A Guide to Setting up an Urban Observatory

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Introduction

More than half of the world's population is living in cities and the number is growing everywhere. Cities are suffering from an acute crisis that hinders their capacity to develop sound policy and provide much-needed services to their residents: ***a crisis of accurate, useful information***. Lacking detailed knowledge and information on the demographic, economic, cultural, physical and environmental dynamics in their cities, many planners and decision-makers are operating in an environment of uncertainty, allocating resources to immediate and pressing issues rather than investing in progressive change over the long term.

Reliable, up-to-date information on a meaningful set of *indicators* – measurable attributes of local conditions, such as proportions of the population with access to basic services or the cost of housing in different parts of the city – and the means to turn collected information into good urban policies and plans are the antidote to the information crisis. Local authorities and organizations, however, have been hindered by a lack of capacity, particularly in developing countries, for the collection and assessment of data, for its transformation into useful information and for its broad dissemination. Many cities in both the developing and developed world also lack reliable, accurate and timely information collection mechanism for credible and consistent system of urban data collection.

Data are essential for city, country, region and global policy formulation notwithstanding other political mechanisms of local to global policy planning and decision-making. However, the availability of data at all levels - city, country, region, and global – continues to be an elusion particularly in developing countries. In some cases, data albeit available, are unusable because of the:

1. inappropriate scale of data aggregation for local relevance (e.g., gross domestic product);
2. infrequency of data release to inform timely decision-making (e.g., national censuses);
3. inadequate data for specific policy needs even at city level (e.g. youth employment)

National governments around the world have the overwhelming task of ensuring the viability and auspicious living conditions of their urban areas, vis-à-vis the health and progress of their populations. They must therefore strive to understand the dynamics within cities by creating initiatives toward decentralizing or localizing decision-making.

Information is knowledge and knowledge is the key for any development as well as policy formulation. Informed policy is crucial for any city or country as it would make the city more livable for the dwellers. It is important to have a mechanism to develop and collect data on locally relevant indicators, while citizens and decision-makers acquire the knowledge they need to effect positive change. Doing so requires a concerted effort to institutionalize urban development monitoring systems. This guide describes the **urban observatory** model for urban data collection and analysis, developed by UN-HABITAT's Global Urban Observatory in partnership with cities

around the world, and provides systematic guidance on how to set up an Urban Observatory, with proactive coordination and in an effective urban monitoring system.

Chapter 1: The Habitat Agenda (HA) and Global urban Observatory (GUO)

1996 United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), in Istanbul, Turkey. The Habitat Agenda indicators provide data on specific aspects of shelter, social development and eradication of poverty, environmental management, economic development and governance, with the aim of global monitoring for informed policy.

In 1997, UNHABITAT established the Global Urban Observatory (GUO) to help find a scientific solution to the urban information crisis. Charged with generating "Better information for better cities", the GUO initiated its partnership with local and national authorities in selected countries to develop a system for urban data collection with a framework of locally relevant as well as globally linked data.

With the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration in 2000, UN-HABITAT also began reporting on Member States' progress toward Goal 7, target 7D: by 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers. In order to do this, UNHABITAT requires reliable and up to date (time-bound) urban information that provides insights into differences in access to housing and basic services in the cities. Global Urban Observatory in partnership with cities around the world, has successfully collated and disseminated relevant data, in addition to providing tips on how to set up and coordinate proactive, cooperative urban monitoring systems.

1.1: The MDG's and the Habitat Agenda

The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) adopted by the UN member states in the year 2000 are broad goals for the entire world. They address essential dimensions of poverty and their effects on people's lives attacking pressing issues related to poverty reduction, health, gender equality, education and environmental sustainability. By accepting these goals, the international community has made a commitment to the worlds poor, the most vulnerable, in precise terms, established in quantitative targets.

In order to assist Member States realize the eight goals of the Millennium Declaration, the United Nations System has set numerical targets for each goal. Further, it has selected appropriate indicators to monitor progress on the goals and attain corresponding targets. A list of 18 targets and more than 40 indicators corresponding to these goals ensure a common assessment and appreciation of the status of MDGs at global, national and local levels.

