

MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGIC AND INSTITUTIONAL PLAN 2008–2013

Focus Area Policy and Strategy Papers

Introduction to the Focus Area Policy and Strategy Papers



▲ Street scene in Shanghai, China.

Preface

Cities and towns are growing rapidly. With every passing month, the equivalent of a new city the size of Madrid is created. Urbanization generates economic growth and social and political advances, as well as technical and scientific progress. But when poorly managed, it can generate poverty, social exclusion, and environmental degradation.

To address these challenges, UN-HABITAT's Governing Council in 2005 asked the agency to prepare a Medium-Term Strategic and Institutional Plan. The vision of the plan is to help create by 2013 "the necessary conditions for concerted international and national efforts to stabilize the growth of slums and to set the stage for the subsequent reduction in and reversal of the number of slum dwellers".

Strategy

The plan's overall strategic goal is to support governments and their development partners to achieve more sustainable urbanization. It aims to promote policy and institutional reform in order to have impacts at the appropriate scale. The key cross-cutting issues of the plan are (i) gender, (ii) youth, and (iii) response to human settlements in crisis, all of which feature prominently in the first five focus areas of the plan.

Focus Areas

There are six focus areas in the Medium-Term Strategic and Institutional Plan, each of which has a plan of action (Focus Areas 1 to 5 have full policy papers detailing these):

1. Advocacy, Monitoring, and Partnerships
2. Participatory Planning, Management, and Governance
3. Access to Land and Housing for All
4. Environmentally Sound Basic Urban Infrastructure and Services
5. Strengthened Human Settlements Finance Systems
6. Excellence in Management

Context and Approach

UN-HABITAT is the lead United Nations agency responsible for promoting sustainable urban development. At a time when the world is increasingly aware of this challenge, UN-HABITAT must play a leadership and catalytic role. In April 2007, the agency's Medium-Term Strategic and Institutional Plan was approved and work began immediately to prepare for its implementation.

Through the medium-term plan, UN-HABITAT wants to see sustainable urbanization in cities and regions that provides all citizens with adequate shelter, basic services, security, and employment opportunities, regardless of age, sex, and social strata.

UN-HABITAT is working towards this vision by emphasizing partnerships and continuing to develop the Enhanced Normative and Operational Framework, which is ensuring greater harmonization between normative and operational work at the country level. The six mutually reinforcing focus areas represent an integrated approach to achieving sustainable urbanization. Each focus area has an overall strategic result and specific expected accomplishments, all of which are detailed in the separate focus area documents.

Getting It Done

UN-HABITAT's success in achieving its strategic aims depends on its success in implementing important institutional reforms.

Priorities include integration within the ongoing UN reform process; institutional adjustments to align UN-HABITAT's structure with the medium-term plan; a review of the agency's governance structures; the implementation of results-based management; strengthened human resources management; strengthened knowledge management; and an improved resource mobilization and communications strategy.

The expected results of the medium-term plan focus areas include the adoption of improved sustainable urbanization policies, from the local to the global level, and the improvement of inclusive urban planning, management, and governance at national and local levels. There will also be improved access to land and housing, and expanded access to environmentally sound basic urban infrastructure services, focusing on unserved and under-served populations.

Additional results will include improved access to sustainable financing for affordable housing and infrastructure in targeted countries, and effective and efficient delivery, by UN-HABITAT, of the planned results of the medium-term plan.

Partnerships

UN-HABITAT's Enhanced Normative and Operational Framework is an integrated approach to support governments and their development partners to achieve more sustainable urbanization through better alignment between normative and operational work. The framework builds on and strengthens existing synergies and partnership arrangements within a coherent structure that reduces transaction costs within the agency and vis-à-vis donors and partners.



▲ Participants at World Urban Forum 5, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

The focus area policy papers identify some of the critical partners with whom UN-HABITAT is strengthening its strategic relationship. These partnerships inform the overall partnership strategy as well as the operationalization of the Global Campaign for Sustainable Urbanization and the Habitat Agenda Task Manager System. Collaboration with partners focuses on implementing the work programmes of each focus area and working together at the national level in selected pilot countries.

Focus Area 6: Excellence in Management

The Medium-Term Strategic and Institutional Plan's Focus Area 6 is unique in its cross-cutting nature. Unlike the five other focus areas, the sixth applies to the whole medium-term plan and does not have its own policy paper. "Excellence in Management" relates to UN-HABITAT's institutional and operational culture and is vital for the implementation of all the focus areas.

In essence, Focus Area 6 ensures effectiveness in UN-HABITAT's work. This is being done through enhanced results-based management (a key element of the medium-term plan), improved communication, and better financial, human, and knowledge management systems and tools.

The expected results of Focus Area 6 include increased impact at the country and global level, resulting from more cohesion and resource sharing. Efficiency and effectiveness will also be increased through better knowledge management, including systematic dissemination of policy and programme information. There will be improved policies and performance, based on feedback from better programme monitoring, evaluation, and reporting that focuses on results and lessons learned.

Additionally, there will be better funding from a wider donor base, resulting from a comprehensive resource mobilization strategy. Another expected result is better alignment between staff skills and functions, resulting from an improved human resource management system. Finally, there will be higher visibility of UN-HABITAT's work through greater commitment by all staff to a common vision, culture, and branding.

For more information or to obtain a copy of a full Medium-Term Strategic and Institutional Plan Focus Area Policy and Strategy Paper, contact us.

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UN-HABITAT is the United Nations body mandated to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities and to provide adequate shelter for all.

There are seven policy leaflets in this series:



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