrian and Palestinian refugees constitute a large population. In 2021, the government of Lebanon partnered with UN-Habitat and Swiss Agency for development to improve living conditions and basic services for both refugees and hosts in Badawi and Mina municipalities. The rehabilitation exercise has led to improved security especially for women through lighting, accessible and inclusive public spaces for open dialogue among residents.

This inclusive space caters for children, older persons and persons with disabilities. Additional houses have also offered shelter to the marginalized while meeting basic needs and boosting economic development through the revamping of Lebanese traditional heritage. All these activities, with over 100,000 beneficiaries, promoted increased access for residents to enjoy their human rights in the city of Tripoli.

Transformation of old Mina Municipality, Lebanon after completion of the project to improve urban basic services © UN-Habitat



## 1.6.2. Persons with disabilities

Persons with disabilities are people experiencing long term sensory, psychosocial, physical, intellectual, and other impairments which in turn impact their ability to effectively and fully participate in society on equal and competitive grounds with others (UN Disability Inclusive Communication Guide, 2021). According to the World Health Organization (WHO) global report on disability, over 15% of the global population live with some form of disability, out of which about 4% experience extreme functional difficulties (2023). Evidence shows that persons with disabilities face barriers to core social activities and services targeted by social protection projects, including health and rehabilitation, education, livelihoods and political participation. Additionally, women and girls with disabilities are disproportionately impacted. The key international standard for the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities is the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which acknowledges the diversities in human beings and emphasizes the need to consider diversity in human experience through disability in policy development and implementation (UN, 2006). Developing policies which promote equal opportunities for persons with disabilities are vital to this overall goal.

To protect the rights of persons with disabilities and ensuring their participation in urban life, one measure countries such as Peru and Kenya are using is cash transfers programmes that specifically target persons with disabilities in situations of marginalization.

In Kenya for example, households living in extreme poverty that include persons with disabilities receive a monthly financial support through the '*Inua Jamii Initiative*'.

Other than the social cost and the negative impact on groups and individuals, lack of inclusion harms cities' entire economy because human capital cannot achieve its full potential in overall productivity. When national economic productivity suffers, governments are forced to increase spending and lose tax revenues at the same time. Excluding people with disabilities from any areas of life results in significant economic costs. For example, having a disability inclusive prevention and care plan for non-communicable diseases has the potential to give a global return of \$10 on every 1\$ spent globally (WHO, 2023). In addition, the economy of Bangladesh loses an estimated \$ 54 million per year due to a lack of education for persons with disabilities and their care givers (ICED, 2014).

Social inclusion and human rights-based and gender responsive approaches to NUPs enable persons with disabilities to participate in urban decision-making processes and, as pointed out above, inclusive, participatory cities mean better cities for all. Social inclusion in this context can be ensured by organizing local and national forums where

persons with disabilities share their thoughts on how to better implement the NUP process in the cities, as well as consulting with persons with disabilities to ensure that NUP events and discussions, as well as the final outcome document are accessible to persons with disabilities.

Saran et. al. concluded that effective interventions to improve social inclusion initiatives among persons with disability have significant effect in improving the quality of life in cities and communities (2023). Consultation outcomes should be actively implemented and not just remain theoretical.



### Online registration service for persons with disability

In November 2023, the government of Kenya through the National Council for Persons with Disability (NCPWD), launched a new online disability registration service on the e-Citizen platform.

This was a move aimed at establishing inclusive service delivery promotion of human rights awareness for people living with disabilities in the country towards NUA and SDG 11. In this context, persons living with disability can register online and access all government services without having to visit the local and national government offices in person.



### 1.6.3. Gender equality and equity perspective

Aside from being a human rights violation, gender inequality costs sub-Saharan Africa \$340 billion while the world losses about \$160 trillion in human capital wealth annually (World Bank, 2018). On the other hand, addressing gender inequality could add \$4 trillion to the global economy.

The report estimates that 1% increase in gender inequality reduces a country's human development index by 0.77%. In addition, research indicates gender inequalities especially women is a major challenge for sustainable cities and communities with only two of the eighteen indicators of SDG 5 on gender equality met as of 2024 (UNDESA, 2024). For instance, Inter-American Development Bank report notes three major forms of gender inequalities in cities.

These include gender-sensitive urban planning, unequal political accessibility limiting women participation in key decision-making arena at local and national levels, and discriminative legal and cultural practices (Libertun de Duren et al., 2020). As previously mentioned, urbanization must be gender responsive to be considered inclusive and sustainable. This means, for example, ensuring that all women and girls and those at risk of exclusion due to their gender or sexual identity can meaningfully participate in the urban decision-making that shapes their

lives, but it also means addressing the power structures and barriers that keep women and girls stuck in situations of inequality and marginalization.

As such, NUPs must go beyond traditional urban planning to include, human rights and gender concerns, including, for example, spatial inequality, unequal distribution of resources, unequal access to property ownership, limited access to leadership opportunities for some parts and some positions in the community, women working in the informal sector outside of formal labour protection laws and regulations, and policies especially in the offices and power in households and cities (Elson & Seth, 2019). To implement inclusive national urban policies, gender equality and women's empowerment must be considered throughout the urban development process.

In addition, increased social inclusion and gender equality in the urban setting needs a more strategic direction and focused effort through acupuncture projects. This is because acupuncture projects give residents a more practical approach towards implementing socially inclusive policies in cities and communities.

UN-Habitat is adept at working in challenging environments and offers a range of services. The overall goal is to assist governments and other actors in turning policy statements on gender and social inclusion into actions that promote equality and inclusive growth in cities and communities. A good example is the demonstration project implemented to action policies of Niger State, I.R. Iran, Myanmar under the K-NUPP programme.



**CASE STUDY 3**

**Palestine: Gaza strip**

Source: UN-Habitat, 2021



Youth and women groups use Minecraft to design public space in Khan Younis city – Palestine © UN-Habitat .

## **Palestine**

In 2021, the youth in Gaza strip, Palestine used Minecraft to design inclusive and safe public spaces for women in Al-Mawasi area. This was done through HAYA joint programme, a collaboration between UN-Habitat and the housing council of the State of Palestine aimed at ending violence against women through education and interventions. This programme reflects substantive engagement of youths in promoting the security of women in the community thus enhancing gender equality in building safe, inclusive, and resilient cities.



#### 1.6.4. Youth and children

The population of youth<sup>1</sup> today hits a record high, totaling nearly three billion, almost half of the total global population; 1.3 billion of this total is between the age of 12 and 24 (UN, 2024). These young people live, by and large, in cities and towns. The cities of the global south account for over 90% of the world's urban growth, and children account for a large percentage of those inhabitants. It is estimated that as many as 60% of all urban dwellers will be under the age of 18 by 2030 (UN-Habitat, 2015).

Children<sup>2</sup> and youth in urban areas face a range of risks including social exclusion, economic marginalization, and vulnerability (UNICEF, 2018). They encounter obstacles when it comes to accessing quality education, healthcare, security, public spaces for recreation, and are at risk of exposure to extremism or terrorism. Neglecting the inclusion of youth and children in urban policy processes increases the likelihood of crime and general unrest.

The principles and commitments of the New Urban Agenda strongly promote the integration of children and youth as active participants in driving positive change within cities and communities.

National youth policies are an essential strategy

in instituting the inclusion of young people in policy development and implementation processes. However, most countries still do not have such a policy especially in the Global South with some at draft stage.

In Kenya for instance, the National Youth Development Policy recognizes the challenges faced by youth in terms of limited participation in developing and implementing various policies that directly impact them (2019). In the context of socially inclusive NUPs, young people's contributions to sustainable urban development should be recognized and strengthened. The Kampala Principles toolkit<sup>3</sup> gives a detailed approach on how countries can engage youths among other marginalized groups in terms of inclusive country ownership and transparency to achieve effective development co-operation (GPEDC, 2019).

To this extent, youth-led and child centred organizations and organizations representing them, should be consulted, data disaggregated, and information disseminated in a youth and child friendly manner. Youths as gamechangers initiative' supported by UN-Habitat advocates for the principle of always acting in the 'best interest of youth' in all urban planning and policy processes to foster inclusion and active participation where young people lead discussions of what works best for them (UN-Habitat, 2023).

Young people can also be involved both formally and informally towards the development of child and youth friendly cities through relatively informal discussions in schools, at home,

<sup>1</sup> The UN statistically defines a youth as 'a person between the ages of 15 and 24 (United Nations, 2025)

<sup>2</sup> The Convention on the Rights of the Child defined a child as 'any person below the age of 18, unless the relevant law recognizes an earlier age of majority' (United Nations, 1989)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.effectivecooperation.org/landing-page/kampala-principles>

and other social spaces on how they would like the cities to look like. Formal engagements include discussions with organizations engaging children and youth like the Urban Youth Councils. Their knowledge and expertise are often an untapped resource that is essential to addressing challenges of governance and inform child and youth friendly NUP process.

#### CASE STUDY 4

### Ecuador: Otavalo

Source: UN-Habitat, 2023



A section of Otavalango youths making a presentation ©UN-Habitat

## Indigenous One Stop Youth Resource Centre

El Museo Vivo Otavalango, translated as the Otavalango Living Museum, a Cultural centre of the Kichwa people of Ecuador, was accredited by UN-Habitat in May 2023 as the first ever Indigenous One Stop Youth Resource centre (<https://unhabitat.org/news/05-may-2023/first-ever-indigenous-one-stop-youth-centre-launched-in-ecuador>). This is due to the role the centre plays in empowering the youth and the community in line with NUA and SDG 11. The centre has played an instrumental role in realizing inclusive communities, while promoting spatial and social cohesion.

The preservation of Kichwa history and culture, including indigenous crafts like weaving, language, and cuisine, has been prioritized. The Young people played a critical role in transforming the centre into a model one-stop youth centre. Simultaneously, the children and youth receive accessible services that promote both their well-being and contribute to the economic development of the community.

## CASE STUDY 5

### Socio-Economic Resilience Advancement Committee (SERAC), Bangladesh



A section of Rajshahi Urban Youth Council during the world zero waste day © SERAC

Established in 1993, the organization empowers young people through active involvement and capacity building initiatives. With over twenty active projects, the organization has 2,000 active young people spread across the 28 districts in Bangladesh, volunteering and supporting initiatives like dream wings, Pease Adda, SHIFT, and Space to Lead. This is done in close partnership with over 200 academic institutions to address challenges experienced by the marginalized groups like women, children, young people, older persons, and persons with disabilities. These challenges include urban safety, access to basic services, inclusive policy processes, and inadequate capacity. SERAC has also supported establishment of Urban Youth Councils across Bangladesh to enable meaningful engagement of young people.

On March 2026, Rajshahi Urban Youth Council participated in a waste collection and removal themed 'Zero-Waste Eco-Friendly Cities'. Program sensitized residents on proper waste disposal and recycling to create cleaner, healthier urban environments.

<https://serac-bd.org/rajshahi-urban-youth-council-take-the-action-for-a-zero-waste-and-eco-friendly-city/>



### 1.6.5. Educational diversity

Most diversity issues have placed emphasis on gender, age, persons with disability, and racial differences. However, another contemporary issue is educational diversity due to literacy gaps which ripple into technical capacity gaps on urban development particularly in developing economies (Tamtik & Guenter, 2019). Considering the variation in financial endowment which makes it somehow difficult to attain the highest levels of education, different people therefore have different educational accomplishments. This education gap is predominant in the low- and middle-income countries where poverty levels remain high hence only a few can finance themselves past what the governments offer in free education programmes.

An example can be seen in literacy levels. There is a commendable increase in literacy levels across the globe currently standing at 87% (UNESCO, 2023). While countries in the global north led by Finland have achieved 99% literacy level, a good percentage of countries in the global south recorded high illiteracy levels as of 2022 with Mali and South Sudan at 31% and 35% respectively thus 773 million people in the world are still illiterate (World Economic Forum, 2023). This population should be considered and involved in policy

making as they constitute the vulnerable group in contemporary society.

Formal education contributes to building a whole of cycle approach in capacity. Most locals, especially in the global south rural and informal settlements, who have not been able to attain relevant high level training due to inadequate resources and other circumstances beyond their control tend to also have more information and knowledge of the informal environment along social corridors. In the normal set-up, expert groups, professionals, and government officials get prioritized in surveys and meetings.

However, in the spirit of 'leaving no one behind', this group also needs an avenue through which their voice is heard, for their opinion to count in the NUP process and capacity strengthened, towards the New Urban Agenda and eventually SDG11-Sustainable Cities and Communities. Inclusion in this aspect includes having all expertise included in the NUP process and capacity gaps addressed effectively. Individuals with lower cadres of education or working in the informal sector need to be consulted and engaged during policy formulation and implementation respectively. Local and national governments can enhance capacity building strategies for these population groups. Such inclusion enhances ownership and participation by the local citizen with regards to urbanization as well as its impact on human development.

## CASE STUDY 6

### Finland: Espoo

Source: UN-Habitat, 2022



Finland has taken lead in conducting voluntary local reviews with Tampere as one of the six cities participating in the programme. Voluntary local review (VLR) assesses performance of a city against the SDGs by getting the views of residents. This programme that started in 2018 has seen a total of over 80 cities across the globe conduct voluntary local reviews with the city of Mwanza, Tanzania being the latest.

VLRs encourage advocacy and sensitization of the city residents to actively participate in development of urban policies as well as monitor implementation in relation to SDG localization. This localization strategy bridges the gap between global and local realities and reduces the aspect of stakeholders working in silos. On the other hand, it gives the local population, irrespective of their social status, an opportunity to learn and share their opinions in relation to contextual development priorities.



### 1.6.6. Older persons

The ageing population constitutes one of the most significant demographic transformations of the 21st century. Research estimates that by 2050 the number of older persons will double to 1.5 billion: one in six people in the world will be aged 65 years or over (UNHRC, 2022).

