

PROFILE

---

# Regional Office for Arab States

**UN**  **HABITAT**  
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE







Aleppo, Syria, before the crisis. Photo© UN-Habitat/



# FOREWORD

The Arab region is one of the most urbanized regions in the world. 56% of its 357 million people live in cities and the number is increasing. Demographic processes made the population quadruple in the past 40 years, and rural-urban migration as well as refugee flows caused by conflicts and natural disasters brought even more people to the cities, seeking a better quality of life, stability and safety. This trend is ongoing and thus urbanization will continue to be one of the most significant sources of economic and social transformation in the upcoming decades. Cities have long been hubs of growth, productivity and invention, and the prosperity of nations is closely linked to them. The world is becoming more and more aware of this connection and the Arab region is no exception. Thus, in December 2015, with the support of UN-Habitat Regional Office for Arab States (ROAS) and under the auspices of the Government of Egypt and the League of Arab States, Arab leaders came together at the First Arab Ministerial Forum for Housing and Urban Development to review how the role of urbanization as a source of development and contributor of peace and stability can be realised through a trans-regional effort.

This approach aligns with the recently adopted Sustainable Development Agenda, which aims, through the Goal 11 to “make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”. The Arab states have already demonstrated commitment towards realizing this goal not least through setting the League of Arab States Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urbanisation which was endorsed in December 2015. UN-Habitat will support Arab states in efforts to achieve sustainable urbanisation and the right of adequate housing to all, within the framework of the New Urban Agenda which will be finalized at the 3rd United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) taking place in 2016. Although UN-Habitat strongly believes that urbanization can be a solution rather than a problem, there are many issues that remain to be addressed. These issues are very diverse and range from a lack of coherent urban policies to the rapid expansion of informal settlements to inadequate provision of shelter and basic urban services. UN-Habitat ROAS tackles these issues with a three-pronged approach designed to achieve sustainable urbanisation, comprising of urban legislation and governance, urban planning and design and urban finance. UN-Habitat also emphasizes the importance of human rights, gender, youth and climate change as cross-cutting issues in its work. This is the basis on which UN-Habitat’s seven focus areas and its development tools are built upon and through which we aspire to achieve a better urban future for the people in the Arab region.

This document provides an overview of UN-Habitat’s work in the Arab region through highlighting examples of work in the seven focus areas.



**Dyfed Aubrey**  
Regional Director UN-Habitat Regional Office for Arab States

# URBAN ISSUES

## Urban Data for the Arab Region<sup>1</sup>

Population (2010)	357 million <sup>2</sup>
Urban Population (2010)	56% <sup>3</sup>
Youth Population (2010)	60%(below 25 years) <sup>4</sup>
Urban slum population as a percentage of total urban residents: (2012)	28,4% <sup>5</sup>
GDP per capita growth (1990-2011)	2% <sup>6</sup>
Number of refugees (2010)	7,5 million <sup>7</sup>
Number of IDPs (2010)	9,8 million <sup>8</sup>

## Key Urban Issues in the Arab Region

ROAS identifies eight key issues that pose challenges, but also opportunities in correlation with the urbanization process in the region:

**Demographic trends** over recent decades have resulted in accelerated urbanization in the region, and contributed to, instability. While about 60 per cent of the population is below the age of 25, employment opportunities for the youth and particularly young women are limited; young women and girls are also frequently excluded from decision-making processes. Marginalization, felt by youth has translated into political polarization.

While the economic performance of the Arab

states is very diverse, and while there is a general recognition amongst Arab Governments of the importance of the city as a hub for economic activity and job creation, a number of challenging **economic trends** related to urbanisation prevail. These include limited diversification of local economies leaving them vulnerable to global market fluctuations; shortage of jobs, partly as a result of the privatisation of formerly state-owned enterprises; scarcity of small scale credits and lack of affordable housing, which has left many people in cities in desperate situations. These trends have led to the growth of major informal economic sectors in the Arab cities, and the rapid expansion of informal spatial development.