The United Nations System assigned UN-HABITAT the responsibility to assist Members States monitor and gradually attain the "Cities without Slum" Target, also

known as "Target 11." One of the three targets of Goal 7 "Ensure Environmental Sustainability," Target 11 is: "*By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 millions slum dwellers*".

1.2: Global Urban Observatory

The Global Urban Observatory (GUO) was established by UN-HABITAT in response to a decision of the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements to develop a mechanism to monitor global progress in implementing the Habitat Agenda and to monitor the global urban conditions and trends. The GUO addresses the urgent need to improve the world-wide base of urban knowledge by supporting Governments, local authorities and organizations of the civil society develop and apply policy-oriented urban indicators, statistics and other urban information. The GUO works closely with all areas of UNHABITAT as well as national to local authorities to support the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. The GUO programmes operate under the Monitoring Research Division of UNHABITAT, which has the overall mandate to monitor progress on the Habitat Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals.

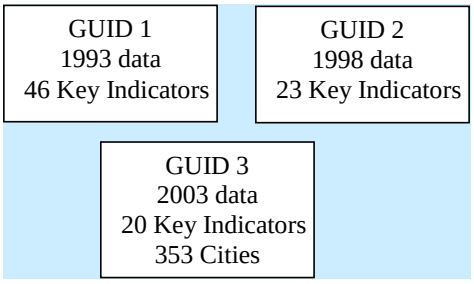
1.3: The Global Monitoring System

i. Urban Indicator Programme (UIP)

An indicator is the basic tool for measuring progress, using a commonly agreed definition of a specific aspect of the urban condition. Indicators define the data to be collected, so they should be relatively easy to measure and interpret, and should provide valid and reliable information about the objectives they are meant to measure.

UN-HABITAT has been a pioneer organization in the collection of urban indicators. In 1991, it initiated the Housing Indicators Programme, focusing on monitoring shelter performances. It then became Urban Indicators Programme in 1993 in order to focus on a larger range of urban issues. The programme produced two main databases in 1996 and 2001 (Global Urban Indicators Databases I and II), presented at the Habitat II Conference and the Istanbul +5 which helped establishing regional trends in key urban issues. In the Habitat Agenda (result of the 1996 Habitat II Conference), Member States and the Habitat Agenda Partners have requested that UN-HABITAT continue monitoring urban conditions worldwide. They have also committed themselves to monitoring their own urban conditions over time and report on their trends regularly. The next Global Urban Indicators Database (III) will continue to address the Habitat Agenda key issues, with a specific focus on the Millennium Development Goals, particularly, its Target 11 on the improvement of slum dwellers.

Since 2003, The Global Urban Indicators Database (GUID) has been updated yearly based on a more sustainable process of data collection by strengthening the capacities of countries to produce city and country aggregated data on urban indicators on a more consistent and permanent basis based on each

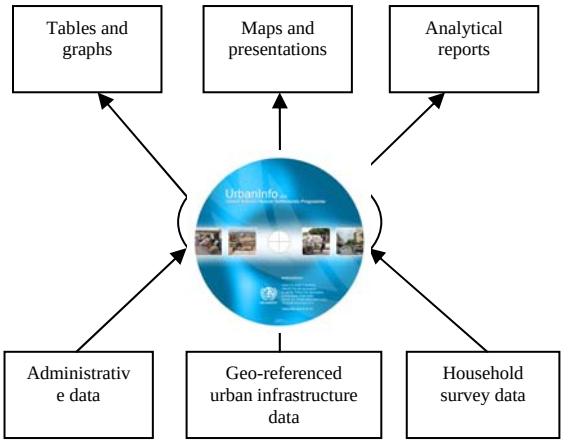


country's own census and household survey data. For this new phase, data will be collected through different mechanisms; such as, in Africa Region, workshops will be held in order to gather experts to agree on key results for the region using a sample of urban agglomerations. Data experts will be selected from National Statistics Offices, Ministries responsible for urban issues at the National level, Municipal and Metropolitan authorities representing urban agglomerations. The measurement tools to obtain data on these indicators must meet certain qualifications: the data they produce must be valid and reliable, sensitive to changes and specific to each indicator. The indicators must be readily quantifiable, using agreed definitions and reference standards. The data used to calculate each indicator should also be comprehensive, supplying representative city-level information and appropriate sub-city level breakdowns as required.

ii. Urban Info System

An *alternative approach* is to use a corporate or process database, which allows an urban observatory to systematize ongoing data collection, storage and reporting efforts. A process database is a dynamic environment that can produce a variety of information-product outputs for the use of planners and urban decision-makers. Data is collected on a continuous basis for a variety of projects and is stored, synthesized, analyzed and disseminated in different ways to meet the needs of different data users.

