

## UN-HABITAT Country Level Activities

The main strategy for UN-HABITAT'S future in-country activities is defined under objective 1 (ENOF). The preparation and implementation of ENOF is in turn subdivided into four components: (i) a global campaign on sustainable urbanization; (ii) four policy papers on MTSIP thematic focus areas; (iii) an integrated programme of normative and operational activities at country level; and (iv) a renewed partnership strategy and monitoring system.

This concept paper will form a basis for the implementation of an integrated programme of normative and operational activities in 30 countries. The concept paper will contribute to UN-HABITAT regionalization strategy as a component of the MTSIP.

### 1. Background

The objectives of UN-HABITAT'S country-level activities can be summarized as follows:

- promote policy reforms consistent with global UN Agendas (Agenda 21, Habitat Agenda, Millennium Declaration);
- build institutional and human capacities at national, municipal and local levels; test, validate and disseminate norms, strategies, policy options and practical tools through demonstration projects; and
- support the implementation of local and national plans of action and mobilize or leverage corresponding national resources.

Country operations and global programmes are complementing each other, the former being generally a longer term holistic effort rooted in the national and local context, the latter being more of a networking and knowledge-building nature, linked to normative activities at regional level. The synergy between operational and normative functions also constitutes a major asset and comparative advantage of UN-HABITAT.

### 2. Regional Structure

The Regional and Technical Cooperation Division (RTCD) is coordinating all country-level activities of UN-HABITAT. Other Divisions are often involved, by providing guidelines or training and by supporting country operations out of global funds negotiated at headquarters level.

RTCD is the regional arm of UN-HABITAT, in charge of assisting national and local governments in the improvement of their human settlements conditions through the delivery of technical assistance and the execution of operations in the field. It implements its work through four Regional Offices:

- Regional Office for Africa and Arab States (ROAAS) based in Nairobi; established in 1999
- Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP), based in Fukuoka; established in 1997
- Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC), based in Rio de Janeiro; established in 1996
- Office for Central European Countries, based in Warsaw; established in 2006

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Seville, 15-16 October 2008

In the near future, it is envisaged to open a Cairo Office for the Arab States with financial support from the Egyptian government.

UN-HABITAT and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the agency responsible for country-level co-ordination of UN development assistance, signed a Memorandum of Understanding in October 2002 to establish the positions of Habitat Programme Managers (HPM) in selected developing countries with a focus on Least Developed Countries (LDC). The GA welcomed the HPM initiative in its Resolution 57/275 of December 2002.

HPMs are under the direct supervision and co-ordination of the respective Regional Offices, but they work for the entire Agency. Their role is well defined in resolution 20/15 as:

- promoting the integration of sustainable urbanization into UNDAFs;
- promoting the global and normative mandate, programmes and campaigns of UN-HABITAT;
- supporting operational activities at the national and local levels.

An evaluation of the HPM initiative was carried out in 2006 and submitted to the 21<sup>st</sup> session of the Governing Council in April 2007 (HSP/GC/21/INF/4). It recommended the formulation of Habitat Country Programmes in selected countries. More than 25 Habitat Country Programme Documents (HCPD) have been formulated in 2008 in cooperation with host governments and UN country teams. Taken together these HCPDs constitute the very core of the integrated programme of normative and operational activities at country level called for in the MTSIP-ENOF Action Plan.

### **3. Substantive priorities**

At country-level UN-HABITAT is expected by its current Work-Programme:

- to enhance regional, national and local capacity to implement human settlements policies, strategies and programmes with special focus on reduction of urban poverty and response to disasters;
- to improve national policies on housing and urban development in line with UN-HABITAT global norms and to increase regional knowledge of urban conditions and trends; and
- to improve coherence and integration of sustainable urbanization into UNDAFs and national development strategies and plans, including PRSPs where they exist.

These activities are demand-driven, i.e. they are developed in response to governmental requests, and extra-budgetary, i.e. they are undertaken only when funds have been identified and made available. Country-level activities of UN-HABITAT have been traditionally focused on: (i) promoting shelter for all; (ii) improving urban governance; (iii) improving the living environment and access to basic services; and (iv) managing post-disaster and post-conflict reconstruction. The first three priorities coincide exactly with three focus areas of the MTSIP while the fourth one (disaster mitigation and rehabilitation) is a cross-cutting topic of extreme importance in affected countries. Habitat Country Programme Documents are organized along MTSIP focus areas while taking fully into account national specificities.