Urban spaces can act both as enablers and as barriers to the realization and enjoyment of the rights of older persons. Barriers and structural challenges often emerge for older persons in the context of work, urban life such as public space and transport, and access to services and resources, including housing and health, as well as the city-level decision-making (planning, policy design, legislative processes) that impacts their lives (Makore & Al-Maiyah, 2021). Also, inadequate data for older persons in the past has kept some pertinent issues like exploitation, poor living conditions, and non-inclusion in development agenda across the globe uncovered.

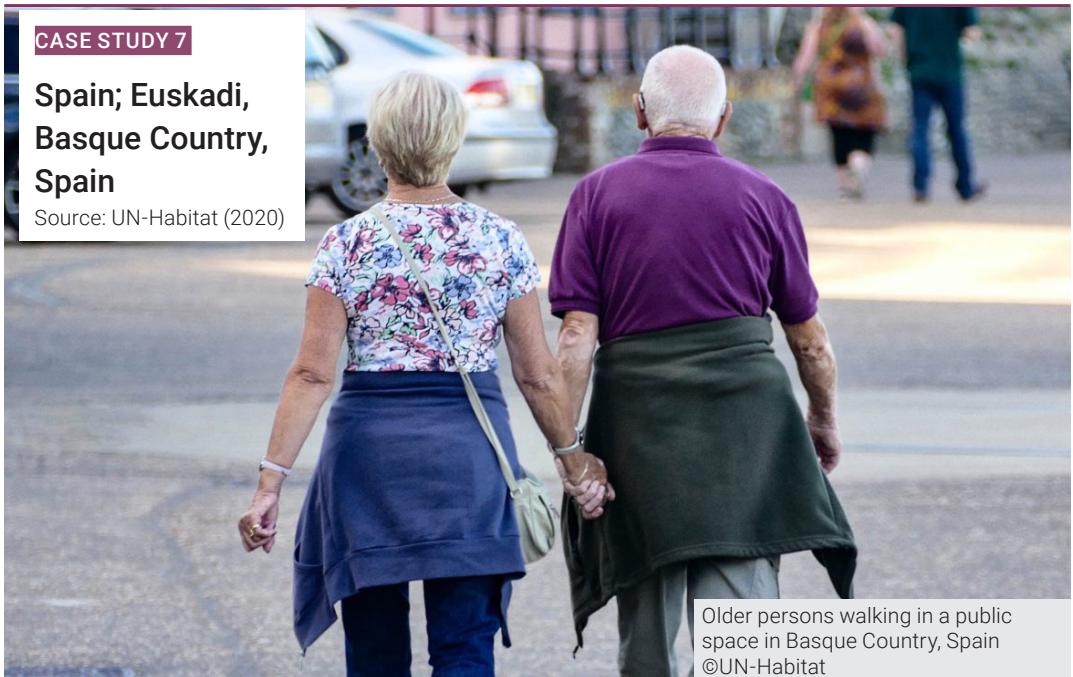
Older persons are also at greater risk of exposure to disasters in urban areas. Spatial factors in the physically built environment, informal and unplanned urban growth, insecure customary and informal land rights, poor quality of housing, poorly designed infrastructure, among others can increase these risks.

This hinders the exercise of other human rights, including the right to an adequate standard of living, especially when adequate and equitable social protection systems are not in place. As a result, in many societies, older persons comprise a disproportionate number of the poor (UNDESA, 2023). Exclusion and discrimination experienced by older persons must be contextualized: for example, formal and customary laws often discriminate against older women in their right to own property or inherit it. In addition, older women are often victims of land grabbing. Aging also increases the risk of temporary or long-term disability, with more than 46% of older persons presently living with a disability (UNDESA, 2023)

The exclusions and human rights violations experienced by older persons are the consequence of ageist attitudes, directly and/or indirectly discriminatory laws and policies (including, for example, in urban planning and city-level decision-making), underfunding, and lack of accessibility and affordability.

Designing urban spaces to respond to the needs of ageing populations presents a key opportunity to anticipate the future population structure and ensure the economic and social pathways for a smooth transition (Ryser & Franchini, 2022). Local governments have a crucial role to play in the protection and promotion of human rights for all urban residents. Proven methods for the meaningful inclusion of older persons in the NUP process include opinion surveys, interviews, and discussions set up in culturally appropriate manners so that all older persons, regardless

of their gender, disability, economic status etc can share their experiences, knowledge, practical solutions and needs for their city.



### **The way in which cities are planned, managed and designed determines the opportunities for inclusion of elderly: Euskal Hiria 2020**

In 2020, the regional government of Basque country in Spain organized an expert group meeting with UN-Habitat titled '*Cities for All; ageing and inclusion*'.

The meeting brought together national and international stakeholders who discussed urban policies and inspiring practices to ensure improved living conditions in Spanish cities. Major findings noted that persons aged 65 and above have increased in OECD countries with a projection of 27.9% by 2040, while cities fail to be age-inclusive (OECD, 2020). Age-inclusive urban policy processes advance competitiveness, environmental sustainability and social cohesion, delivering many win-win outcomes for the population. Discussion focused on four main areas which include public space and built environment, mobility, housing and social inclusion, and health care for older persons in the 2020 Euskal Hiria framework.



## 1.7. A SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE NUP APPROACH

As pointed out throughout this document, a well-developed and implemented National Urban Policy is an instrumental tool to build and maintain sustainable, inclusive, human rights-based and gender-responsive cities. National urban policies need to ensure:



Inclusive participation for all parts of society, with particular focus on those most at risk of exclusion and marginalization.



Equality and non-discrimination, both in the development of the policy and in its outcome; equitable measures may need to be applied to eventually ensure equality of all, a human rights and gender analysis will further inform consideration of any such measures;

NUPs help counter structural inequalities by promoting inclusive policies and targeted interventions. NUP also promotes core level principles related to urban designs that can capture the benefits of agglomeration. Cities should be compact, integrated, connected, socially inclusive, resilient to climate change and human-rights based (NUP, 2019).

A progressive NUP should additionally promote inclusive approaches that assert urban space and territoriality, the positive role of urbanization in national socio-economic development and provide an overarching coordinating framework.

This will in the long run address urban challenges to maximize the benefits of urbanization, while mitigating potential adverse externalities (Kundu et.al., 2020).

Progressive cities around the world recognize that growth cannot be sustained without inclusivity. Cities need to demonstrate innovative ways to strengthen inclusion. Those already acting on social inclusion are using a range of strategies including social protection programmes, inclusive planning processes and adopting proactive strategies to engage with marginalized groups.

Considering the planning part of NUPs specifically, participatory planning and decision-making complemented with hybrid communication are at the heart of inclusivity and have amongst others, the following benefits:



reduce inequality and social tension.



incorporate the needs, knowledge, productivity, social and physical capital of marginalized groups in city development



build trust and transparency among communities, urban planners, and policy makers



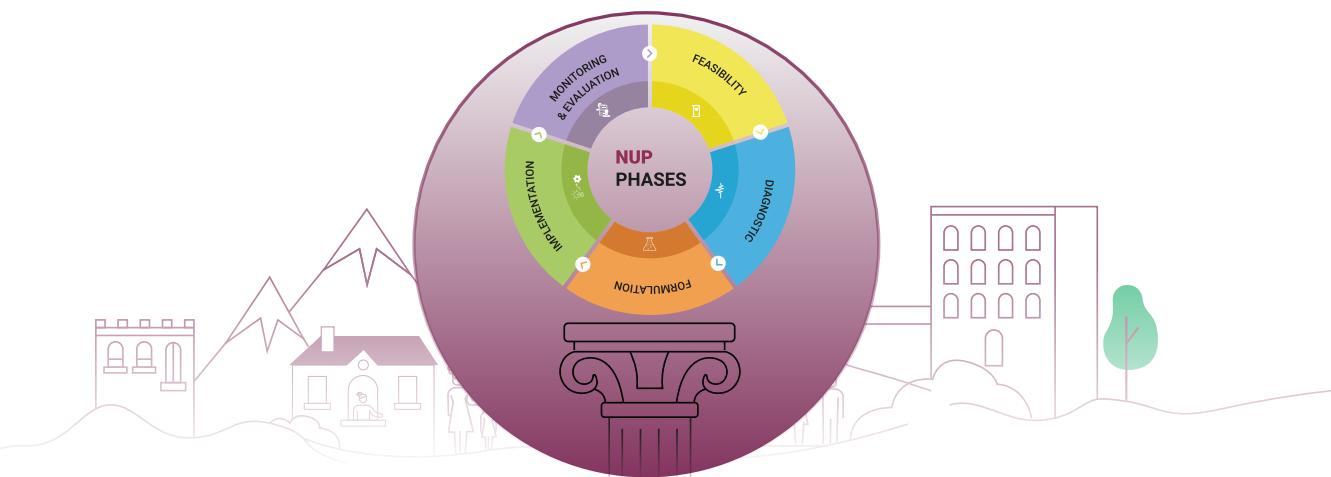
increase local ownership of development processes and programmes

According to research from the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), social policies that promote the establishment of norms of solidarity and reciprocity, as well as practices based on universal rights-based entitlements, are more likely to lead to long-lasting social inclusion (UNRISD, 2019)

To enable the development of suitable policies, capacity building at national and local level is important to assess individual historical challenges and thus to develop appropriate solutions. Further, capacity building should focus on professionals at all levels to ensure they have a clear understanding of human rights and inclusion. Capabilities at local and national levels are needed to realize the vision of inclusive societies.



Participatory planning of public spaces at Kalobeyei, Turkana Kenya 2019 ©UNHabitat/Bernard Heng



## 2. SECTION TWO



### 2.1. INTEGRATING SOCIAL INCLUSION INTO NUP PHASES AND PILLARS

To understand how to adopt a socially inclusive approach for the NUP process, it is necessary to consider key questions for each NUP phase and pillar and to understand the different roles that key stakeholders can play to facilitate the approach. The key questions also act as checklists guiding social inclusion mainstreaming into NUPs. Below are recommendations that can assist in facilitating development of a NUP responsive to gender, human rights, and other key aspects of social inclusion.

#### **Box 1.** Extract from GSNUF 3rd Edition Survey on Mainstreaming Social Inclusion in NUPs

The Global State of National Urban Policy (GSNUF) is a biennial assessment of the development and implementation of national urban policies (NUPs) across the globe. An extract from the global NUP survey carried out to inform the third edition shows that the 74 countries have integrated various aspects of social inclusion into their national urban policies. A majority of 44 out of the 74 stated that their policies promote and ensure the engagement and participation of subnational governments and stakeholders especially academia, citizens, and private sector. In addition, 50 responding countries, led by countries from Africa, North America and Europe also indicated that their policies integrate and coordinate sectoral policies focused on social inclusion. Notably, countries from Europe and North America such as Netherlands and Finland which have explicit NUPs also report lower regional inequalities hence amplifying the fact that NUPs remain an imperative tool to address inequality.

In the second segment, NUPs of most responding countries gave a moderate to extensive attention to inclusive growth and opportunities for all. For example, 56 countries gave moderate to extensive attention by ensuring inclusive urban development through meeting the needs of marginalized populations, promoting diversity and inclusion, reducing gender and/or generational gaps. 56 respondents also encourage inclusive design and implementation of urban policies while 52 of them focus on building capacity through education and training. NUPs of 59 countries address population dynamics and composition whereby various groups such as children, youth, women, the older persons and persons with disabilities are taken care of and human rights issues addressed.

In the spirit of 'Leaving No One Behind', implementing and monitoring the New Urban Agenda, 25 countries use social, environmental, and economic dimensions to formulate medium to long-term disaggregated data to make urban demographic projections and trends. This is essential in the diagnosis phase to help identify social inclusion gaps. Also, 35 countries have adopted legal frameworks to reduce urban and territorial disparities whereas 23 countries promote jurisdictional coordination and coherence.

Countries have equally put in place measures to address urban challenges posed by rapid urbanization. For instance, while 37 countries agree that inadequate housing is a common problem in most urban communities, 25 countries are taking specific action to address inadequate housing for certain groups of population with specific needs like the elderly and people with disabilities. In addition, 34 respondents are taking action to improve accessibility to basic urban services like public transport, schools, hospitals, water, sanitation, and recreational facilities most of which the vulnerable group cannot sufficiently afford. Therefore, findings from the report emphasize the centrality of integrating social inclusion throughout all the phases and pillars of NUPs to achieve sustainable, equitable, and resilient cities and communities

Please see Annex 1 for detailed survey extract on social inclusion from the third edition of GSNUP, 2024.





## 2.2. CONSIDERATIONS FOR DEVELOPING SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE, HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED, GENDER-RESPONSIVE NUP

### 2.2.1. Mainstreaming social inclusion into NUPs

These are non-exhaustive sample considerations to serve as an illustration of possible approaches

- Incorporating it not as an individual sector but throughout all themes and parts of the NUP including, but not limited to legislation, urban planning and design, housing, infrastructure and basic services.
- Within those themes, not duplicating entry-points but making sure that specific issues crossing inclusiveness with the theme are identified and accompanied with specific and implementable recommendations.
- Reducing economic inequality, more so, if it is closely linked with the exclusion of marginalized groups.
- Proactively engaging individuals, communities and organizations representing those most at risk of exclusion including but not limited to those living in informal settlements, refugees and IDPs, migrant workers, informal workers, youth, women and girls and older persons, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, etc. in urban policy and planning.
- Improving access to urban infrastructure, facilities and services for all marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities.
- Asserting the importance of agency for young people and the need to open the space for such agency to thrive to shape the sustainable urban trajectory, youth as primary drivers and a critical resource and asset for solving urban problems and catalytic agents of positive change. This would entail including young people in decision making of national and local urban development strategies, through for instance, 'Youth Governance Initiative' and 'Urban Youth Councils' including education skills development and employment opportunities (UN-Habitat 2023).