Urban-Info is a systematic database that allows the user quick and easy retrieval and reporting of information in user-friendly formats. Urban-Info stores geographic and quantitative data on indicators selected by user, analyzes information according to chosen attributes and produces tables, graphs and maps in personalized presentations and analytical reports. The software is compatible with most relational database systems. Urban observatories that adopt this tool can benefit from the global statistical information that is provided with the software, collected and analyzed by GUO. The information can help observatories to associate or correlate indicators or to undertake comparisons with data from other cities and countries around the world. Urban-Info is easy to adapt to the needs of an urban observatory at the national or local level, using locally relevant indicators.



In response to demands from data users, the Global Urban Observatory (GUO) of UN-HABITAT initiated the **UrbanInfo** software in 2004, a user-friendly tool prepared on the Windows platform. **UrbanInfo** helps to store, present and analyze urban indicators through a variety of presentation tools, such as tables, graphs and maps. The first version of **UrbanInfo,** published in 2006, contains information on several topics, such as housing, demography, communication, energy, economy, education, health, nutrition and gender. The second version of UrbanInfo provides

updated information on these topics and also covers new topics, such as disaster, crime, migration, income inequalities and transport.

The second version of UrbanInfo is designed by UN-HABITAT in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), with financial support from the World Bank and other partners.

iii. 1000 cities GIS programme

The ability of GIS to combine both spatial and socio-economic data helps to generate meaningful information in a shorter time. GIS tools have much advantage to offer, the most powerful being:

- Visualizing planning scenarios and their impacts on the local population
- Fast retrieval of information and translation into easily understandable maps
- Excellent tool for spatial statistical analysis

Other GIS and remote-sensing tools include:

- Slum Identification and upgrading
- Infrastructure and utility mapping
- Hazard mapping
- Site and terrain analysis
- Land Information system
- Environmental and land use planning
- Participatory planning
- Revenue generation system

Good Urban Policy and planning requires accurate information on the situation; UN-HABITAT supports the local and national authorities to use spatial and socio-economic data to produce vital information for decision making in the cities.

Bringing the use of Geo-spatial technology into the mainstream for improving urban governance and planning in the cities of developing and transitional countries, the GUO initiated the "1000 cities GIS programme" in partnership with ESRI, which involves distributing the GIS software package together with online training programme to the city authorities in developing and transitional countries.

Who Can Apply for the Software Grant?

- Institutions or organizations collecting and analyzing urban information
- Should have proper data sharing protocol with GUO and ESRI
- Cannot be current or former ESRI product user
- Need to have necessary hardware for basic GIS operation

By providing decision makers with reliable and accurate information, GIS analysis will enable cities to prioritize issues and channel their attention to those parts of urban areas that are most neglected. This will complement other initiatives within cities that

aim at improving city planning, governance, environmental management and climate change.

iv. Urban Inequality survey (UIS)

The Urban Inequality survey (UIS) is intended to assist UN-HABITAT staff, in their work with national and local counterparts and other partners, in measuring progress towards the implementation of the Habitat Agenda (HA), the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on Slums Target and the implementation plan from the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)[1] through the use of household surveys. This manual provides a step-by-step guide to carrying out an urban household survey necessary for reporting on urban conditions and trends, and for laying down a base from which to measure change as we strive to meet the MDG goal of significantly improving the lives of 100 million slum dwellers by the year 2020.

The UIS model questionnaires and manual have been developed specifically to obtain the data for the HA, the MDG and the WSSD as listed in Table 1.4 at the end of this chapter. The objective of these surveys is to inform local policy so that global aspirations expressed in these global programmes become local. These model questionnaires draw heavily on experiences with the MICS and DHS and on expert advice and various surveys conducted by FAFO-AIS, APHRC and the World Bank (Integrated Questionnaire for the Measurement of Social Capital).

