

HUMAN LIBRARY CONFERENCE
REVISITING
25 YEARS OF UN-HABITAT'S TECHNICAL COOPERATION

Draft Panel Guidelines

Nairobi, 15 – 17 February 2011

Panel 1: Relations with other UN agencies (including UNDP), towards “One UN”

(Moderator: *Cecilia Martinez*)

“One UN” is a major component of the UN reform process undertaken over the recent years with the aim at increasing the system-wide coherence by “Delivering as One” in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment. The impacts of this process are meant to provide a support to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at country level, where the UN should work as one united family.

In practical terms, the “One UN” requires that all UN programme activities be consolidated at the country level, under a common programme. For coordination purposes, the UN Resident Coordinator has been empowered to manage the “One UN” Country Programme, while UNDP has been repositioned to focus and strengthen its operational work on policy coherence and positioning of the UN country team, and withdraw from sector-focused policy and capacity building done by other UN organizations.

Relevant questions:

1. *What could “ONE UN” mean for a small Agency with limited resources like UN-HABITAT?*
2. *Can UN-HABITAT benefit from the multi-year funding available for the “ONE UN” Country Programme, or are there external factors, which limit the Agency’s access to such funding?*
3. *What is UN-Habitat experience in working with/for UNDP and with other agencies in country operations?*
4. *What are UN-HABITAT’s specific contributions to the global UN Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction agendas at country-level?*
5. *How does UN-HABITAT collaborate with other UN Agencies, in particular UNDP at the country level? What are the opportunities? What are the challenges? What should be done to maximize the benefits of such collaboration also in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness?*

Panel 2: Relations among UN-Habitat Divisions, towards “One UN-Habitat” at Country level

(Moderator: *Mariam Yunusa*)

UN-HABITAT’s biennial Work Programme is currently articulated around 4 sub-programmes, implemented by the 4 substantive Divisions of the Agency:

- (i) Shelter and sustainable human settlements development,
- (ii) Monitoring and Research,
- (iii) Regional and Technical Cooperation, and
- (iv) Human Settlements Financing.

The programmatic coherence of the Agency was to be shaped with the adoption of the Medium Term-Strategic Institutional Plan (2007 – 2013), which builds on 6 Focus Areas and provides for their implementation at the regional and country level through the Enhanced Normative and Operational Framework (ENOF). So far inter-divisional coordination and collaboration has been uneven in the history of UN-Habitat.

Relevant Questions:

1. *How should the Agency manage its inter-divisional collaboration for more efficiency and effective delivery at country-level?*
2. *Which institutional mechanisms have been put in place to ensure the success of the Agency’s normative work at the regional and national levels?*
3. *How does the regional and technical cooperation feed back into the normative work of UN-HABITAT? How to improve this process?*
4. *What are the best (and worst) examples of inter-divisional cooperation at country level? How to encourage divisions to provide their expertise in support of regional offices instead of working in isolation?*
5. *What are future perspectives of the Agency’s technical cooperation, and what should be done to address the inter-divisional shortcomings of the past 25 years?*

Panel 3: Impact of UN-Habitat Technical Cooperation on national policy reforms

(Moderator: *Mohamed El-Sioufi*)

UN-HABITAT combines both normative and operational activities. The Agency focuses on a unique field of activities and, since its creation in 1978, has both advocacy and monitoring responsibilities over its two mandated sectors: “urban development” and “housing”.

The Agency was elevated in 2001 to Programme status with a broad convening mandate (e.g. Governing Council, World Urban Forum, African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development, Asia and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development, MINURVI, etc). Both its normative programmes and operational activities have raised the Agency’s profile in developing countries, as well as countries in transition.

The impact of UN-HABITAT’s technical cooperation has resulted in several countries into new national policies on housing and urban development. However, the impact of technical cooperation projects on national and local policies is sometimes questioned by UN-Habitat governing bodies (CPR and GC).

Relevant Questions:

1. *How does UN-HABITAT manage to make a difference at country level in influencing housing and urban policies?*
2. *How does capacity development add value to policy reforms at country level in key areas of UN-HABITAT’s mandate?*
3. *What are the success stories of UN-HABITAT’s policy advisory activities, and what triggered them?*
4. *How does the lack of funding for normative activities affect the technical cooperation portfolio?*
5. *How to re-invent and better articulate future UN-HABITAT’s country-level activities to ensure more impact on national policies and translate global norms into concrete strategies?*

Panel 4: Relations between country-level operations and regional/global activities

(Moderator: *Eduardo Lopez-Moreno*)

Country activities have been an important component of the UN-Habitat's mandate since its inception. Also known as "technical cooperation activities", country-level operations aim to support central and local governments in the development of their institutional capacities and in the formulation of sustainable shelter and urbanization policies and strategies.

There are many elements of policy, advocacy, monitoring and evaluation at country level which should feed into regional and global activities. In practical terms, UN-HABITAT's can carry out meaningful regional and global normative activities only if they are connected with the real world, i.e. the country level.