### 2.2.2. Prioritizing human development

- NUP should entail a wide range of actions to ensure urban residents have equal rights, opportunities and access to participation, infrastructure, basic services, and to adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living among others.

- Promote that “all”, without any form of discrimination, have an opportunity to participate in, and influence, the decision-making process that affects them, in the NUP process.

Ensure that those affected and have a stake in the national urban policy framework actively contribute to the whole process. Further, concerned stakeholders are given the opportunity and encouraged to know not only the basic facts and figures but also, the mechanisms and processes behind the NUP processes. Finally, the NUP process will ensure that the expected outcomes improve the quality of life of the populations, especially the most excluded groups, which include women, children, persons with disabilities, and older persons in situations of vulnerability and marginalization (UN-Habitat, 2015).



## Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022

This development plan consisted of objectives and policies that guide on how and where development would take place in Dublin city throughout the set period. The coherent, integrated spatial framework aimed at achieving city development through inclusion hence improve the quality of life for the 544,107 residents while attracting foreigners.

The plan was anchored on principles of sustainability and resilience in economic, social, and environmental aspects. The main themes included open spaces, green infrastructure, and recreation. Throughout its development, the plan underwent extensive consultations from the public, local, and national authorities. This helped to align the plan for the utmost benefit of the people while aligning it to respective policy instruments.

Link: <https://interlace-hub.com/dublin-city-development-plan-2016-2022>

### 2.2.3. Inclusive language

- Policy notes, diagnosis report, policy proposal, evaluation reports, and all other relevant documents must communicate in a way to avoid discrimination or perpetuate stereotypes. The language shall place all in the same level; people-centered, gender-sensitive and gender neutral, respect human rights and focus on marginalized groups and furthest behind in communities (UN-Habitat 2015).
- While addressing inclusion aspects in policy, Member States need to consider aligning with UN guidelines for gender inclusive, disability inclusive language conscious, non-discriminatory language. This also includes when addressing stakeholders either as individuals or as a group.
- Inclusive language also involves having information disseminated through different languages and kinds of media such as television, radio, and social media platforms. Furthermore, communication should be done in a manner accessible and usable by all in terms of translation to local dialects to ensure that it addresses persons with disabilities, the diversity in literacy levels and understanding of the target audience. For instance, provision of documents in braille for persons with visual impairment, easy-to-read for children and people with conditions like ADHD, autism using for instance bionic text and bionic reading among others.

#### CASE STUDY 9

### Subnational Urban Policy Guide

Source: UN-Habitat



UN-Habitat offices, Nairobi, Kenya  
© UN-Habitat

UN-Habitat continues to support regional, local, and national governments on sustainable urbanization. To further realize its mandate, the agency has developed a policy guide that helps sub-national governments to develop an urban development model that addresses local challenges. The guide aims at enabling local governments to achieve efficient multi-level governance, decentralizing skills and resources for equitable well-being and shared prosperity. In the spirit of inclusion, the guide which was drafted in English has further been translated into Persian and Arabic languages to reach a wider audience across the globe.

Link: <https://urbanpolicyplatform.org/download/sub-national-urban-policy/>

## 2.2.4. Inclusive and meaningful participation

- NUPs must be developed in partnership with communities and civil society. For NUPs to be successful and sustainable, buy-ins from the local community is essential. Consultation must be undertaken with a broad cross-section of society, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, persons with different literacy levels, elder persons, civil society organizations and other marginalized groups especially at grassroots levels. Inclusive participation means that previously marginalized groups receive recognition as experts best fit to address their own needs.
- Inclusive participation should also embrace academia through relevant research institutes. This segment is vital as it helps in giving evidence-based solutions on gaps and challenges related to social inclusion on matters urbanization through national urban policies. Partners can tap into the updated data banks and resources from the research institution to help analyze data as well as make informed decisions on how to counter such challenges.
- Inclusive participation should also engender governance and financing issues. Marginalized groups should be aware and take an active role in the discussions pertaining to budgeting of the various projects on social inclusion and implementation of urbanization projects in their localities. A joint effort between policy makers, national and local governments, as well as the people will translate to capturing all expenses related to NUP process.
- Participation also includes partnership with international, not-for-profit, and multinational institutions or organizations interested in the specific country activities. This includes development of the policy aligned with international guidelines and the SDGs. In addition, the external partnerships can strengthen capacity in terms of financial, technical, and human resources in developing and implementing socially inclusive aspects in NUPs or SNUPs.

## CASE STUDY 10

### Quito, Ecuador

Source: Interlace Hub



<https://panorama.solutions/en/solution/quitos-participatory-urban-agriculture-programme-agrupar>

## Participatory Urban Agriculture (AGRUPAR)

In 2020, the Municipality of Quito's Metropolitan District developed the AGRUPAR instrument as a component of its social inclusion policy. The instrument aims at ensuring that the most vulnerable population in Quito Municipality is actively engaged in food security while improving social cohesion among urban farmers. The instrument encourages a modernized intervention for low-cost, alternative infrastructure for urban and peri-urban gardens. It takes a participative lens especially on women, senior citizens, household heads, and individuals with low schooling.

Link: <https://interlace-hub.com/quito-and-its-urban-agriculture-agrupar>



### 2.2.5. Inclusive methodologies and events

During the NUP cycle, ensure inclusion through all methodologies, as tools, interventions, action plans, and timelines. It is also imperative to ensure inclusiveness over all the events, such as workshops, group discussions, expert consultations among others.

In every NUP-related event, the planners should ensure conformance to international standards in terms of physical accessibility, technology, and safety measures.

Identify and involve all stakeholders, including women and girls, youth and older persons, as well as the most marginalized populations, which could include the urban poor, the landless, slum dwellers, migrant workers, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples as per the human rights analysis.

## CASE STUDY 11

### Malaga, Spain

Urban Governance Atlas,  
Interlace Hub (2024)



Source: <https://interlace-hub.com/green-neighborhood-manzana-verde-architectural-innovation-contest-malaga>

### Green Neighborhood (Manzana Verde) Architectural Innovation Contest

The leadership of Malaga city, Spain introduced an architectural innovation contest in 2017 dubbed 'Manzana Verde'. The initiative focused on creating accessible green spaces in a previously industrial area aimed at improving local biodiversity and increasing social cohesion.

The program is anchored on four socio-urban vectors including urban metabolism, social cohesion, biodiversity, and urban complexity to impact a population of 574,000 residents. This annual event not only brings together architectures, but also residents who participate in the decision of selecting the most innovative competitors.

Link: <https://interlace-hub.com/green-neighborhood-manzana-verde-architectural-innovation-contest-malaga>

## 2.2.6. Capacity building and knowledge sharing

- Training and education: Provide targeted training programs for policymakers, urban planners, and community leaders on inclusive practices and human rights-based approaches. This can be addressed through inclusion of diverse social groups in workshops, trainings, online courses, and certification programs, leveraging resources from institutions like UN-Habitat and the World Bank (UN-Habitat, 2016).
- Empower communities through capacity-building initiatives that enhance their ability to participate effectively in urban planning and policy-making processes. For example, facilitating community-led mapping projects can help residents document their needs and advocate for resources (World Bank, 2017).
- During the process of formulating NUP, establishment of knowledge hubs to compile and share resources, organize regular knowledge exchange forums, and widely disseminate successful practices and lessons learned from NUP initiatives through reports, newsletters, and social media should be considered.



### Youth for the Environment Programme

An initiative of the Colombian Ministry of Environment, the programme constitutes community-based agreement to impact the environment through inclusion. The programme empowers young people by supporting them to undertake professional internships that promote green business through food security.

Through this, the young population is actively involved in urban agriculture. Program leaders also raise awareness of the program through social media platforms to promote community involvement. Over time, the program has secured a network of over 200 young supporters, with commendable recognition and support from the regional and local government.

Link: <https://interlace-hub.com/programme-youth-environment-quibd%C3%B3>

## 2.2.7. Leveraging technology

- Ensure that digital tools and platforms used in the NUP process are accessible to all, including those with limited digital literacy or access to technology. This can involve providing digital literacy training and ensuring platforms are mobile-friendly (ITU, 2024).
- Utilize innovative technological solutions such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for urban planning, mobile apps for community feedback, and social media for broad dissemination of information. For instance, using mobile surveys to collect data from hard-to-reach populations can enhance inclusivity (Bryant, 2021).

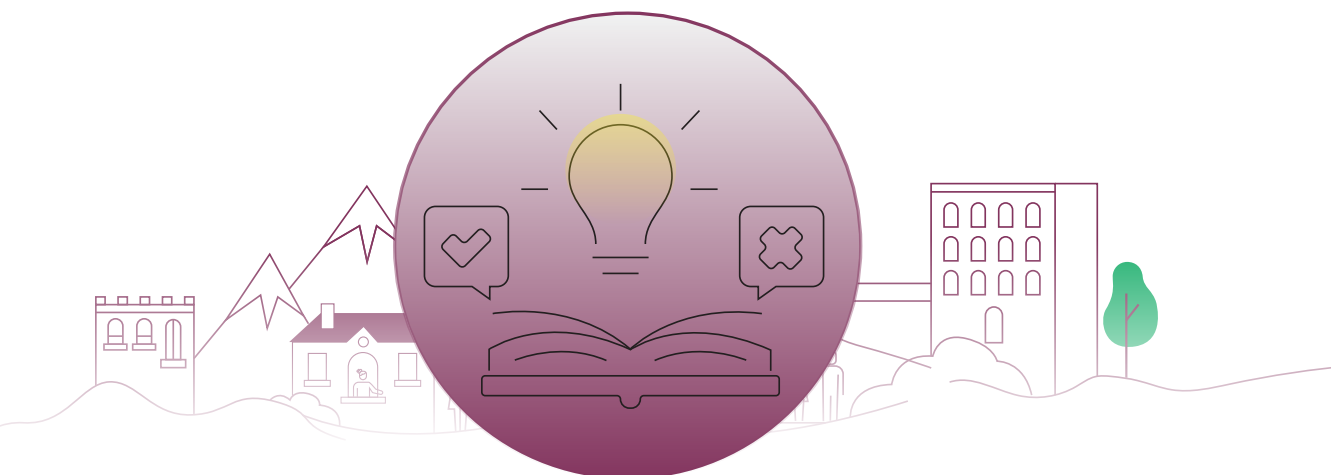


### Green Your Laneway Program

Melbourne City published the 'Green Your Laneway' program in 2016 to improve urban greenery along the city's small laneways. As a way of inclusivity, local communities suggest laneways to be transformed in their neighborhoods. As of 2023, the program has transformed four laneways.

To leverage technology while enhancing ownership and involvement of local communities, the social innovation agency has collaborated with the city administration to develop a dedicated website. The website consists of an interactive tool with a map of laneways ripe for transformation. It also guides users on nature-based solutions to green the suggested laneways.

Link: <https://interlace-hub.com/green-your-laneway-program-melbourne>



### 3. Recommendations for socially inclusive NUP per phase and in pillars



#### 3.1. MAINSTREAMING SOCIAL INCLUSION IN NUP PHASES



##### 3.1.1. Feasibility Phase

The goal of the NUP Feasibility Phase is to make a case for a NUP and to begin building stakeholder support for an inclusive vision. It offers the opportunities to highlight the value addition in a specific context.

It identifies key facts and figures, clarifying available opportunities to build consensus and rally support to undertake a NUP process. The feasibility phase is to ascertain marginalized groups and their challenges (through human

rights and gender analysis), project how medium and long-term demographic trends impact on marginalized groups and how the inclusive policy addresses them. Social analysis is thus conducted to better appreciate how political, cultural, social, macro and micro economic processes impact equitable urban development (Bruno et.al., 2024).

Inclusive NUPs need to be tailored to the national context and be feasible in terms of available resources, institutional capabilities and political goodwill. In this phase, training needs analysis is essential to ascertain existing gaps for effective NUP implementation. The final document in this phase is the feasibility study report.

Once the value addition of the NUP is clear in the context of inclusiveness, it becomes possible to begin to build consensus around the vision for a NUP (UN-Habitat, 2015b). Undertaking the feasibility phase is essentially a process of determining the viability of a proposed initiative, a NUP, while providing the framework and direction for its development and delivery.



To enable a successful feasibility phase, key questions and key recommendations include;

- What are the demographic trends in the country? How can we get sufficient data to assess and generate disaggregated demographic projections on age, sex and disability rights data? How do medium and long-term demographic trends impact marginalized groups?
- What are the cultural dynamics in the country? How can these dynamics influence the inclusion and participation of different social groups in the process of formulating NUPs?
- Who is marginalized in this society? What are the additional, intersectional challenges faced by some groups? What challenges can be addressed through the NUP? Why and how can a NUP help to consider and address these crises in the society?
- What are the barriers and power imbalances that may not be immediately visible but impact some parts of the population? How can these be made visible and addressed?
- Which group of stakeholders participate in decision making processes? Who is missing? How can participation from all parts of society be ensured? Are there any prerequisites for effective participation that need to be met before the decision-making process starts? (Capacity building?)
- How can we define formal and informal urbanization in the national and local context? What are the key drivers (past, present and future) of urbanization (economic, demographic, political, social, environmental, regional, or national)?
- Are there any existing policies, institutions, budgeting and finance plans that have been created at the national or local levels to address inclusivity?

### **Key recommendations for a selected activity under feasibility phase**

#### **Demographic projections and trends**



Formulate medium and long-term demographic projections and trends, with geographic disaggregation by age, gender and disability, taking into consideration the interplay of economic, social and environmental forces.

- While studying demographic projections and trends, the data quality and sources

will be considered. Ensure data sources are reliable, up-to-date, and representative. Incorporate data from various sources, including government censuses, academic research, and NGO reports.