> The quality of the data obtained in a survey depends on the proper design of the questionnaire, on the sampling strategy and on good training and supervision of suitable interviewers.

The content of the survey is organized into question modules, for countries to adopt or omit according to the data already available. Another possible approach, discussed later in this chapter, is arranging for urban modules or questions to be incorporated into suitable surveys due to be carried out by other organizations. (World Health Surveys, Living Standards Measurement Surveys, MICS and DHS are examples.)

The optional modules shown at the bottom of Table 1.2 are so designated because they should only be included in an UIS if they are of particular relevance and use to the country. These optional modules are supplied in Appendix Two of this manual and not in the core questionnaire, which is placed at the end of Chapter 3.

The development of the UIS questionnaire and manual has drawn on an even wider spread of organizations than the MICS. They include FAFO-AIS, APHRC, HIPS, the World Bank, etc. A broad-based technical advisory group helped coordinate and advice on inputs from many the many sources used. In particular, close working relations with the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) programme not only

[1] The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development emanated from the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa from 2-4 September 2002, it reinforces both the Habitat Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals.

improved the commonality and consistency of indicators between the UIS and DHS surveys, but also resulted in an agreement to work together at city level so as to maximize the usefulness of the two organizations' survey activities.

1.4: Habitat Agenda Indicator & MDG Indicator

UN-HABITAT has adopted a more holistic approach by integrating the Habitat Agenda (HA) indicators in the overall MDG framework (Annex B. List of MDG and HA indicators). The Habitat Agenda indicators have been developed on the basis of the Habitat Agenda and on Resolutions 15/6 and 17/1 of the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements. They comprise 20 key indicators, 8 check-lists and 16 extensive indicators which measure performances and trends in selected key areas of the Habitat Agenda. Together, they should provide a quantitative, comparative base for the condition of cities, and show progress towards achieving the Habitat Agenda.

A. THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS FRAMEWORK

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)	
Goals and Targets (from the Millennium Declaration)	**Indicators for monitoring progress**
Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	
Target 1.A: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day	1.1 Proportion of population below $1 (PPP) per day[i] 1.2 Poverty gap ratio 1.3 Share of poorest quintile in national consumption
Target 1.B: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people	1.4 Growth rate of GDP per person employed 1.5 Employment-to-population ratio 1.6 Proportion of employed people living below $1 (PPP) per day 1.7 Proportion of own-account and contributing family workers in total employment
Target 1.C: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger	1.8 Prevalence of underweight children under-five years of age 1.9 Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption
Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education	
Target 2.A: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling	2.1 Net enrolment ratio in primary education 2.2 Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary 2.3 Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds, women and men
Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women	
Target 3.A: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015	3.1 Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education 3.2 Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector 3.3 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament
Goal 4: Reduce child mortality	

Target 4.A: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate	4.1 Under-five mortality rate 4.2 Infant mortality rate 4.3 Proportion of 1 year-old children immunised against measles
Goal 5: Improve maternal health	
Target 5.A: Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio	5.1 Maternal mortality ratio 5.2 Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel
Target 5.B: Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health	5.3 Contraceptive prevalence rate 5.4 Adolescent birth rate 5.5 Antenatal care coverage (at least one visit and at least four visits) 5.6 Unmet need for family planning
Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	
Target 6.A: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS	6.1 HIV prevalence among population aged 15-24 years 6.2 Condom use at last high-risk sex 6.3 Proportion of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS 6.4 Ratio of school attendance of orphans to school attendance of non-orphans aged 10-14 years
Target 6.B: Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it	6.5 Proportion of population with advanced HIV infection with access to antiretroviral drugs
Target 6.C: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases	6.6 Incidence and death rates associated with malaria 6.7 Proportion of children under 5 sleeping under insecticide-treated bednets 6.8 Proportion of children under 5 with fever who are treated with appropriate anti-malarial drugs 6.9 Incidence, prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis 6.10 Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected and cured under directly observed treatment short course
Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability	
Target 7.A: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources Target 7.B: Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss	7.1 Proportion of land area covered by forest 7.2 CO2 emissions, total, per capita and per $1 GDP (PPP) 7.3 Consumption of ozone-depleting substances 7.4 Proportion of fish stocks within safe biological limits 7.5 Proportion of total water resources used 7.6 Proportion of terrestrial and marine areas protected 7.7 Proportion of species threatened with extinction
Target 7.C: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation	7.8 Proportion of population using an improved drinking water source 7.9 Proportion of population using an improved sanitation facility
Target 7.D: By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers	7.10 Proportion of urban population living in slums[ii]
Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development	
Target 8.A: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system Includes a commitment to good governance, development and	*Some of the indicators listed below are monitored separately for the least developed countries (LDCs), Africa, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.* Official development assistance (ODA)