**Social trends** in many Arab countries are characterized by social inequality.<sup>9</sup> This is manifested visibly in cities where well serviced affluent communities and poor, frequently underserved communities exist in close proximity. Social inequalities are also experienced between cities. Youth are often marginalised and lack opportunities to contribute meaningfully in society. Likewise, women and girls are affected by a prevalent gender bias, rooted in tradition.

Issues of **security and conflict** are major challenges for the Arab region. The last decade is characterized by the repeated occurrence of various intense and violent conflicts. They



Manshiet Nasser, 2014. Photo© Dyfed Aubrey

1 The term "Arab region" includes each of the four Arab sub-regions: the Maghreb, the Mashreq, the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the countries of the Southern Tier

2 UN-Habitat (2012): The State of Arab Cities Report

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 The Arab Millennium Development Goals Report (2013)

6 Ibid.

7 UN-Habitat (2012): The State of Arab Cities Report

8 Ibid.

9 See the Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/IHDI>



Bombed out building in Aleppo, Syria. Photo© UN-Habitat

resulted in massive flows of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees to cities in more peaceful areas, affecting the cities in the conflict country as well as cities in neighbouring states. Rapid population influx within, to and between cities has resulted in localised surges in the cost of living including housing rental, competition for employment, and inadequate access to basic services.

The management of **land and urban planning** in the Arab region is often very centralized, which tends to leave cities without the capacity to effectively plan and regulate urban development and expansion. Urban planning approaches are often outdated, do not take into account the realities of the urban population, and are poorly regulated. This has often resulted in spatial

segregation by class, declining densities, lack of public space and the development of unplanned neighbourhoods.

Also connected to conflict and planning issues, a lot of Arab governments struggle to fulfil **the right to adequate housing and basic urban services**. The influx of refugees, demographic trends, land speculation and poorly planned city extensions resulted in a significant shortage of affordable housing. People whose needs are not satisfied by the formal housing market resort to informal construction instead, often on the urban periphery. In informal settlements housing safety standards are often not met and access to basic services is limited.

Arab countries are very exposed to extreme

environments and **climate change**. Their already scarce water resources are decreasing and cultivated areas are increasingly threatened by desertification. Paradoxically, at the same time heavy rainfall and sea level rise could be devastating to many of the region's densely populated cities. Risks associated with climate change and natural hazards in cities need to be better understood, and measures to increase resilience to the impacts of climate change and reduce disaster risks will be essential, and will necessitate cooperation between states on certain issues.

Similar to urban planning, effective **governance and legislation** of Arab cities is hindered by high degrees of centralization. Municipalities are often completely dependent on central governments, both financially and politically, and often lack trained personnel to plan and manage urban growth. With the absence of politically and fiscally empowered local government, many cities in the region are unable to respond effectively to the needs and priorities of local citizens.

# UN-HABITAT IN THE ARAB REGION

## About the Organisation

UN-Habitat is the United Nations' programme working towards a better urban future. Due to the pressing needs of housing and sustainable urbanisation in the Arab Region, Arab member states pressed for an Arab regional office. In September 2010, the Government of Egypt signed a cooperation agreement with UN-Habitat on the establishment of a Regional Office for Arab States, which was accredited in April 2011. UN-Habitat ROAS has a mandate to provide technical cooperation and capacity building for 18 countries across the Arab region: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Sudan, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Currently there are active projects in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Sudan with a total project portfolio of about 150 million USD as of 2016. UN-Habitat works closely together with the League of Arab States (LAS) on housing and urban development issues. Recently, ROAS assisted the LAS in developing the Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, 2030. This strategy, which was endorsed on the 30th session of the Arab Council for Housing and Construction, represents a methodology for localizing and implementing the SDGs, especially SDG 11. It proposes a set of goals and targets to develop the sector of housing and



Riyadh. Photo© Mohammed al-Deghaishim

other relevant sectors to achieve integrated, inclusive and sustainable urbanization at the regional level, to be adapted and developed according to the specific context of each country at the national level. Finally, with support from ROAS the First Arab Ministerial

Forum on Housing and Urban Development (AMFHUD) took place in December 2015 in Cairo and resulted in the Cairo Declaration. The conference will take place every two years.