- A NUP considers current and future trends related to population composition and distribution, demographic projections, economic assessment and environmental conditions, gender, age, income, educational level, employment and economic sectors (OECD & UN-Habitat, 2018).
- Social analysis is vital to enhance the understanding of macro-social processes as well as how cultural, social, and political factors either influence opportunities or constrain equitable urban development. Accessibility and safety audits are essential at this stage to examine urban safety and disability gaps. This will inform the basis and priority areas for which to incorporate inclusion and participation. accessibility and safety audits are essential at this stage to examine urban safety and disability gaps.



### **National and local context or situation identification**

- While the process of identifying and understanding the national and local context (e.g., existing policies, plans, strategies). All inclusion plans, strategies, policies, or projects in relation to urban development shall be considered, to fully understand the local politics and economy of urbanization. Understanding the administrative, legal, political, and economic frameworks enables stakeholders to accurately map out existing gaps in relation to social inclusion as well as how to handle disputes in case they arise. This also gives a clear understanding of existing resources and infrastructures to advance social inclusion in the development and implementation of NUP.



### **NUP Plan or Strategy**

- While identifying opportunities for NUP and providing a plan or strategy intended to achieve the goals of urban sustainability, the intersectionality of vulnerabilities and opportunities must be considered to address inclusion issues.
- Build consensus and support for undertaking a NUP: understanding and articulating the vision and value addition of inclusiveness. This can be done by fostering community engagement throughout the NUP phases and pillars.
- Overall, the NUP vision should align with other national, regional, and international policies like African Union (AU) Agenda 2063, the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda.



## NUP opportunities and risks

- While identifying and prioritizing the risks to maximize the realization of opportunities, NUPs need to recognize and acknowledge informality to better protect the marginalized and promote resilience, recognizing the importance of the informal economy in many livelihoods and the informal settlements as a source of housing and center for community, but also as those areas vulnerable to everyday risk and small, medium and large-scale disasters (human-made and/or nature driven).
- In terms of economic policies, NUPs should focus on developing strategies that support both formal and informal sectors. This dual approach fosters economic resilience and inclusivity, ensuring that economic growth benefits all segments of society, including those involved in the informal economy.

### CASE STUDY 14

## The Republic of Korea

Source: Global State of National Urban Policy (2024)



Sunrise of Seoul City Skyline, South Korea ©CJ Nattanaei/ AdobeStock

The Republic of Korea is rated amongst the most forward-looking countries in Asia and globally in terms of sustainable urban development. Its experience in urban development spans over four decades since 1976. From the 2023 global survey on GSNUP, Korea indicated that during the formulation of its policy, it was keen on providing opportunities for all urban residents, in particular by ensuring that urban development is sensitive to marginalized urban populations. This has largely promoted diversity and inclusion while reducing gender and/or generational gaps. In addition, Korea has expanded its NUP experience in partnership with UN-Habitat through the National Urban Policy Programme (NUPP) since 2016. The second phase supports eight countries (Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Egypt, I.R. Iran, Mozambique, Myanmar Niger State in Nigeria, and Paraguay) to scale up people-centered smart cities through NUPs. The development of NUPs and implementation of demonstration projects constitute social inclusion in key urbanization aspects.

Link: <https://urbanpolicyplatform.org/download/global-state-of-national-urban-policy-2024/>



### 3.1.2. Diagnosis phase

The diagnosis phase of the NUP is an occasion to gather relevant information regarding urban development in relation to inclusion issues to ensure an evidence-based approach in understanding the existing gaps and community context (UN-Habitat, 2018). Diagnosis helps to define the policy goals and inform the formulation process to design policy options that are inclusive, human rights-based and gender responsive. While addressing the policy problems and opportunities, the experts in the diagnosis phase expect to come up with a NUP diagnosis note at the end of this phase.

On many occasions, not only is there not enough data on the exclusion or discrimination in society, but also, it may not be recognized

that there is existing marginalization. Hence, the diagnosis phase of socially inclusive NUP should develop novel yet accurate questions and measurements to assess the status, results and impact of policies regarding human rights and equity (Güvenbaş & Polay, 2021). The prior human rights and gender analysis will be useful to guide these questions.

To facilitate diagnosis phases successfully, key questions and key recommendations include, but are not limited to, gathering, analyzing and using disaggregated data and evidence on gaps between urban communities, stakeholders and institutional mapping and analyzing, and based on the inclusive evidence and data, developing preliminary policy goals and structure. Disaggregated data refers to the smaller units of information sifted from compiled data to make meaning and understand underlying trends in each context (UNDP, 2018)

#### Key questions



#### Contextual data analysis

- What are the key facts and figures of the urban development process across political, economic, social, environmental, technological, environmental and legal dimensions that impact or reflect human rights, gender equality and social inclusion?
- Which variables and data are most relevant to the identified problem?
- How comprehensive is the data in capturing aspects of social inclusion, such as gender, and disabilities, and age disaggregation?
- What crucial data is missing, especially considering risks identified in accessibility audit, human rights and gender analysis?



### **Legislative Frameworks and Policy structure**

- Is the current policy structure likely to perpetuate existing disadvantages?
- How do legislative frameworks support, protect, and promote the planning and implementation of socially inclusive policies at both national and sub-national levels?
- How does the structure of the policy field, along with existing legal and regulatory frameworks, promote human rights and values of dignity, respect, fairness, and autonomy?
- How well do these frameworks capture aspects of social inclusion?



### **Identification and analysis of marginalized groups**

- Who are the marginalized groups in the current urban context (e.g., women, youth and children, the older persons, persons with disabilities)?
- What quantitative evidence (e.g., census, labor force survey, health statistics, national earning survey, household survey) should be collected?
- What qualitative evidence and administrative data (e.g., in-depth academic and policy research) should be gathered?
- How can equalities budgeting, data schema, and risk assessment be used to establish and address unintended consequences?



### **Forms of inequality and human rights impact**

- What are the common forms of inequality in the urban context?
- How do human rights issues affect different groups, and in what ways do these impacts vary?
- How are different inequalities and human rights concerns created and perpetuated?
- What mechanisms are in place to address these inequalities effectively?



### **Public benefits and policy measures**

- How would different groups in society benefit from policy changes?
- Should change measures be considered separately by policy, equality, and human rights experts to ensure comprehensive benefits? What are the potential unintended consequences of policy changes, and how can they be mitigated to ensure equitable outcomes?



## Data utilization and improvement

- How can existing data collection methods be improved to capture more disaggregated and nuanced information about social inclusion?
- What new data sources or methodologies could be implemented to enhance the accuracy and relevance of the data?

## Key recommendations for a selected activity under diagnosis phase



### Building evidence

- The methodology of collecting data; desktop research, surveys, rapid appraisal, SWOT analysis, assets/opportunities and negative externalities analysis, consultative meetings, focus group discussions, etc., must be adjusted to reach as much as audience and obtain as much disaggregated data as possible. The process and methodology must be adaptable to local contexts, cultures, and languages.
- Strengthening capacities to gather, analyze and use disaggregated data and evidence, including understanding the range of disadvantages and deprivations. Data disaggregation refers to sorting and separating compiled information into smaller segments to determine hidden patterns in accordance with the sought information such as scope in the problem statement for policy makers (UNDP 2018).
- Provide data on safe access to urban basic services (water, sanitation, energy) and roles of people lacking those services.
- Provide disaggregated data on access to land, housing and types of occupations, including data on ownership of land and property.
- Provide disaggregated data on local economies, roles and wages, unemployment rate, data on wage gaps, including for the same work, disaggregated by sex and age, number of women in high-ranking positions.
- Specifying and categorizing different groups to identify their individual needs with a focus on issues of vulnerability, opportunity, and resilience.
- Use the stakeholder map in order to demonstrate trends, over time, of how these populations have been impacted in areas such as labor force surveys, health statistics, national earning survey, household surveys, etc.
- In contexts where this information is not available, communities can and should be mobilized to undertake participatory qualitative research to try and answer some of these questions. Data collection can be done using the most cost-effective yet comprehensive method to give stakeholders a clearer, detailed view on what to

incorporate in the NUP process and reflect the NUA. All stakeholders should access the data with ease and in the most eligible, intelligible form.



### **Stakeholder and institutional analysis**

- Map all the relevant stakeholders and include their roles in relation to urban development. The list must be gender balanced and include all relevant groups at risk of marginalization as set out in the human rights and gender analysis. (E.g. these could include youth, women, older persons, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, various literacy levels, etc.) Stakeholder mapping should collect disabilities, sex and age-disaggregated data of stakeholders and/or stakeholder groups.
- Engage stakeholders and consultation in defining alternative approaches for urbanization challenges and opportunities. This should not only focus on gender balance but also, functional diversity through different professionalisms and on various cadres of leadership.
- Local and national government officials and stakeholders with decision-making powers in the NUP process shall promote the involvement of all marginalized groups and attain gender balance.
- Events such as training, workshops, capacity development, consultative meetings, forums, focus group discussions, expert group meetings (EGMs), should be gender balanced, accessible and include representatives from all parts of society, especially those most at risk of being excluded.
- Accessible locations and time-friendliness of these events must be considered to promote broad participation.
- Specifying and categorizing different groups to identify their individual needs with a focus on issues of vulnerability, opportunity and resilience.
- Conduct institutional mapping to identify existing capacity of institutions and what roles institutions can play in promoting social inclusion.



### **Regional spatial strategy analysis**

- Promote integrated territorial development and strong urban-rural linkages in order to improve livelihoods of marginalized people in rural areas.
- Analyze the spatial characteristics of the area to generate inclusive regional planning proposals based on data generated by that analysis.
- Conduct an analysis on spatial inequalities, affordable housing, access to basic services among others and identify gaps and opportunities along these themes for

mainstreaming and integration of social inclusion in the policy. Use methods like GIS, remote sensing, and participatory mapping to conduct spatial data analysis.

### The policy goals definition



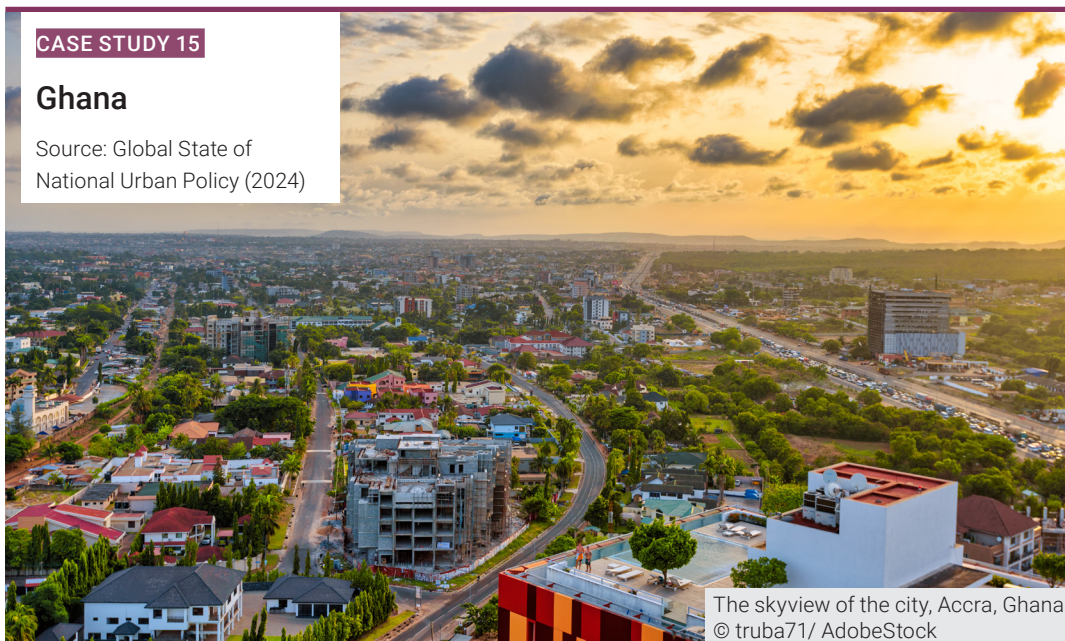
- Clarify the problems and obstacles to human rights and delineate the boundaries of the problem. List goals and objectives for policy solution in the inclusive context, developing preliminary costs and benefits.
- Establishing a clear definition of urban open public space in the country's context to better identify where access and safety needs are to be improved, and communal uses protected – including addressing trend of 'privatized public space.'

Ghana, which is in the implementation phase notes that its NUP considers major housing

#### CASE STUDY 15

### Ghana

Source: Global State of National Urban Policy (2024)



The skyview of the city, Accra, Ghana © truba71/ AdobeStock

challenges facing the country. Some of the highlighted challenges include lack of social housing and inadequate housing for marginalized groups like persons with disabilities and the elderly. To resolve these housing inadequacies and improve access to social amenities like schools and hospitals, Ghana's NUP diagnosed these aspects in the diagnosis phase through stakeholder mapping and analysis and currently taking recommended action in the implementation phase.

Link: <https://unhabitat.org/global-state-of-national-urban-policy-2024>



### 3.1.3. Formulation Phase

This phase entails defining what happens between defining the policy problems and attaining the policy goals. These steps include an evaluation of different policy options, the formulation of the policy plan, the building of consensus, and the evaluation of human, financial and institutional capacity (UN-Habitat, 2018).

The expected output of this phase is a draft NUP.

What is crucial at this phase is to ensure that as many stakeholders as possible, especially the marginalized groups, participate in policy decision-making, propose inputs and revise existing policy components. Therefore, the key questions and recommendations for this phase mainly deal with how to build a framework and structure in which a majority of the population can participate throughout the entire NUP process.