### **4. Delivering as One**

In the last eighteen months, the "Delivering as One" pilot initiative has been testing how the UN family – with its many and diverse agencies -- can deliver in a more coordinated way at country level. The objective

is to ensure faster and more efficient development operations to accelerate progress in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. All UN agencies are working together to provide their knowledge, expertise and experience to national partners. UN-HABITAT applies its knowledge, expertise and experience in four areas: policy and advocacy, normative and technical support, capacity development, and civil society partnerships.

As a result of its full involvement in the "Delivering as One" process, UN-HABITAT is now receiving through "One UN" Funds multi-year core funding in countries such as Rwanda and Mozambique. In Mozambique, since July 2008, the government has agreed that all UN agencies can work together under a common One UN Fund. Working in close collaboration with local and national partners as well as with other UN Agencies, UN-HABITAT has successfully managed to access resources available for Joint Programmes in addition to solo projects. But to be fully involved in such operations, a non-Resident Agency such as UN-HABITAT needs a very strong country presence.

## 5. Resources

In terms of funding, most country-level activities have been traditionally financed by extra-budgetary resources mobilized locally on a project-by-project basis (totalling close to USD 100 million annually). This constitutes a major constraint as resource-mobilization requires a lot of time and energy, particularly in regional offices.

The technical co-operation system is changing (reduced resources for the UN agencies, less autonomy for individual agencies in programme/project design and resource mobilisation, increased emphasis on common programming frameworks). Though the system of Common Country Programming is still being refined, there is little doubt that UN agencies have to engage actively in the "delivering as one" process (for their benefit and, more so, for the benefit of the countries). Resource mobilisation therefore starts at country level by putting UN-HABITAT on the map through what it can offer in terms of specific technical expertise and its track record of relevant experience. This is an important aspect of Habitat Country Programmes.

## 6. Proposed Criteria for UN-HABITAT's country-level activities

In view of its global mandate as the UN Agency for Cities and other human settlements, UN-HABITAT should be able to respond to requests for technical assistance. However the limitation of human and financial resources and the need to focus on well-defined priorities consistent with the MTSIP and the biennial work-programmes constitute major parameters which should be taken into account in responding to governmental requests. The need for geographical balance and for efficiency in the delivery of support services should also be acknowledged. The main selection criteria for country-level activities could therefore be regrouped along the following clusters:

- thematic consistency with MTSIP focus areas and with the biennial work-programme;
- functional consistency with the Enhanced Normative and Operational Framework (reinforced linkages between policy and capacity-building activities);
- inscription in the HCPD and/or UNDAF as an agreed country priority;
- financial and political commitments by the national government and its partners;
- availability of international support to complement national resources in funding UN-HABITAT inputs;
- past experience and knowledge by UN-HABITAT in the concerned country;

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Seville, 15-16 October 2008

- actual and potential cooperation with other UN agencies under the “Delivering as One” approach;
- potential for scaling up and dissemination, including at regional and global levels;
- post-disaster emergencies, within the IASC framework;
- Need for geographical balance and prioritization of LDCs.

The CPR and/or the Governing Council are expected to discuss these criteria.

A step in the management of UN-HABITAT country-level activities could be to reform the way Regional Offices are funded and make them less dependant on overhead income. This would allow Regional Offices to develop and offer more normative activities at national and regional levels – through an improved team work within UN-HABITAT – which is a major objective of the MTSIP.

### **7. Points for discussion in Seville**

- Should country-level activities be concentrated on some of the six MTSIP focus areas or be cross-cutting?
- Should normative activities at country-level be funded by core central resources or by locally-mobilized contributions?
- Could UN-HABITAT rely on “One UN funds” for financing its country-level activities?
- Should UN-HABITAT reduce its post-disaster portfolio or capitalize on its experience in this field?
- Should UN-HABITAT limit its country-level activities to 20/30/40 countries?
- If yes how to rank the criteria proposed under section 6 above?
- Is there a need to reform the funding of UN-HABITAT Regional Offices to make them less dependent on overhead income?