## Achieving Sustainable Urban Development

In line with the LAS Strategy, the Sustainable Development Agenda, particularly Goal 11, as well as the New Urban Agenda, the vision of UN-Habitat ROAS is to:

“Support the development of integrated, inclusive and sustainable cities and human settlements capable of providing an adequate standard of living for children, youth, women and men, being well governed and resilient to shocks.”

To face the aforementioned challenges and utilize the opportunities that accompany urbanization processes, ROAS presents a comprehensive strategy which is based upon a three-pronged approach which contains the following principles as key drivers for sustainable urban development: efficient and inclusive physical design; sustainable financial planning; rules and regulations for planning and inclusive governance. The physical planning at national, regional and city level determines population distribution, the system of interrelationships between villages, towns, cities and corridors, and the growth of urban areas, considering density, connectivity, land use, and the delineation of public space. Cities can be designed to be economically productive and socially equitable. Urban finance provides the mechanism through which the economy of the city and the value of land and property can translate into revenue as needed to provide access to basic urban services for all and to finance sustainable expansion. Planning and financing mechanisms are enabled by appropriate legislation and well-functioning institutions.

In addition to these principles, UN-Habitat’s programme of development is based on the UN Common Understanding of the Human Rights-Based Approach, and aims to further the realization of human rights as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments including the Arab Charter on Human

Rights. ROAS also mainstreams the cross-cutting issues of gender, youth, and climate change and aligns its programmes within seven focus areas that are adapted to the particularities of the region as follows.



Reconstruction works, Lebanon. Photo© UN-Habitat

## 1) Urban Planning and Design

Urban planning strategies and frameworks frequently fail to keep up with the rapid rate of urbanisation. This results in spontaneous forms of urbanisation, characterised by less dense and inefficient land use patterns. Among these is the lack of urban public space, which traditionally provides relief in urban environments and has an important social function in Arab societies. Planned urbanization in the Arab region is constrained by the lack of coherent urban policies at national, subnational and city levels, lack of coherence amongst sectoral strategies, and lack of linkage of spatial development strategies with sectoral development strategies. Local governments and municipalities therefore lack a framework to adequately guide, plan and regulate urban development and expansion, as well as the capacity and resources to do so. A lack of coordination between departments also leads to contradicting policies in some countries. As a result, the potential for urbanization to drive growth and development is constrained. In order to change this, more holistic approaches to urban development are needed, guided by National Urban Policies. With its long-time experience in the field and a number of tools at its disposal UN-Habitat is well prepared to support the Arab governments plan and design sustainable urban growth. Tools deployed in the Arab Region include urban and metropolitan planning, neighbourhood planning, planned city extensions, and urban infill design.

### **Saudi Arabia: Future Saudi Cities Programme**

Embedded in the context of UN-Habitat's Future Saudi Cities Programme, UN-Habitat is working together with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to formulate and implement a National Urban Policy. The previous national spatial strategy of 2000 required revision to take into consideration energy consumption, environmental sustainability and economic efficiency. It also needs to address unemployment rates and prevent urban sprawl, particularly in major cities (Jeddah, Riyadh), which currently experience the growth of slums and informal settlements. The National Urban Policy needs also to reform the governance of cities, as municipalities lack adequate resources and capacity to undertake urban management functions with any substantive degree of autonomy and lack of coordination between departments has often resulted in contradictory policies.

The Future Saudi Cities Programme provides a holistic approach to develop a National Urban Policy that amalgamates within a national system of regions, governorates and cities the currently dispersed energy and potential of urban centres. The National Urban Policy will coordinate the work of different sectors and tiers of government, establish the incentives for more sustainable practices, and will provide a planned and geographically connected basis for the allocation of resources.

## 2) Urban Legislation, Land and Governance

Countries in the Arab region often lack efficient legal and institutional capacities to organize the extension of urban space. Inefficient policies and defunct governmental structures resulted in high percentages of informal land, the sprawl of unplanned areas and insecurity of tenure and property rights. These problems are aggravated by often very centralized and rigid administrative processes which left municipalities incapable to manage the dynamics of rapid urbanization in a sustainable way. At the same time inhabitants and slum dwellers are often not perceived as rights-holders and lack access to local decision making processes. Within this focus area UN-Habitat develops legislation, mechanisms and capacity as needed to make affordable land available at a pace to match urbanization and to strengthen the role of the communities in this process.