#### Key questions

- What are the policy goals to achieve inclusion?
- What are diverse ways to address these goals?
- How will the proposed policy options impact individuals, prior identified as socially marginalized?
- Among suggested policy options, how will the evaluation of the expected impact, reaction, and potential adverse impacts on marginalized groups of society?
- Has consensus been built regarding this policy among stakeholders?
- Were the targeted groups included, and did they participate in the policy development process?
- How easy is it for people to access, understand, and participate in the policy-making process?
- What measures can be taken to improve access, understanding, and participation?

#### Key recommendations for a selected activity under formulation phase



#### Policy options development and validation of a draft urban policy

- Promote cross-cutting issues and a forward-looking development agenda.
- Address inclusion issues, recognize and acknowledge informality to better protect the marginalized and promote resilience and mitigate the everyday risk and small, medium and large-scale disasters (human-made and/or nature driven).

- Reduce urban and territorial disparities and inequalities, promote an inclusive and productive system of cities and human settlements, strengthening urban-rural linkages and accessibility to infrastructure, public goods and services, national and regional economic development, resilience and environmental protection, and adequate housing (UN-Habitat 2018).



### The validation process

- Undertake a scenario mapping during a stakeholder workshop for how the proposed policy options will affect individuals. Scenarios and priorities will be informed by human rights and gender analysis. Examples of scenarios as below:
  - Will this work for a man with disabilities (visually impaired), a father of two who is living in an informal settlement and needs to travel to work every day?
  - Will it work for a single Indigenous mother of three from a low-income background living in state housing to attend vocational training on the other side of the city?
- Ensure inclusion and meaningful participation of marginalized groups in validation workshops



### Implementation strategy

- Resources are mobilized and distributed for instance, through gender-responsive budgeting to enable administration of the policy. The policy is implemented within its socially inclusive objectives and evaluation is carried out to ensure the implementation aligns with the social inclusion analysis set out in the policy.
- Inclusion and active participation of the rights-holders is crucial at this stage.



### Monitoring and evaluation framework

- Set a strategy for continuous data collection to ensure the new or revised NUP meets projected outcomes and reflects the actual population in the data.
- Set gender equality, women's empowerment and human rights indicators and outcomes using disaggregated SMART indicators.
- An assessment of human, financial and institutional capacity should be undertaken based on the policy proposal in order to identify potential capacity or weakness prior to implementation.
- Ensure equal access to and distribution of financial, human, and technical resources towards inclusion in NUPs and benefits of urbanization.

## CASE STUDY 16

### Paraguay

Source: Global State of  
National Urban Policy (2024)

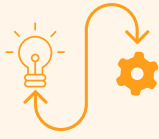


Aerial Drone Fly Above Asuncion City  
Waterfront in Paraguay, Daylight Cityscape  
Panorama of South American River  
© Michele/ AdobeStock

From the 2023 NUP survey, Paraguay notes that its NUP is in the implementation phase. The formulation phase, like other NUP phases, is iterative in nature hence involves rigorous stakeholder engagement from problem identification, policy proposal, validation, and development of a monitoring framework. Paraguay's response emphasizes an extensive engagement and contribution of subnational governments and other non-governmental stakeholders (local communities and civil society) been in the NUP process.

The ongoing participation of Paraguay in the second phase of K-NUPP showcases how the country has embraced stakeholder engagement especially through the planned validation of the draft National Urbanism, Housing and Habitat Plan (PLANUVIH). This will further support implementation of the recently approved National Urbanism, Housing and Habitat Policy (PNUVH). Inclusive aspects in this case involve consultative sessions with academic institutions and civil society.

**Link:** <https://unhabitat.org/global-state-of-national-urban-policy-2024>



### 3.1.4. Implementation Phase

During the NUP Implementation Phase, the policy proposal and plan that had been completed during the Formulation Phase will be translated into actionable items. Implementation phase done often through the acupuncture projects give life to the policy thus giving a basis to evaluate policy impact on the lives of the people (Wang & Deng, 2022). Implementing a NUP means a sustained technical process of building the legal foundations, institutional capabilities, administrative procedures, human capacity,

and financial instruments to pursue this agenda effectively. It requires complex arrangements to coordinate the various actors and agencies involved, including different kinds of partnership.

The strategies, implementation frameworks and local action plans of NUPs should have a central focus on inclusion issues, through discussion and review with various stakeholders, especially with the marginalized, to prevent exclusion and discrimination. These should be noted to closely monitor the policy implementation process and to observe how policies affect marginalized groups. This may require a strategy of decentralization and capacity development of the national and sub-national governments.



#### Key questions

- Is the policy being implemented in such a way as to achieve its socially inclusive objectives?
- Does the implementation plan for the NUP delegate roles and responsibilities to the rights-holders?
- Does the national government and municipalities have the capacity and the incentive to adequately implement inclusive policies?
- What mechanisms are available to ensure that municipal development priorities do not undermine social inclusiveness?
- What challenges (human resources management, fiscal decentralization, structure for accountability, and legal framework assignment of functions) negatively impact decentralization efforts and what implementation strategies can we use to improve the situation?
- How is the change or impact measured? What does inclusion look like in this context?
- How does decentralization (or the lack thereof) impact development outcomes for

the most vulnerable groups?



## Key recommendations for a selected activity under implementation phase

### Implementation analysis

- Undertaking an implementation analysis to understand the policy, legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks in an inclusive context.



### Developing implementation plan and timeline

- To be inclusive at all levels, NUP must be solidly supported by a range of policy instruments and measures that work best in combination: constitutional or legal framework, coherent spatial strategies, financial tools encouraging sustainable investments and other programmes, regulations and projects.
- Build implementation plan including timeline, delegation of roles and responsibilities and performance indicators and targets to structuring the way forward to inclusiveness and communicating how implementation will play out between stakeholders.



### The process of implementation

- Ensure communication protocol and stakeholders involvement during the entire implementation phase. Hold national urban forums throughout NUP process and involve participant groups from as diverse as possible.
- The objectives and strategies regarding inclusiveness in the NUP need to be guaranteed in their implementation using legal and policy instruments and an appropriate allocation of resources.
- Change and update institutional systems and culture as necessary in action of inclusive NUPs and create feedback mechanisms to inform future action.



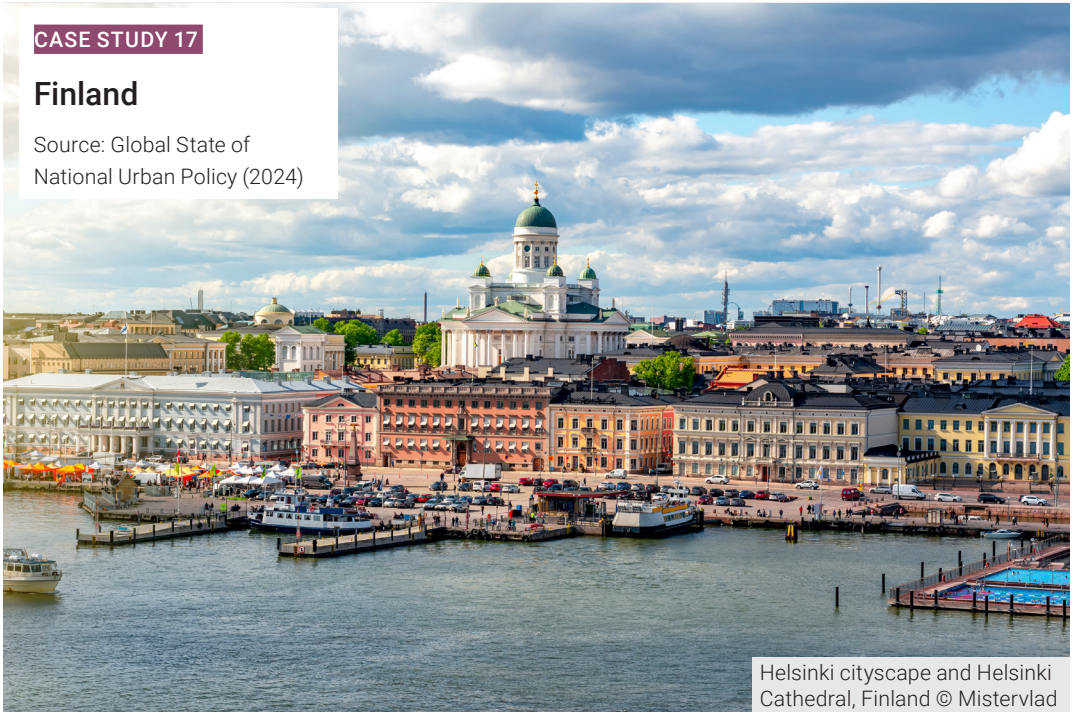
### Considering decentralization and devolution of powers

- Decentralize in order to build capacity of local government and the people to successfully implement the NUP and to ensure inclusive governance.
- Ensure appropriate fiscal decentralization accompanying that of competences, through effective public finance mechanisms that secure financial autonomy and capacity for local government.
- Formulating stronger city-level institutions to plan and manage inclusive NUP and robust legal and financial instruments to help implement policies effectively.

## CASE STUDY 17

# Finland

Source: Global State of  
National Urban Policy (2024)



Helsinki cityscape and Helsinki Cathedral, Finland © Mistervlad

Finland, the country rated first globally in the happiness index<sup>4</sup> had its first NUP developed in 1990's. Currently in the implementation phase, the policy boasts of a cross-sectoral focus and partnership funding modality in its implementation. Drawing from the GSNUP survey questionnaire responses, Finland uses national grant and subsidies like transfer for cities from higher level of governments, incentives and private sector partnerships to implement its NUP.

For instance, the funding from the World Bank will be used to implement 'rapid transit systems' by end of 2025.

Link: <https://unhabitat.org/global-state-of-national-urban-policy-2024>

<sup>4</sup> World Happiness Report (2025). Accessed on 23/4/2025.  
<https://data.worldhappiness.report/table>



### 3.1.5. Monitoring and Evaluation Phase

The evaluation of a policy should not only reflect the impact of the policy, but also the process. It considers the NUP process effectiveness and success of its outcomes concurrently. Therefore, it could be divided into NUP process evaluation and NUP final evaluation report.

The issues identified on the feasibility and diagnosis phases, and the established indicators at the formulation phase provide a base for an evaluation against the implemented actions (Michalina et.al., 2021). From a long-term point of view, this phase is predominantly concerned with construction of an iterative system in order to operate policies in an inclusive manner. The process of policy improvement that reflects monitoring and evaluation results should be included in the policy cycle. It is also necessary to develop the capacity of civil society organizations to carry out multifaceted and objective assessment of policies.



#### Key questions

- Are the respective communities involved in the monitoring and evaluation? Are they able to freely and informedly participate and share their experiences?
- Are the socially inclusive objectives of the policy being assessed?
- Are the outcomes of policy actions having an equal impact, particularly when it comes to areas of social inclusion that were mapped in the feasibility phase?
- How does access to the NUP process differ according to social, cultural, institutional, physical and economic constraints, many of which may be rooted in systemic structural issues in a particular context?
- What are the lessons learned on social inclusion?

#### Key recommendations for a selected activity under monitoring and evaluation phase



#### Undertaking evaluation

- Evaluate the methodologies used in the policy through an inclusion lens; identifying how the policy has or will impact different groups, engaging these groups in the evaluation process, and providing on-going mechanisms for community feedback.
- Evaluate and assess if the social inclusion objectives have been or are being met and identify the failures and reasons regarding inclusion to curb them and involve all the stakeholders (including marginalized groups).



- Evaluate if the policy outcomes show equal impact or a reduction in the inequality gap (the policy impacts may not be equal due to the diverse nature of the various social groups to be included).
- Use the evaluation process to facilitate dialogue and understanding of different stakeholders. Debates and dialogues encourage an assessment that the evaluation operates in tandem with policy to inject debate and feedback into the policy cycle, beyond a narrow-defined place in the policy.

### **Inclusive and flexible, yet iterative policy design and feedback loop**

- Ensure institutional learning and system changes; with governments, institutions and civil society to institutionalize community feedback mechanisms and advance participatory and people-centered monitoring that includes marginalized groups and communities.
- Empower communities, grassroot organizations, social and traditional leaders and civil society at large by providing them with tools for monitoring and evaluating policies and increasing participatory mechanisms in budgeting and/or policymaking and implementation processes.
- Promote iterative policy design, keep long-term goals while being responsive at all times to those who are vulnerable and will be most directly affected by the policies adopted.

## CASE STUDY 18

# Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)

Source: Global State of National Urban Policy (2024)



Aerial View of Riyadh Skyline at Daytime © Wajdram/ AdobeStock

The NUP of the KSA has a robust monitoring and evaluation framework. This is highlighted in three main aspects in the GSNUP 2024 report. First, on the financing implementation and monitoring, KSA has maximized on incentives and the private sector to provide or mobilize technical, financial, and human resources. In terms of measuring impact, an observatory framework at the national level periodically measures outcomes against specific SDG 11 targets and indicators.

In addition, the KSA NUP has achieved measurable, tangible results through greater urban resilience, better institutional framework, enhanced stakeholder engagement, and better coordinated urban infrastructure. In implementing and monitoring NUA, the NUP has aligned with national and sectoral development plans and policies at all territorial levels to harness the transformative power of urbanization.

Link: <https://unhabitat.org/global-state-of-national-urban-policy-2024>



## 3.2. MAINSTREAMING SOCIAL INCLUSION THROUGH NUP Pillars

Consideration for the crosscutting pillars, which are **participation, capacity development, and acupuncture projects** will contribute to the overall inclusiveness of NUP. These pillars answer the ‘how’ aspect of socially inclusive NUPs. They should not be treated separately from the phases but rather, done simultaneously and continuously throughout the phases and implemented in the context of each community, city or urban area. Key questions and recommendations to successfully implement each of the pillars are as discussed below.



### 3.2.1. Participation

Integrating public participation into the NUP process is one of the key pillars of UN-Habitat’s approach to NUP development. Achieving a meaningful participatory approach to policymaking means integrating and involving all stakeholders throughout the NUP process (Noori et al., 2025).