The insufficient relations between UN-Habitat's country operations and regional and global activities are subject to criticism. Improving these relations is key to the Agency's success in the implementation of its mandate and in convincing donor countries to increase their support.

Relevant Questions:

1. *How does UN-HABITAT's technical cooperation at country level concretely relate to the agency's global mandate as specified in the Habitat Agenda?*
2. *Who are the drivers of change at both the country and regional levels, and how does UN-HABITAT inter-act with them? What are the mechanisms in place to support such cooperation?*
3. *How should UN-HABITAT invest in global programmes with country-level activities, and how should these programmes involve regional offices?*
4. *Which lessons can be drawn from the past 25 years of UN-HABITAT's technical cooperation and how did they impact on the global priorities of the Agency?*
5. *What are the problems to be addressed in developing regional programmes?*

Panel 5: Project and programme administration (UN rules and their application)

(Moderator: *Paul Taylor*)

UN-Habitat activities are generally initiated by Regional Offices (Directors and HSOs) implemented by a trio of RTCD officers (HSO, PMO and CTA or the equivalent in the field). In the past, the essential functions (requesting, certifying and approving) were ensured directly or under Delegation of Authority. There was direct contact between RTCD and UNON as Approving Officer for most operational activities.

During recent years, most operational actions have faced a controlling stage in the Programme Support Division (PSD) before moving to UNON. Therefore, each project requires a close collaboration between at least three parties: the concerned Regional Office, PSD and UNON. Collaboration among these parties has not been satisfactory, as reflected in numerous delays at all stages of the project cycle.

Processes that are to be approved by UN-Habitat with no involvement of UNON, like UN-Habitat Project and Programme Documents approval were, until 2009, prepared by Regional Offices, cleared by the Regional Project Review Committee and approved internally by the ED or the Directors under Delegation of Authority. In the last year, this process has been modified and is now demanding, for project worth more than US\$ 1 million, a total of 18 signatures. In addition, once the Project is substantively approved, the financial start demands additional steps to obtain an IMIS registration. It is only after the IMIS coding that operational activities are possible and UN-Habitat and UNON are able to start the actual operations. Out of the contracting mechanisms only Agreements of Cooperation with partners are fully under UN-Habitat authority.

This complicated administrative process may be necessary to ensure adequate control. However, a number of responsibilities could be delegated or decentralized. This is an important challenge that the MTSP focus on 'excellence in management' has tried to address, with limited success so far.

Relevant Questions:

- 1. How to improve the competitiveness of UN-Habitat country programme administration vis-à-vis other UN agencies such as UNDP and UNOPS?*
- 2. How does UN-Habitat administrative performance compare with the performance of bilateral or multilateral agencies in terms of human and financial resources management?*
- 3. In order to move towards 'excellence in management' of country activities, which delegation of authority has been enforced and what remains to be done?*
- 4. To improve administrative efficiency and avoid duplication, which current functions of PSD could be transferred to Regional Offices and/or UNON and/or OED?*
- 5. Is there a way to speed up UN-Habitat recruitments in the context of the new INSPIRA system which seems to be even more bureaucratic and cumbersome than the previous GALAXY system?*
- 6. How to change the dominant UN culture in which control comes first and action comes second, and move towards post-facto assessments and verification to really empower project managers to perform and meet partners' expectations?*

Panel 6: Fund-mobilization successes and difficulties

(Moderator: *Toshi Noda*)

In 2010, RTCD recorded a budget portfolio of US\$ 184 million (the highest ever) and a delivery of more than US\$ 100 million for the year. Sub-contracts and Agreements of Cooperation represent the largest portion of that budget. More than 70% of the funds are mobilized in post-disaster and post-conflict countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, DRC, Sudan, Iraq, Somalia and Haiti. Fund raising has been successful with a handful of bilaterals, including Japan, DFID, SIDA, US-AID, Spain. Recently the European Commission has contributed to country and inter-regional programmes of UN-Habitat, replacing de facto UNDP contributions.

The portfolio of RTCD has grown from US\$ 38 million in 1990 to US\$ 184 million in 2010 thanks to a dynamic fund-raising at country-level and the increasing size of individual projects. However, this performance is over-dependent upon crisis and disasters which continue to attract donor funding while development assistance is declining and replaced by budget support. Fund-mobilization from multi-lateral banks also remains a challenge while government cost-sharing has been successful in a number of Arab countries.

Relevant Questions:

- 1. How sustainable are technical cooperation activities with such a focus on post-disaster and post-crisis activities? Should UN-Habitat become another humanitarian agency?*
- 2. What lessons can be learnt from successful funds mobilization in Asia and the Arab States? And from the difficulties in Latin America?*
- 3. How to combine core resources and management fees to provide more impetus to country activities? Is it advisable to merge all extra-budgetary resources of UN-Habitat?*
- 4. Is the network of Regional Offices adequate in terms of fund-raising or should it also expand towards development partners such as the European Commission?*
- 5. What lessons can be learnt from global multi-agency initiatives such as UMP and the Cities Alliance as far as their attractiveness to the donor community is concerned?*