### **Egypt: Participatory Review of Egyptian Planning and Related Urban Development Legislation to Support Sustainable Urban Development Project (January 2014 - March 2015)**

Funded by the German Government (through the BMZ), the project assisted the Egyptian Government in reforming its legal framework for sustainable urban development in a pro-poor manner by increasing the range of appropriate tools available to increase access to serviced



land and lower the proportion of informal development in the country's cities. The project has: (1) improved understanding of urban planning and management laws and their relationship to and impact on institutional structures; (2) initiated the empowerment of national and local authorities and key stakeholders to effectively guide and manage urban development; and (3) mobilized resources for reform of the urban legal system in areas of land management, planned urban expansion, improved supply of affordable serviced land in cities, and a means to generate local revenue through the urbanization process. The knowledge generated in this project was shared through expert group meetings in the Arab region.

### 3) Urban Economy

By concentrating the factors of production (land, labour, capital) cities are the main creators of economic wealth, generating over 70% of global GDP. Increasingly, Arab governments seem to recognize the importance of the city as a laboratory for innovation, a magnet for investment and a source of job creation. There is growing recognition of the role of sustainable urbanisation to reduce the proportion of people living in poverty, and a growing desire to harness the economic potential of cities within national systems of cities. These typically include systems of interdependent urban agglomerations and growth nodes,



ED of UN-Habitat Joan Clos speaks at First AMFHU in Cairo. Photo© UN-Habitat

linked by development corridors, and lead to the emergence of metropolitan urban regions. To be able to make adequate services available, implement sustainable urban development plans and provide the overall framework that can unleash economic growth, suitable urban financing strategies are key. These financing strategies are designed so that economy and land value generated by urbanisation can be partially reinvested into the city's management, infrastructure and services.

UN-Habitat is supporting the development of National Urban Policies in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Lebanon and Sudan. Building on the overall policy framework provided in the NUPS for

maximising the potential of cities to generate economy as well as local revenue through sharing the benefit of improved urban economies and land value, pilot projects and legislation are being developed in Egypt. They generate revenue through planned city extensions and valuable lessons learned are being shared in the region. In Jordan the municipal credit rating tool is applied to assess and strengthen capacity of local authorities in financial management and revenue generation. Other projects in Iraq, Sudan and Palestine have sought to improve livelihoods and generate economy through supporting the vocational training of low-income women and youth in urban livelihood and construction skills.

### **Palestine: Technical and Vocational Training Centre for Underprivileged Women in Hebron**

Funded by the Saudi Committee for the Palestinian People Relief, UN-Habitat in partnership with Hebron Municipality and line ministries in the West Bank/occupied Palestinian territories, have been supporting an environment that promotes alleviation of poverty among women in Hebron city since 2009. This included establishing a Technical and Vocational Training Centre to empower underprivileged women and their families and improve their living standards through the provision of vocational training, urban entrepreneurship development and economic training programs and initiatives. The Technical and Vocational Training Center targets vulnerable urban women-headed families. Under this framework UN-Habitat held participatory appraisal workshops and completed a comprehensive field survey that covered more than 600 households in the city. These interviews and workshops aimed at identifying the underlying problems, training needs and potential economic initiatives required for the improvement of the socio-economic situation of poor women in the city. The project has also contributed to capacity building of women's skill development institutions in other cities and towns in the occupied Palestinian territories.

## **4) Urban Basic Services**

In order to keep up with ever increasing urbanization, governments in most Arab countries face the challenge of providing increased access to land and provide for sufficient urban basic services and infrastructure. In general, access to services and infrastructure as well as health and education facilities is better in cities than in rural areas. However, cities lack resources and the management capacity to cope with increasing demands for service provision and as a result some neighbourhoods are left without access to drinking water and sanitation, energy services, transport and public facilities, leading to unsatisfying

and sometimes dangerous environments for their inhabitants. A lack of sufficient public transport systems also translates into less mobility for some social groups, which excludes them from a large part of the city.