Participation often takes the form of public education, co-creation, and publicity. Stakeholders and experts in charge of NUP development should engage the people, especially marginalized and socially disadvantaged groups through public forums,

surveys, interviews and questionnaires, and focus group discussions.

These avenues ensure diverse viewpoints are considered in a two-way dialogue. At the advanced stages of participation, all city or community residents, especially marginalized groups are actively engaged by the respective authorities to collaborate in shaping the NUP.

To formulate an inclusive and participatory NUP, all should be given the opportunity not only to participate by choosing between pre-determined policy options, but they should also be included in the making and shaping of policy, as the “Makers and Shapers” (Leino & Puumala, 2021).

This dilutes the traditional perspective of city residents as decision takers and instead, translates them into decision makers.

#### Key questions



- How can we identify and define the appropriate roles and responsibilities of different actors?
- How do we assess effective participation of marginalized and disadvantaged groups in the NUP process?
- How can we ensure that marginalized groups are not just participants but active collaborators in shaping the NUP?

- What barriers might prevent marginalized groups from participating, and how can these be addressed?
- How do we draw attention to any inequality and equity challenges facing the urban context? What measures and interventions do enable to build cross-sectoral consensus and strengthen participatory process?
- What indicators can be used to measure extent and impact of public participation?
- How can we ensure sustained engagement and participation from marginalized groups throughout the NUP process?
- What strategies can be implemented to maintain long-term engagement and participation of all stakeholders in urban governance?

### Key recommendations for a selected activity under participation



- Ensuring targeted information-sharing on consultations, and early enough in advance for all stakeholders and communities of urban society to be able to attend.
- Avoiding legal or technical jargon that could distance and disengage the public who often are not versed in urban policy and planning.
- Having dedicated venues, accessible and safe for marginalized persons, for separate discussions that could free up speech.

Material capacity refers to alleviating practical and material obstacles to participation such as;

- Ensuring safe access to transport and public spaces, including streets, green spaces and privatized public spaces.
- Promoting polycentric urban organization and proximity to enable all marginalized groups to work close to home.
- Ensuring that participants are supported on family challenges to free up time for their involvement, by securing relevant basic services such as childcare, security, water and sanitation, and housing

## CASE STUDY 19

### Netherlands

Source: Global State of National Urban Policy (2024)



Beautiful Groenburgwal canal in Amsterdam with the Southern church (Zuiderkerk) at sunset in summer © Dennisvdwater/ AdobeStock

Participation cuts across all the NUP phases iteratively. The Netherlands NUP is in the implementation phase. The policy has a robust inclusivity strategy and also encourages meaningful participation through extensive engagement of government and non-government stakeholders. Civil society, community organizations, special groups like women and youth, academic institutions especially universities, private sector, business owners, and trade unions. Participation is enhanced through formal multi-stakeholder platforms of dialogue between national, subnational governments, and non-government teams.

Link: <https://unhabitat.org/global-state-of-national-urban-policy-2024>



### 3.2.2. Capacity development

Integrating the development of capacity at all levels of national and sub-national government is necessary for building inclusive policy, beginning with the assessment and development of human, financial and institutional capacity. Well-developed and effective capacity development strategies like training, knowledge sharing workshops, improved data collection, and mentorship

programmes are gamechangers in achieving inclusive development (Ahmad & Islam, 2024). Socially inclusive NUPs need to shift from the traditional capacity development interventions whereby only the high authority and office bearers benefit and instead, localize the interventions to local governments and communities to reach all groups of people in the society. This all-round approach boosts participation and awareness of the NUP in the long run. Capacity development in the contemporary world should also be integrated into the NUP process, not only as a one-off activity within the NUP process, but as a continuous process adjusted to advancing technology.

This way, the sustainability of capacity development is assured.



### Key questions

- How effectively are national and local governments developing the capacity to fulfill NUP/SNUP responsibilities, including revenue generation, technical formulation, and policy implementation?
- How effective are the existing capacity development strategies? What are the gaps and how can they be bridged to realize socially inclusive NUPs?
- How to facilitate the inclusion of different perspectives, concerns, solutions, and partnerships into development and implementation of an inclusive NUP.
- What partnerships with educational institutions, NGOs, and international organizations can support capacity development?
- How can collaboration between different government levels and stakeholders be strengthened to enhance these efforts?



### Key recommendations for a selected activity under capacity development

Participation in urban policymaking, and more widely, within the urban public space needs to be made possible by building symbolic and material capacity. Symbolic capacity could be explained as compensating the inadequacy of information and/or confidence that constitute barriers to participation in public policy processes with:

- Adopting an inclusion lens when developing capacity for the development and implementation of NUP, including specialized sessions for all, when appropriate, to ensure their capacity to participate.
- Facilitating, across all parts of society, knowledge and capacity. Training sessions to sensitize residents about their rights and the obligations and responsibilities of their national and local authorities so that they feel confident in participating in public policy decision-making processes in an informed manner.
- Promoting young and other marginalized people's voice and perspectives and building capacities of government to be transparent, inclusive, responsive, and accountable to their population.

## CASE STUDY 20

### Indonesia

Source: Global State of National Urban Policy (2024)



Twilight over the Jakarta business district in Indonesia capital city © jakartatravel/ AdobeStock

Establishing partnerships with educational institutions, NGOs, and international organizations to support and enhance the efforts towards capacity development.

Indonesia's NUP which is in the implementation phase has made provisions to strengthen stakeholder capacity throughout all the phases. Updated in 2020, the policy is expected to propel the country into achieving sustainable urban development and support in establishment of the new capital city Nusantara to address rapid population growth. From the GSNUP survey questionnaire, the policy has mechanisms to facilitate horizontal and vertical alignment and co-ordination. The periodic multi-level forums organized periodically aim at strengthening stakeholder capacity. This is also achieved through technical assistance programmes for policy makers and local community leaders. The policy has enabled effective urban governance through continuous forums that have provided a platform to ensure all voices are heard for institutional reforms.

Link: <https://unhabitat.org/global-state-of-national-urban-policy-2024>



### 3.2.3. Acupuncture projects

Implementation of acupuncture projects is the third pillar that encourages an inclusive NUP process. The aim of socially inclusive

NUP through acupuncture projects is to ensure that the policy translates into direct action. The suggested activities in NUPs are localized through small-scale, human rights based, gender responsive projects from national to sub-national levels. This pillar enables the people, initially excluded, to take active roles in implementing NUPs in their context. In the process, NUP improves the well-being of marginalized persons in cities

and communities through poverty reduction, improved delivery of basic urban services, climate change resilience, reduced spatial and social inequalities (Hemingway & De Castro, 2022).

Transparency and accountability in implementation of acupuncture projects improves urban governance while participation strengthens institutional frameworks at local and national levels (UN-Habitat, 2019). The practice of grounding the inclusive policy through acupuncture projects also provides an

opportunity to evaluate and assess the policy in relation to challenges encountered during implementation as well as gaps hindering achievement of objectives, thus promoting an interactive NUP process.

Therefore, it is important to consider which projects will have the greatest impact relative to the time, human capacity, and finances available. The process uses small-scale interventions, through either planning, implementation or policy, to attempt to contribute to the larger urban context.



### Key questions

- How does a project address the interests and needs of various social groups?
- How does a project contribute to improving the well-being and development outcomes for the marginalized groups?
- Are there specific challenges and needs experienced by marginalized, and disadvantaged groups addressed urgently? How are these addressed in the NUP?
- What are the unique key challenges and opportunities in relation to the issue of strategic importance and to what extent are the challenges effectively addressed, and opportunities enhanced?



### Key recommendations for a selected activity under an acupuncture project pillar

- Identify 'quick wins' and catalytic interventions which can demonstrate the value of a socially inclusive policy and link tangible benefits from targeted marginalized groups to national development.
- Encourage inclusive participation in national and local urban governance, particularly in NUP planning, as well as foster leadership among marginalized groups to ensure their voices are heard.
- Promote equality in access to assets, e.g., land, affordable housing, employment, health, education and basic services through NUPs.
- Link to resilience agendas, by adopting an inclusion lens in strategies to prepare and respond to crises, natural and human-made disasters, climate change and conflict.

- Strengthening the focus in urban planning agenda to promote safety and security in cities and accessible public spaces.
- Ensure a specific focus in NUPs on marginalized groups, including those most often affected by poverty and exclusion.
- Design programmes for localizing and implementing NUPs through a specific inclusion lens.
- Develop a national database of best practices and innovations in urban development, and use this database to inform and inspire stakeholders, ensuring continuous improvement and adaptation of NUPs.

#### CASE STUDY 21

### Niger State, Nigeria

Source: K-NUPP 2023-2024 Annual Report



Suleja, Niger state, Nigeria © UN-Habitat

Nigeria's NUP is in the implementation phase. Acupuncture projects are essential in providing practical guidance to various stakeholders. These have been cascaded to the state levels with Niger State in Nigeria for instance, having launched its SNUP. Niger State has implemented several acupuncture/demonstration projects in the last three years. These include rehabilitation of bi-water schemes, reforestation, and improvement of sanitation. This has benefited over 250,000 residents in six towns, especially the vulnerable population.

The acupuncture projects have not only given life to the Niger state SNUP but also augmented capacity building initiatives for the local community and urban development experts in the country. It also offers a benchmark against which such activities can be replicated in other areas across the country.

Link: <https://urbanpolicyplatform.org/download/2023-2024-annual-report-national-urban-policy-programme-phase-two/>



## 4. SECTION THREE



### 4.1. KEY TAKEAWAYS

Throughout the guide, it is evident that NUP is an essential component towards achieving the SDGs especially Goal 11, NUA and UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan 2026-2029. Social inclusion ensures that formulation, implementation, and monitoring of any NUP/SNUP takes a wholesome, human-right based, and gender sensitive approach. Inclusion should be applied in an iterative manner throughout the NUP pillars and process. In the spirit of *'Leaving No One Behind'*, a socially inclusive NUP needs to consider the main population groups discussed in this guide among others.

While integrating gender responsive and human-rights based social inclusion into NUPs, responsible stakeholders should consider asking specific questions and implementing the recommendations highlighted in this guide throughout the NUP process and for all the cross-cutting pillars.

Key strategies for social inclusion include prioritizing human development, and the use of inclusive language while ensuring inclusive and meaningful participation among the residents. Successful mainstreaming of social inclusion in NUPs depends on leveraging technology, enhancing human and institutional capacity, and sharing knowledge. Implementation should equally embrace inclusive methodologies and processes that reach as many people as possible.

Long term strategies for social inclusion in NUPs and SNUPs include a continuous availability of disaggregated data regarding the most marginalized groups in cities and communities. The evidence base enables stakeholders to continuously map gaps, acknowledging priority groups to strengthen social inclusion through NUP process and pillars.

In addition, availability and allocation of adequate financial, human, and institutional resources to advance advocacy initiatives, train relevant stakeholders, and implement existing policies in the urbanization context will ensure effective inclusion of social aspects for

sustainable development. Periodic monitoring and evaluation alongside benchmarking exercises for good practices with countries in similar contexts also enable national and sub-national to compare progress in relation to regional and global inclusion metrics.



## 4.2. STEPS TO DEVELOP A SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE NUP

Below is a summary with ten (10) suggested steps for developing a socially inclusive NUP. This can be tailored to country context to achieve specific inclusion goals related to national or sub-national urban policies and priorities.







**Figure 4:** 10 steps to develop a socially inclusive NUP




Source: Author, 2026




### 4.3. CHECKLIST FOR DEVELOPING A SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE NUP

**Table 2.** Checklist for mainstreaming social inclusion in NUP phases and pillars

NUP Phase/Pillar	Questions	Y/P/N
<b>NUP Phases</b>		
<b>Feasibility</b> 	Are there statistics showing the demographic trends and cultural dynamics in the country?	
	Are there existing skills gaps? What training is required to strengthen inclusion?	
	Are there any existing policies, institutions and plans that have been created in the national or local levels to address inclusivity?	
<b>Diagnosis</b> 	Does comprehensive disaggregated data exist? Does it highlight existing gaps in social inclusion?	
	Do the existing policy and legislative frameworks and structures address social inclusion?	
	Are there strategies to identify new data sources and methodologies which can be used in implementing socially inclusive NUP interventions?	
<b>Formulation</b> 	Were the targeted groups able to access, understand, and participate in policy formulation and decision-making processes?	
	Will the proposed policy options positively impact individuals, prior identified as socially marginalized?	
	Among the identified policy options, is there a plan to evaluate the expected impact, reaction, and potential adverse policy impacts on marginalized groups?	
<b>Implementation</b> 	Is the policy being implemented in a manner to achieve its socially inclusive objectives?	
	Does the implementation plan for the socially inclusive NUP enable meaningful participation among the various groups and stakeholders?	
	Do governments and municipalities have the capacity and resources to effectively implement and manage inclusive policies?	

<b>Monitoring and Evaluation</b>  	Are the respective communities involved in the monitoring and evaluation? Are they able to freely and informedly participate and share their experiences?	
	Is there a strategy to assess socially inclusive objectives of the urban policies?	
	Are there tools and strategies to assess the impact of socially inclusive NUPs initiatives on the lives of vulnerable groups?	
	Do the outcomes of policy implementation have an equal impact, particularly in the context of social inclusion mapped in the feasibility phase?	
<b>Total Score for inclusion in NUP phases (out of 32)</b>		
<b>NUP Pillars</b>		
<b>Participation</b>  	Have participants been identified, roles and responsibilities clarified?	
	Is there an instrument in place or data to measure the extent of exclusion and its impact on effective participation?	
	Is there a strategy to maintain long-term engagement and meaningful participation of stakeholders?	
	Have barriers preventing marginalized groups from participating identified and addressed?	
	Are there enough infrastructure, equipment, and services to allow meaningful participation?	
	What are the existing policies and legal frameworks to ensure meaningful participation?	
<b>Capacity Development</b>  	Have national and local governments developed the capacity to mainstream social inclusion in NUP/SNUPs?	
	If yes, have stakeholders identified gaps in existing capacity development strategies and how to address them to mainstream socially inclusive NUPs?	
	Are there existing partnerships with academia, NGOs, and international organizations to support capacity development?	
	What strategies are in place to monitor the impact of capacity development initiatives?	