poverty reduction – both nationally and internationally Target 8.B: Address the special needs of the least developed countries Includes: tariff and quota free access for the least developed countries' exports; enhanced programme of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction Target 8.C: Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States (through the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the outcome of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly) Target 8.D: Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term	8.1 Net ODA, total and to the least developed countries, as percentage of OECD/DAC donors' gross national income 8.2 Proportion of total bilateral, sector-allocable ODA of OECD/DAC donors to basic social services (basic education, primary health care, nutrition, safe water and sanitation) 8.3 Proportion of bilateral official development assistance of OECD/DAC donors that is untied 8.4 ODA received in landlocked developing countries as a proportion of their gross national incomes 8.5 ODA received in small island developing States as a proportion of their gross national incomes <u>Market access</u> 8.6 Proportion of total developed country imports (by value and excluding arms) from developing countries and least developed countries, admitted free of duty 8.7 Average tariffs imposed by developed countries on agricultural products and textiles and clothing from developing countries 8.8 Agricultural support estimate for OECD countries as a percentage of their gross domestic product 8.9 Proportion of ODA provided to help build trade capacity <u>Debt sustainability</u> 8.10 Total number of countries that have reached their HIPC decision points and number that have reached their HIPC completion points (cumulative) 8.11 Debt relief committed under HIPC and MDRI Initiatives 8.12 Debt service as a percentage of exports of goods and services
Target 8.E: In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries	8.13 Proportion of population with access to affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis
Target 8.F: In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications	8.14 Telephone lines per 100 population 8.15 Cellular subscribers per 100 population 8.16 Internet users per 100 population

List of Habitat Agenda Indicators

The Habitat Agenda Indicators are composed of:

> *5 Chapters which are from the Habitat agenda, which provide data on specific aspects of shelter, social development and eradication of poverty, environmental management, economic development and governance, with the aim of global monitoring for informed policy.*
>
> *20 Key indicators which are both important for policy and relatively easy to collect. They are either numbers, percentages and ratios;*
>
> *Extensive indicators which are intended to complement the results of the key indicators and qualitative data in order to make a more in-depth assessment of the issue.*

Table 1. List of Habitat Agenda Indicators

Chapter/ Goals	Indicators
1. Shelter	
Goal 1: Promote the right to adequate housing	**Indicator 1.1: durable structures** **Indicator 1.2: overcrowding** **Indicator 1.3: housing price and rent-to-income** ***Indicator 1.4[2]: right to adequate housing***
Goal 2: Provide security of tenure	**Indicator 1.5: secure tenure** **Indicator 1.6: authorized housing** **Indicator 1.7: evictions**
Goal 3: Provide equal access to credit	***Indicator 1.8[2]: housing finance***
Goal 4: Provide equal access to land	**Indicator 1.9: land price-to-income**
Goal 5: Promote access to basic services	**Indicator 1.10: access to safe water** **Indicator 1.11: access to improved sanitation** **Indicator 1.12: connection to services**
2. Social development and eradication of poverty	
Goal 6: Provide equal opportunities for a safe and healthy life	**Indicator 2.1: under-five mortality** **Indicator 2.2: homicides** **Indicator 2.4: HIV prevalence** ***Indicator 2.3[2]: urban violence***
Goal 7: Promote social integration and support disadvantaged groups	**Indicator 2.5: poor households**
Goal 8: Promote gender equality in human settlements	**Indicator 2.6: literacy rates** **Indicator 2.7: school enrolment**