### **Lebanon: Enhancing the Role of Unions of Municipalities to Respond to Refugees' & Host Communities' Needs**

Since 2013 and funded by UNHCR and UNICEF, UN-Habitat Lebanon built on its previous experience in capacity building and launched the "Enhancing the Role of Unions of Municipalities to Respond to Refugees' & Host Communities' Needs" project. The aim of the project is to help



Area C planning project, Palestine. Photo© UN-Habitat

local authorities affected by the rapid and significant influx of Syrian refugees to cope with the strains in the provision of water, sanitation and garbage collection within host communities and acute shelter needs of refugee families. This has been achieved through enabling the active involvement of municipalities in identifying, assessing and facilitating sound shelter facilities and the delivery of basic urban services taking into account the existing and forthcoming numbers of refugees.

The project launched two Regional Technical Offices in 2 Unions of Municipalities in Sahel Zahrani and Iqleem al-Kharoub. These offices work with municipalities in the region in identifying, planning and executing priority interventions in sectors of shelter, infrastructure and services. UN-Habitat identified and trained the RTOs and supported the coordination of project activities. The project has increased the capacity of local authorities, and empowered them to take a lead in the planning and provision of urban basic services in refugee affected communities.

The Regional Technical Offices are responsible for:

- Improving water access for 20,000 individuals in Nabatieh area;
- 45,000 of households now have access to wastewater/sewage systems in Mount Lebanon and the south;
- 10 Municipalities with systems



strengthened and harmonized to increase access to quality wastewater/sewage services.



## 5) Housing and Slum Upgrading

UN-Habitat puts the right to adequate housing at the centre of the New Urban Agenda. An increasing number of people worldwide is without adequate housing. Still now the world is recovering from a dysfunctional housing market that treated housing and land purely as a commodity, and caused one of the most severe economic crises in recent history. UN-Habitat ROAS concentrates its efforts on working with its partners on holistic urban strategies that puts human rights and people's needs at the forefront. Most Arab countries have made significant progress in developing initiatives to increase the supply of affordable housing through targeted programmes. However, particular countries still fail to meet the increased housing demand effectively. Conflicts in Yemen, Libya, Palestine, Iraq, Sudan and Syria have led to waves of displacement, resulting in massive population growth in some municipalities (fourfold in some areas of Syria) as people move to where they feel safer. These demographic shocks are accompanied by rising rent prices and overcrowding with three or four families per apartment to save rental cost. As rents continue to rise, more and more secondary displacement takes place, resulting in some families residing in incomplete or non-residential buildings. The significant shortage of affordable housing in most countries of the Arab region has resulted in continuous informal growth especially on the urban periphery, in undesirable and hazardous locations or in existing older,



Dawodye IDP shelter compound, Dohuk, Northern Iraq. Photo© UN-Habitat

substandard buildings.

UN-Habitat has provided an analysis of national housing markets through implementing the Housing Profile tool in Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq, and Palestine. These have translated into housing policies which in turn identified reforms that are needed to enable a well-functioning housing market to achieve the right to adequate housing for all. UN-Habitat is also active in slum upgrading and has implemented a number of pilot initiatives, for example in Kurani Ainkawa, Erbil, which benefited 2000 families. Learning from such initiatives UN-Habitat has supported citywide and national slum upgrading programmes in

Morocco, Iraq and Egypt, and plays now a significant role in addressing housing and shelter needs in crisis situations.