<b>Acupuncture projects</b>  	Do the identified acupuncture projects address the needs and interests of various social groups?	
	Does the project contribute to improved well-being and development outcomes for the most vulnerable in society?	
	Are the programmes designed for localizing and implementing NUPs through a specific inclusion lens?	
	Are there impact assessment tools to measure how acupuncture projects contribute to socially inclusive NUP?	
	<b>Total score for social inclusion in NUP pillars (out of 28)</b>	
	<b>Total score for socially inclusive NUP (out of 60)</b>	

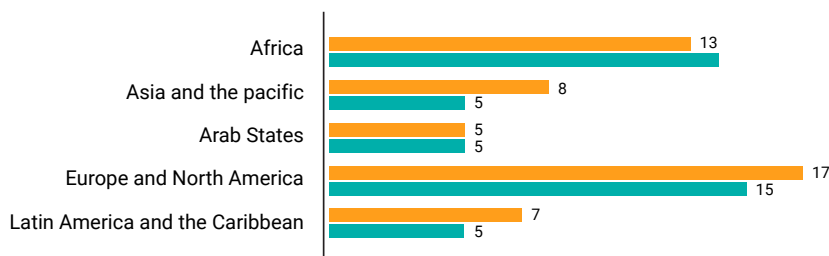
**\*KEY:** Y= yes (2 points), P= partially (1 point), N= no (0 points)

# ANNEX 1: Extract from third edition of GSNUP 2024, on mainstreaming social inclusion into NUPs

This section presents an extract and analysis of questions from the 2024 GSNUP survey with elements of how countries across the globe have incorporated social inclusion in their NUPs and regional development plans.

## Q5. What are the main characteristics of your explicit National Urban Policy?

Q5. Main characteristics of explicit NUP	Integrates and co-ordinates sectoral policies (e.g., urban economy, social inclusion, climate change, technological innovation, etc.)	Promotes and ensures the engagement and participation of subnational governments and stakeholders (citizens, the private sector, academics, etc.)
<b>Africa</b>	13	14
<b>Asia and the Pacific</b>	8	5
<b>Arab States</b>	5	5
<b>Europe and North America</b>	17	15
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	7	5



■ Integrates and co-ordinates sectoral policies (e.g., urban economy, social inclusion, climate change, technological innovation, etc.)  
■ Promotes and ensures the engagement and participation of subnational governments and stakeholders (citizens, the private sector, academics, etc.)

**Figure 5:** NUP characteristics

Source: GSNUP Survey, 2023

**Q9. What level of attention does your NUP grant / is going to grant to the following themes?**

Attention level		Low	Extensive	Moderate
<b>Economic development, skills and innovation</b>	Promote education and skills, and improve labor markets in cities (e.g., role of Public Employment Services)	18	20	32
	Leverage the potential of the social and solidarity economy	29	18	24
<b>Inclusive growth and opportunities for all</b>	Alleviate urban poverty, ensure access to basic urban services and infrastructure (e.g., water, sanitation, waste management, public transport, digital infrastructure) for all urban residents and users	11	42	17
	Leverage digital tools to improve the quality and universal access to public services	16	28	25
	Develop policies and strategies to provide affordable and adequate housing (e.g., innovative financing mechanisms for affordable housing, upgrading informal settlements)	9	37	23
	Promote urban identity and culture and a quality living environment for all neighborhoods (e.g., fighting against spatial segregation, investing in urban public space)	12	34	24
	Provide opportunities for all urban residents, in particular by ensuring that urban development is sensitive to vulnerable urban populations. Promote diversity and inclusion, reduce gender and/or generational gaps.	15	34	22

Engagement, capacity development, monitoring and evaluation	Promote stakeholder engagement in the design and implementation of urban policy (e.g., citizens, businesses)	11	37	21
	Strengthening the capacity of citizens and other stakeholders (e.g., business, trade unions, etc.) in cities (capacity building & education & training)	18	25	27

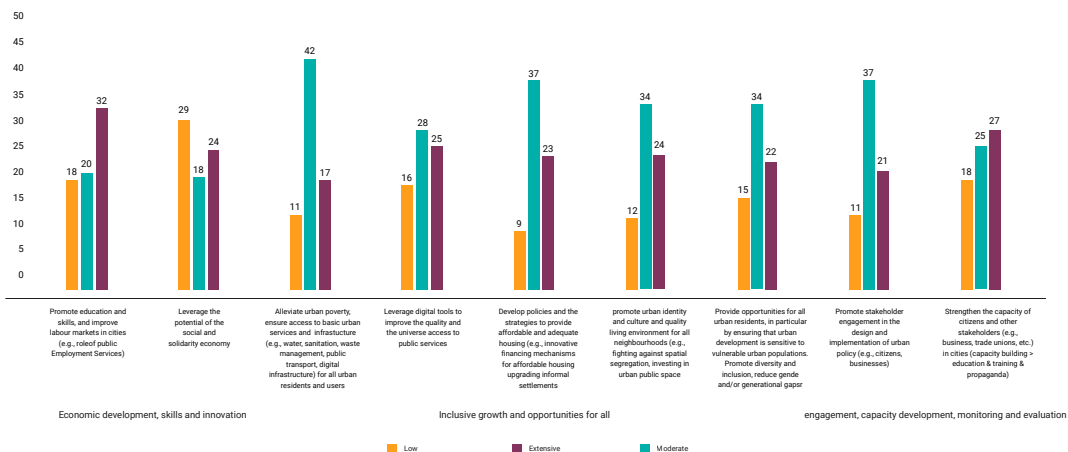


Figure 6: NUP's address on social inclusion themes

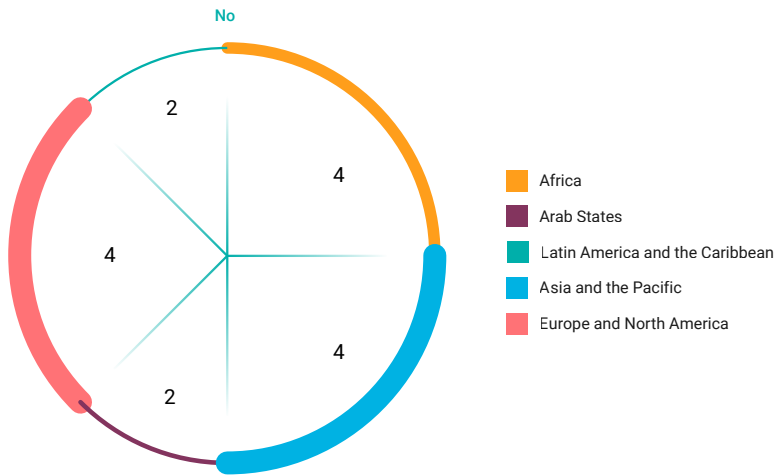
Source: GSNUP Survey, 2023

### Q10. Does your NUP and/or do your Regional Development Plans contribute to the SDG 11.a.1 target?

- a. Responding to population dynamics refers to addressing population composition, trends and projections in achieving development goals and targets.

	Yes	No
NUP	59	16
Regional Development Plans	40	32

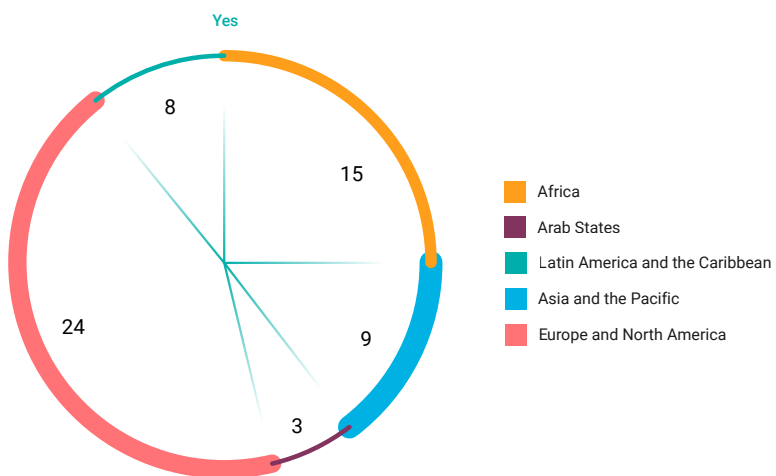
For NUP	Yes	No
Africa	15	4
Asia and the Pacific	9	4
Arab States	3	2
Europe and North America	24	4
Latin America and the Caribbean	8	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>16</b>



**Figure 7:** How NUPs contribute to SDG 11.a.1 target

Source: GSNUP Survey, 2023

For Regional Development Plans	Yes	No
Africa	6	11
Asia and the Pacific	8	4
Arab States	1	4
Europe and North America	23	5
Latin America and the Caribbean	2	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>32</b>

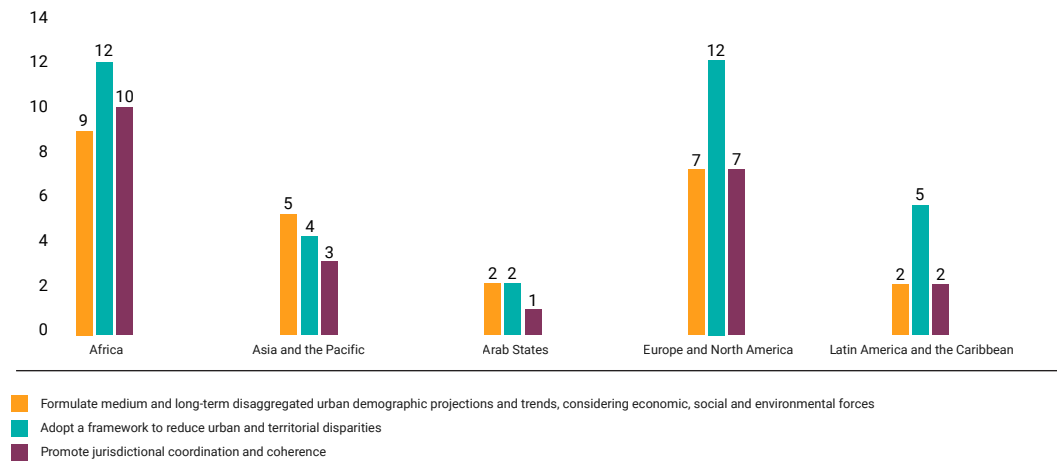


**Figure 8:** How Regional Development Plans contribute to SDG 11.a.1 target

Source: GSNUP Survey, 2023

## Q12. Does your NUP support implementing and monitoring the New Urban Agenda?

Region	Formulates medium and long-term disaggregated urban demographic projections and trends, considering economic, social and environmental forces	Adopt a framework to reduce urban and territorial disparities	Promote jurisdictional coordination and coherence
Africa	9	12	10
Asia and the Pacific	5	4	3
Arab States	2	2	1
Europe and North America	7	12	7
Latin America and the Caribbean	2	5	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>23</b>

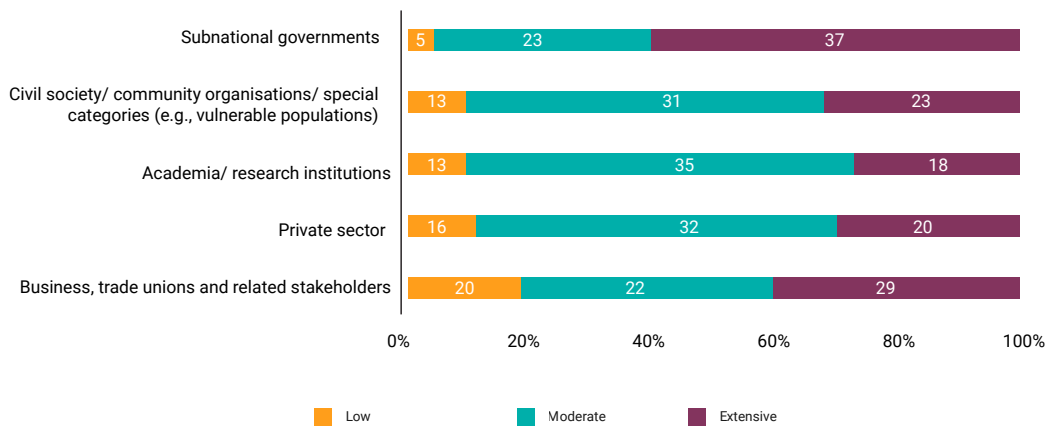


**Figure 9:** How NUPs support implementing and monitoring NUA

Source: GSNUP Survey, 2023

**Q16. To what extent have subnational governments and other non-governmental stakeholders been engaged with/contributed to the NUP process?**

	Low	Moderate	Extensive
Subnational governments	5	23	37
Civil society / community organizations / special categories (e.g., vulnerable populations)	13	31	23
Academia / research institutions	13	35	18
Private sector	16	32	20
Business, trade unions and related stakeholders	20	22	29