[2] This indicator gives an assessment of areas which cannot be easily measured quantitatively. They are audit questions generally consisting of checkboxes for yes or no answers.

development	**Indicator 2.8: women councilors** ***Indicator 2.9[2]: gender inclusion***
3. Environmental Management	
Goal 9: Promote geographically-balanced settlement structures	**Indicator 3.1: urban population growth** **Indicator 3.2: planned settlements**
Goal 10: Manage supply and demand for water in an effective manner	**Indicator 3.3: price of water** **Indicator 3.4: water consumption**
Goal 11: Reduce urban pollution	**Indicator 3.5: wastewater treated** **Indicator 3.6: solid waste disposal** **Indicator 3.7: regular solid waste collection**
Goal 12: Prevent disasters and rebuild settlements	**Indicator 3.8: houses in hazardous locations** ***Indicator 3.9[2]: disaster prevention and mitigation instruments***
Goal 13: Promote effective and environmentally sound transportation systems	**Indicator 3.10: travel time** **Indicator 3.11: transport modes**
Goal 14: Support mechanisms to prepare and implement local environmental plans and local Agenda 21 initiatives	***Indicator 3.12[2]: local environmental plans***
4. Economic Development	
Goal 15: Strengthen small and micro-enterprises, particularly those developed by women	**Indicator 4.1: informal employment**
Goal 16: Encourage public-private sector partnership and stimulate productive employment opportunities	**Indicator 4.2: city product** **Indicator 4.3: unemployment**
5. Governance	
Goal 17: Promote decentralisation and strengthen local authorities	**Indicator 5.1: local government revenue** ***Indicator 5.2[2]: decentralization***
Goal 18: Encourage and support participation and civic engagement	**Indicator 5.3: voters participation** **Indicator 5.4: civic associations** ***Indicator 5.5[2]: citizens participation***
Goal 19: Ensure transparent, accountable and efficient governance of towns, cities and metropolitan areas	***Indicator 5.6[2]: transparency and accountability***

The Millennium Development Goal- Slum Target

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Target 7D : By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

Indicator 7.10: Proportion of urban population living in slums

1.5: Support to establish Urban Observatory

A powerful principle of sustainable urban development – development that meets the needs of today's citizens without impacting the ability of others to meet their own needs in the future – is active cooperation among actors with diverse and varied interests to ensure the sharing of resources and the development of mutually beneficial plans of action. Local partners may establish an urban observatory for a variety of reasons that contribute to overall urban sustainability. These include:

1. **generating value-based urban data and distributing information** by coordinating various sectors and partners within the city or country;
2. **facilitating the participation** of communities and public and private stakeholders in the development process of their neighborhoods by producing urban data at the appropriate scale;
3. **supporting decision-making processes** and enhancing governance within the urban sector by producing local knowledge-based information.

1. Generating value-based urban data and distributing information

Data on the key priorities of a city, region or country is not always available. Urban observatories provide a framework for coordination among and within local organizations for the production of urban data aggregated at the appropriate scale so that information can be put to productive use. They assist the generation and distribution of information in other ways, as well, by:

- developing an information repository that can gather, collate, package and distribute locally relevant information;
- empowering local authorities with information in an analytical but easily accessible format supported by geographical information systems (GIS) tools;
- creating conditions to decentralize the use of the information;
- developing a strategy to communicate the information to decision-makers, providing them with a set of comparable data that enables informed planning over the long term.

Information plays a vital role in creating public awareness of urban issues and improving accountability of decision-makers. Reliable and timely information stimulates dialogue

and actions to reverse negative trends and to understand positive trends for possible replication. The establishment of urban observatories enables local authorities and other stakeholders to generate information on shortfalls or problems confronted by different parts of the community or city, helping to define causes of identified issues, develop strategies for tracking and addressing problems, and formulate policies to help improve the existing situation.

2. Facilitating participation

Local and national urban observatories promote a participatory approach to developing urban indicators, collecting and disseminating data and using the information for urban development that meets citizens' needs and aspirations. Facilitating participation serves several aims:

- to build the capacity of civil society groups and engage them in the decision-making process using accurate, up-to-date and timely urban information;
- to inform communities, policy makers and other development agents about city- and neighborhood-related information on key measures for the city's top priority issues;
- to increase flow of information from one level of decision-making to another.