### **Iraq: Durable Shelter Support for IDPs in Iraq**

The project, funded by the Saudi Humanitarian Fund and launched in early August 2014, aims to develop infrastructure and public facilities including 5,339 temporary prefabricated shelter units for 32,034 internally displaced persons (IDPs) as well as medical facilities and schools in three shelter sites located in Dawodye (Dohuk);

Barznja (Sulaymaniyah) and Bahrka (Erbil). Historically it was experienced that camps eventually develop into slums, as tents are gradually replaced with more permanent structures, which in turn generate new challenges. Prefab shelter solutions are considered as dignified and durable for fast installation and protection from harsh weather conditions as contrary to tents. Additionally, due to the protracted nature of this displacement crisis, the adopted prefab shelter solution is more economically feasible for the medium and long term sheltering. Most significantly this project has integrated the IDP camps into cities as extensions or urban infills, under the management of municipalities. This provides an exit strategy for the UN, but most importantly it enables IDPs to access employment and basic services as other local citizens, and ensures, through following urban planning principles that the camps will not become future slums.

## 6) Risk Reduction and Rehabilitation

Arab countries are amongst those with the scarcest water resources per capita in the world. Groundwater reserves, aquifers and fossil water supplies are being depleted at alarming rates. Water scarcity is a challenge that has led to conflict in the past and will be exacerbated by climate change. Climate change-induced temperature increases and precipitation declines will further aggravate water scarcity and increase the frequency



Impact of flooding in Sudan. Photo© UN-Habitat

of severe droughts, with an adverse impact on agricultural production. Desertification and the associated threats of future water and food insecurity for ever-larger urban populations are among the key defining problems of the region. Paradoxically at the same time, heavy rain and sea level rise could bring devastating floods to many of the region's densely populated cities. Risks associated with climate change and natural hazards in cities need to be better understood, and measures to increase resilience to the impacts of climate change and reduce disaster risks will be essential, and will necessitate cooperation between states on certain issues. Improved enforcement of building codes and disaster resilient construction methods and strengthened institutional capacity to do so is also very much needed.

### Sudan: Emergency Flood Response in Khartoum for Vulnerable Communities

Funded by the Government of Japan, UN-Habitat has implemented the Emergency Flood Response in Khartoum for Vulnerable Communities as part of its 2003-2016 Country Programme Document. The project was developed as a response to emergency situation resulted from heavy rainfall and flooding in 2013 that led to tremendous losses and social disruption. The overall goal was to strengthen government and community capacities to conduct emergency construction of public facilities and necessary infrastructure through adaptation and implementation of resilient to floods urban planning and building techniques. Over 170 thousands persons benefited from the project interventions in terms of accessibility, protections against flood, access to basic services and capacity building. Gender aspects were considered

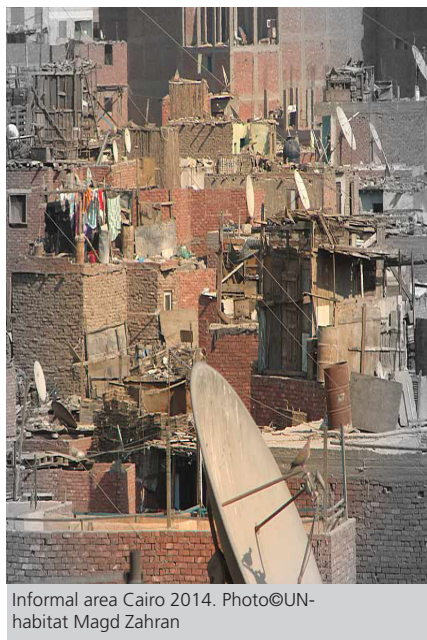
in the planning and implementation and accessibility of facilities. Environmental-friendly construction technology was introduced, applied and disseminated among affected communities.

## 7) Urban Research and Capacity Development

Lack of knowledge and inadequate capacity is frequently a key obstacle in achieving sustainable urban development practices. This can lead to actions that fail to consider the local characteristics of a problem, the needs of communities, and the complex inter-sectoral dynamics of cities. A better understanding of urban processes and the roots of issues is needed for national and local governments to develop appropriate policies and improve their performance to serve the best interests of urban residents. Data and urban analysis enable cities to make correct decisions on policy, identify and prioritize interventions and systematically monitor the economic, social and environmental performance of cities. At the same time, severe crisis in the region affects urban areas in various ways, hence collecting data in these areas is crucial to plan interventions.

UN-Habitat seeks to increase dissemination and awareness of knowledge on sustainable urban development through a number of innovative tools.