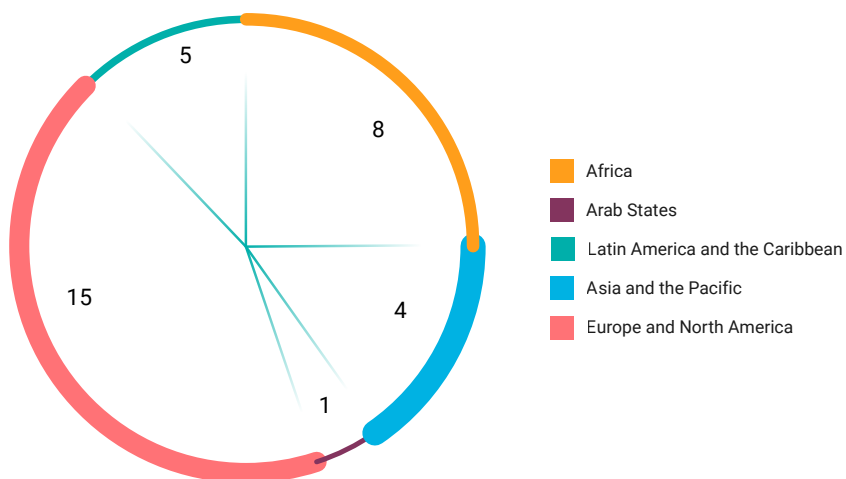


**Figure 10: Stakeholder engagement in NUP Process**

Source: GSNUP Survey, 2023

**Q17. Does your NUP have implementation mechanisms at the national level?**

	Capacity building: Trainings for national and subnational government representatives and officials working with universities/professional institutions (e.g., to develop specific curricula on urban policy)
<b>Region</b>	
<b>Africa</b>	8
<b>Asia and the Pacific</b>	4
<b>Arab States</b>	1
<b>Europe and North America</b>	15
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>

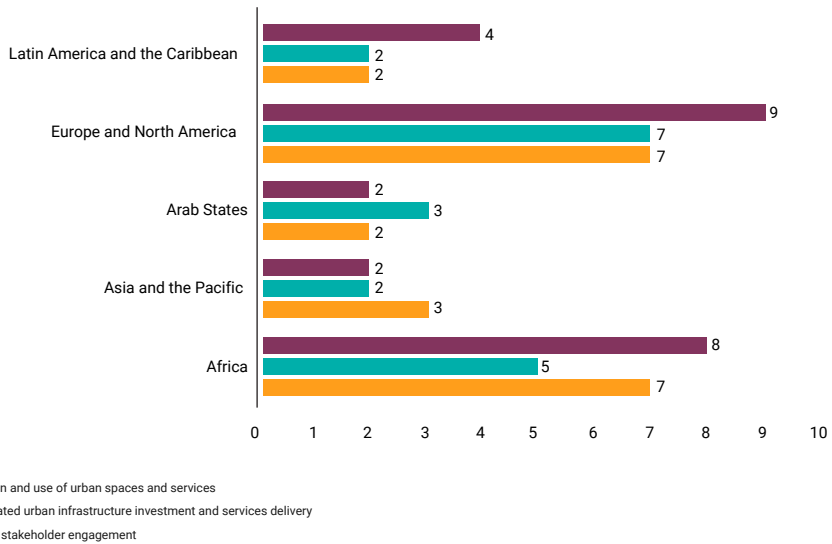


**Figure 11:** Inclusive capacity building in NUP processes

Source: GSNUP Survey, 2023

**Q20. If you answered 'yes' to Q19, where has your NUP delivered tangible results or improvements?**

Region	More effective stakeholder engagement	Better coordinated urban infrastructure investment and services delivery	Inclusive design and use of urban spaces and services
Africa	7	5	8
Asia and the Pacific	3	2	2
Arab States	2	3	3
Europe and North America	7	7	9
Latin America and the Caribbean	2	2	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>26</b>

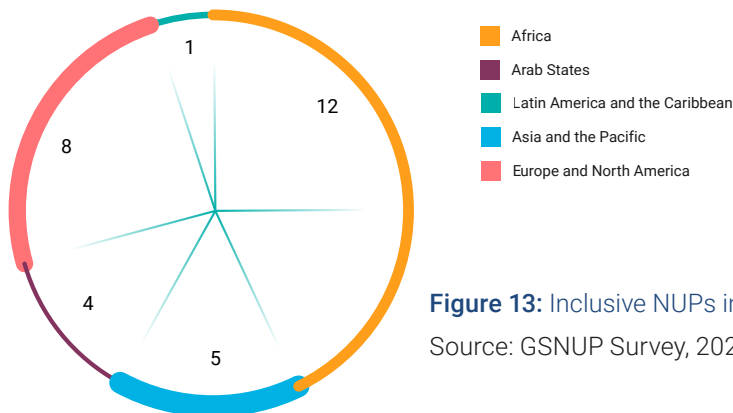


**Figure 12:** Inclusive urban design, coordination, and use of public spaces

Source: GSNUP Survey, 2023

**Q22. Which actions are foreseen within your NUP to promote resilience against different shocks, crises and uncertainties?**

Region	Participatory planning and investments (e.g., involving vulnerable population)
Africa	12
Asia and the Pacific	5
Arab States	4
Europe and North America	8
Latin America and the Caribbean	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>

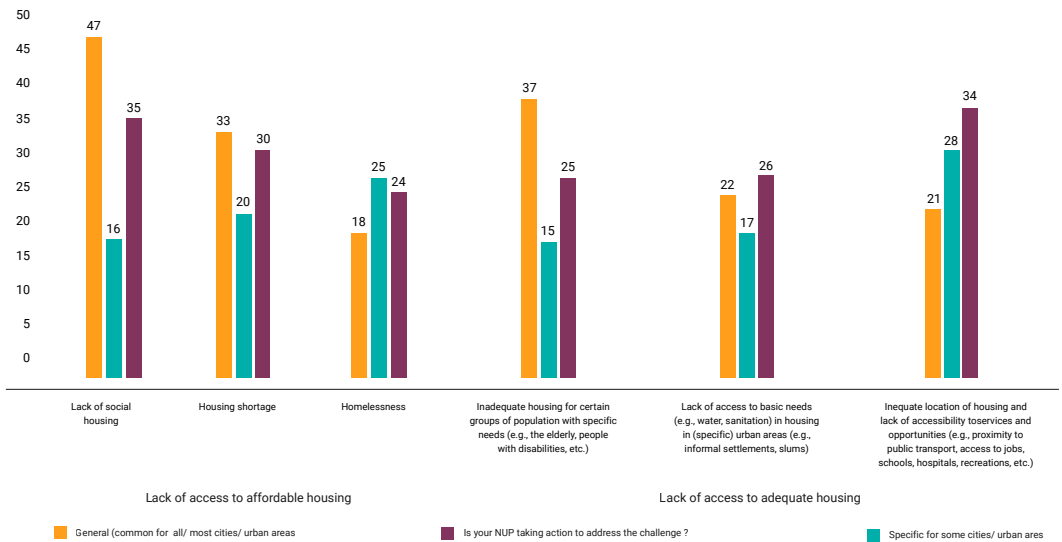


**Figure 13:** Inclusive NUPs in resilience management

Source: GSNUP Survey, 2023

**Q25. What are major housing challenges in cities and urban areas in your country, and how are they included and potentially addressed within your NUP?**

		<b>General (common for all/most cities/urban areas)</b>	<b>Specific for some cities/urban areas</b>	<b>Is your NUP taking action to address the challenge?</b>
Lack of access to affordable housing	Lack of social housing	47	16	35
	Housing shortage	33	20	30
	Homelessness	18	25	24
Lack of access to adequate housing	Inadequate housing for certain groups of population with specific needs (e.g., the elderly, people with disabilities, etc.)	37	15	25
	Lack of access to basic needs (e.g., water, sanitation) in housing in (specific) urban areas (e.g., informal settlements, slums)	22	17	26
	Inadequate location of housing and lack of accessibility to services and opportunities (e.g., proximity to public transport, access to jobs, schools, hospitals, recreations, etc.)	21	28	34

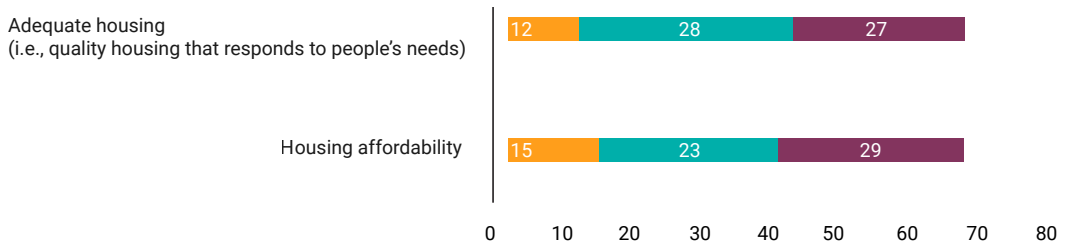


**Figure 14: Housing challenges addressed in NUPs**

Source: GSNUP Survey, 2023

**Q26. What level of attention does your NUP grant to affordable, adequate and sustainable housing? How is your NUP addressing housing challenges in cities and urban areas?**

	Low	Moderate	Extensive
Housing affordability	15	23	29
Adequate housing (i.e., quality housing that responds to people's needs)	12	28	27

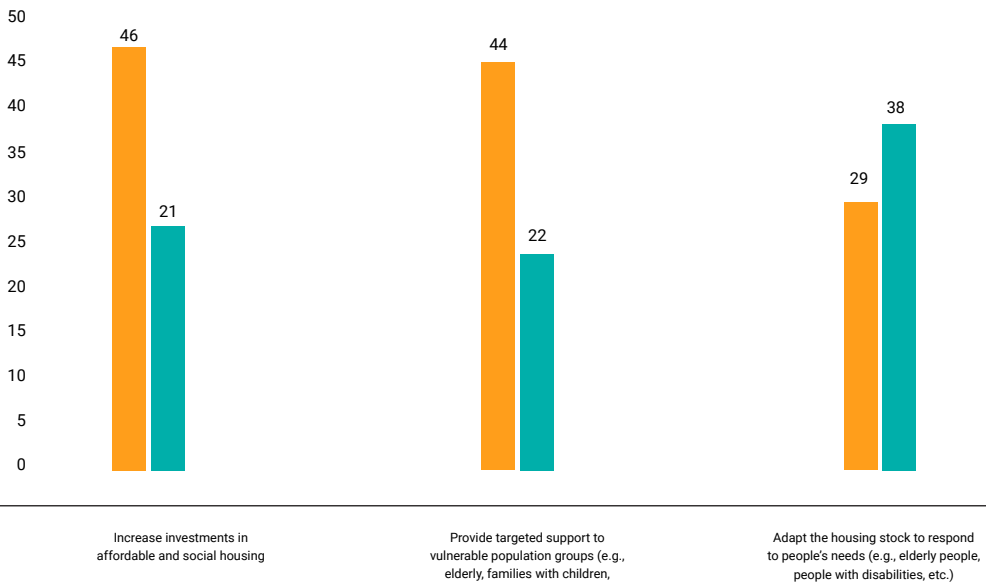


**Figure 15: NUPs attention to adequate and affordable housing**

Source: GSNUP Survey, 2023

**Q27. Which actions are foreseen within your NUP to promote affordable, adequate and sustainable housing?**

		Yes	No
Affordable housing	Increase investments in affordable and social housing	46	21
	Provide targeted support to vulnerable population groups (e.g., elderly, families with children, low-income households, homeless people, refugees, etc.)	44	22
Adequate housing	Adapt the housing stock to respond to people's needs (e.g., elderly people, people with disabilities, etc.)	29	38



**Figure 16: NUPs promoting inclusive housing**

Source: GSNUP Survey, 2023

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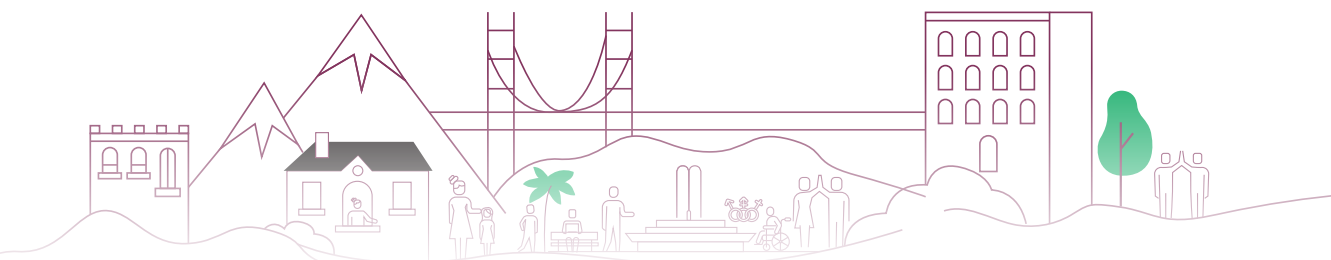
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Social inclusion remains a pivotal measure of sustainable urban development. This is because people in cities and communities serve as both givers and takers of various urbanization components and resulting impacts. On the one hand, effective integration of all urban and community residents through meaningful participation, capacity building, and demonstration projects leads to realization of seamless urbanization policy processes. On the other hand, the results through improved quality of life from aspects like spatial equity, improved provision of urban basic services, affordable and inclusive housing, and fairer employment opportunities all contribute to the realization of inclusive, sustainable and resilient cities and communities. This guide has been developed with an objective to support national and local governments and other actors to mainstream social inclusion as a fabric of their respective national and sub-national urban policies thus subsequently contribute to global development agendas.

First, the guide analyzes the various aspects of social inclusion, highlighting cases studies on how countries across the globe have integrated these aspects into their urban development process. Further, it proposes means through which countries can mainstream social inclusion in the NUP phases (feasibility, diagnosis, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) and pillars (participation, capacity building, acupuncture projects) using examples from countries that have integrated social inclusion aspects in their various NUP stages. It finally recommends a summary through a ten-step pathway to achieve an inclusive urbanization process.

In the spirit of *'Leaving No One Behind'*, this guide envisions that national and local government officials, urban experts, academia, civil society, researchers and community at the grassroots will enhance inclusive urban policy processes. Through this guiding framework, cities and communities can achieve effective, inclusive, and sustainable urbanization outcomes.



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