In many cases, the users and producers of urban data neither know each other nor understand each others' needs and methods. Urban observatories offer the possibility of greater data flow among actors, provided that they integrate multi-sectoral information and the resulting data sets are broadly accessible. A participatory approach seeks to meet the needs of all key players for cooperative collection, management and use of indicator data.

3. Supporting decision-making

An urban observatory is not a policy think tank or an isolated academic research centre, but is instead a coordinated knowledge- and decision-making body that serves to generate high-quality data on specific indicators that inform urban planning, resource allocation and development. Governments, as urban managers and policymakers, must be fully engaged in data production and analysis in order to ensure that the information is put to work for the good of citizens. Urban data that is transformed into good-quality information has the capacity to stimulate dialogue and promote its integration into policy.

Urban observatories around the world are using the information they have generated to support decision-making and enhance governance at the local level. The local urban observatory in Ahmedabad, India, for example, has provided the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation with data and maps for 47 slums (7,065 households) that are part of the corporation's Slum Upgrading Programme. This information is being used by the corporation to target resources more effectively and to monitor changes in slum conditions as a result of the programme's activities. The local urban observatory has also trained stakeholders in the use of GIS and has collected citizen feedback through a

survey, the results of which led the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation to revise the budget allocations.

The ultimate goal of a local urban observatory is to bring together people and institutions to work collaboratively on a common vision for their community aimed at providing high-quality information for decision-making. Transparency and accountability in good local governance are facilitated by accurate information on locally relevant indicators, and urban observatories serve to provide that information. Urban observatories, therefore, provide a framework for accountability.

Chapter 2: Setting up Urban Observatory

Setting up an urban observatory is based on the development of an integrated network of National and Local Urban Observatories. The beneficiaries are policy-makers at all levels and organizations of the civil society participating in sustainable urban development. The three main areas of work include assistance to governments, local authorities and organizations of local civil society to amplify their ability to collect, manage and maintain and use information on urban development; enhance the use of knowledge and urban indicators for policy formulation, planning and urban management through participatory process; and collection and dissemination of results of global, national and city level monitoring activities, as well as disseminating good practices in the use of urban information world-wide.

Purposes

Urban observatories can take many forms, but they share common aims:

- to create *sustainable* urban monitoring systems in support of local planning and management processes, linking data to policy;
- to strengthen local *capacity* for the development and use of urban indicators that facilitate the collection of disaggregated data at city and sub-city levels;
- to promote local *ownership* of urban indicator systems and a culture of monitoring and assessment in the urban sector.

At every level, urban observatories strive to provide high-quality, up-to-date and timely city information, first and foremost. They are driven by the need for improved coordination in the measurement and monitoring of urban indicators in key areas, such as demography, socio-economic development, urban development and environmental issues, among others. Urban observatories are also driven by the desire to develop a knowledge-based information system that can ultimately be used to support better-informed urban programmes and policies.

Activities

To achieve their aims, urban observatories typically work with partner groups to develop and apply appropriate indicators, indices and evaluation mechanisms. They maintain information systems and undertake evaluations and impact analyses at the request of local authorities and partner groups; they build capacity for the generation, management, analysis and dissemination of urban information on a regular and consistent basis. Urban

observatories produce various knowledge products – including reports, empirical studies, CDs, DVDs, websites, online forums and email list-serves – that stimulate dialogue among stakeholders around priority issues. This information is distributed in locally appropriate ways to support decision-making and the development of better-informed policies.

Urban observatories strengthen the community-wide base of urban knowledge. Increased knowledge can contribute to better use of the information produced by the observatories in the development of local plans of action and in harmonizing sectoral policies and strategies. Urban observatories cooperate with others in the global network to share resources, exchange substantive and methodological knowledge and to disseminate information to the national, regional and global levels. As part of their reporting structure, urban observatories may maintain a web site or newsletter for providing citizens with information on their cities, and may produce a biennial "state of the city" report that includes comparative analysis of indicators and presents best practices.