The State of Arab Cities Report 2012



presents a comprehensive picture of urban conditions and trends in each of the four Arab regions and provides a discussion of the similarities, differences and linkages between these countries.

The City Prosperity Initiative is a new initiative that that enables city authorities, as well as local and national stakeholders to identify opportunities and potential areas of intervention for their cities to become more prosperous. It is now implemented in Saudi Arabia and Egypt and UN-Habitat intends to expand across all the Arab region in collaboration with its partners in the Arab states. It will serve as a monitoring tool for the implementation of the LAS Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban

Development.

### Syria: Rapid City Profiles and Shelter Support and Needs Assessment

Five Rapid City Profiles, funded by the Swiss Development Cooperation, were developed during 2014 for Homs, Aleppo, Dara'a Latakia and Deir-ez-Zour analysing the impacts of the crisis on each city. Rapid City Profiles provide a comprehensive analysis of displacement trends, housing, water supply, sanitation, road networks, electricity, health, education, food security, mobility. Rapid City Profiles highlight “hotspots” where the population vulnerability is acute. By overlaying information on population, damage, and sectoral issues, the profiles provide useful insights into how people in different neighbourhoods are coping with the crisis. This in turn helps humanitarian and recovery actors to prioritise their response. Based on the findings of the City Profiles, a more in-depth neighbourhood level shelter needs assessment was conducted in Al Tal, Ma'raba and Ashrafyat Sahnaya in rural Damascus as well as in Salah Ad-Deen neighbourhood of Aleppo.. The neighbourhood profiles were used to develop prioritised area-based action plans for recovery and stabilization through a multi-stakeholder approach, which were then implemented by UN-Habitat and other UN agencies together with local partners. Now with additional funding from the EU UN-Habitat is undertaking city and neighbourhood profiles in 22 Syrian cities.



# OUTLOOK

In the effort to meet the challenges of its mandate, the UN-Habitat Regional Office for Arab States already proved that it can make a difference in the Arab region. The previous successes are a motivation to further engage in realizing the vision to:

“Support the development of integrated, inclusive and sustainable cities and human settlements, capable of providing adequate standard of living for children, youth, women and men, being well governed and resilient to shocks.”

In order to do so, UN-Habitat ROAS aims to increase and strengthen the collaboration and exchange of knowledge on best practices between the different Arab countries in the field of urban development. It also seeks to strengthen

its work in countries that experience crisis situations like Syria and Iraq and establish programmes in those Arab countries that have not seen a UN-Habitat presence on the ground so far. In a global context, its work is also motivated by the mobilization of the regional actors towards the Habitat III conference and by the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Having built a strong and successful presence in many countries in the Arab region, UN-Habitat ROAS aims now to focus more significantly on trans-regional technical cooperation, particularly in the light of the launch of the LAS Strategy of Housing and Sustainable Urban Development and the conclusion of the AMFHUD where Arab States committed to working together in achieving sustainable

urbanisation and adequate housing for all. To do this, UN-Habitat ROAS will foster exchange of knowledge and best practices in key elements of the New Urban Agenda – namely, in National Urban Policy, planned city extensions and urban infill, city and regional planning, urban economy and finance and urban legislation. Further, ROAS will also regionalise key global UN-Habitat programmes on public space, slum upgrading, land, and water and sanitation, and will establish new regional initiatives on urban migration and urban resilience. UN-Habitat ROAS strongly believes that through sustainable policies and coherent frameworks, urbanization will play a key role for growth, prosperity and stability in the Arab region.



Iraq Photo© UN-Habitat





Medina Oudaya, Rabat. Photo© UN-Habitat





UN-HABITAT Regional Office for Arab States

c/o Housing and Building Research Centre (HBRC)

87 Tahreer Street, 9th floor – Dokki, Giza, Egypt

Tel: + 2 (02) 3761 8812

[unhabitat.cairo@unhabitat.org](mailto:unhabitat.cairo@unhabitat.org)

UN  HABITAT

[www.unhabitat.org/ROAS](http://www.unhabitat.org/ROAS)