Composition

Local urban observatories are comprised of a consortium of local stakeholders coordinated by a municipal government office, university research centre, community-based organization or private entity designated as the "workshop" in which urban indicators are adapted from the global monitoring framework, further developed, tested and made operational in the data collection process. Several local urban observatories with different objectives may work simultaneously within a city; those concerned with similar issues in different parts of a city may link up for mutual assistance and information exchange. Rather than replicate efforts, however, GUO recommends that groups with complementary interests in one city partner on one observatory.

Several municipalities in a city-region may coordinate their efforts to develop urban indicators, data and planning strategies for the benefit of all. The city of Curitiba, Brazil, for example, consists of 22 municipalities, 12 of which are working together in a "metropolitan observatory" under the leadership of the city's Chamber of Industries and an environmental university research centre. Similarly, the Regional Vancouver Urban Observatory in British Columbia, Canada, serves to coordinate the environmental and social sustainability efforts of the 21 municipalities in the Greater Vancouver Regional District; it is administered by a university department with the support of local government.

In some countries, networks of local urban observatories are facilitated by a national-level partner that coordinates capacity-building assistance and compiles and analyzes urban indicator data to assess national trends and needs. In Mexico, for instance, the Ministry of Social Development coordinates more than 40 local urban observatories that produce data on various urban poverty related issues. Some national urban observatories are not linked to local partners, but instead take on the responsibility of collecting, analyzing and disseminating all urban data for the country. The National urban observatory in Egypt coordinates among concerned entities (at national level) for validating, observing, monitoring and evaluating the information to establish the integrated geo-spatial based urban indicator platform to support the national human settlement development mechanism. A national urban observatory may be housed in a

central government agency, a national university, a prestigious private research centre, a non-governmental organization, or other institution.

2.1: Urban observatory

Local and National Urban Observatories are governmental agencies, research centres or educational institutions that are designated as the "workshops" where monitoring tools are developed and used for policy-making through consultative processes. A Local Urban Observatory for a city or town is the focal point for urban policy development and planning where collaboration among policy makers, technical experts and representatives of partners groups is fostered. Networks of Local Urban Observatories are facilitated by National Urban Observatories where necessary. National Urban Observatories co-ordinate capacity building assistance and compile and analyze urban data for national policy development.

An urban observatory is a network of stakeholders responsible for producing, analyzing and disseminating data in a meaningful set of indicators that reflect collectively in prioritizing issues on sustainable development. Data and information resources produced by the local network are used to support decision-making and the formulating better-informed policies. An urban observatory is therefore a **focal point for urban monitoring** at the local, national or regional scale.

2.2: Level of Urban Observatory

The Urban Observatories are mainly in three levels; (i) Local Urban Observatory [LUO] (ii) National Urban Observatory [NUO] (iii) Regional Urban Observatory [RUO]

i. Local (LUO)

Local urban observatories are typically housed in an existing city department, non-governmental organization or university. They serve to produce, manage and analyze data on the performance of a city on key urban indicators and other thematic issues relevant to both local decision-making and global monitoring.

Success or failure of urban policy is determined mainly by its responsiveness to local priorities. The GUO therefore encourages the designation of Local Urban Observatories (LUO's) as city-level institutions:

1. To involve local policy-makers and organizations of civil society in dialogue
2. To generate information on local themes and problems
3. To encourage policy responses to locally felt needs and priorities

As a local platform for policy information, an LUO will typically:

- Work with partner groups to develop and apply appropriate indicators, indices and evaluation mechanisms for the urban area and its communities
- Maintain management information systems and undertake evaluations and impact analyses at the request of local authorities and partners groups
- Build capacity for the generation, management, analysis and dissemination of urban information, including empirical information, on a regular and consistent basis and to apply the information in decision-making
- Identify conditions, trends and priority issues through research and consultative processes involving local officials and organizations of civil society
- Propose options for harmonizing sectoral policies and strategies in the context of the local plan of action
- Cooperate with other Local Urban Observatories in sharing resources, exchanging substantive and methodological knowledge and disseminating information to the national, regional and global levels
- Assist other local urban observatories in developing their capacity to collect and use urban indicators
- Analyze and share lessons learned from ongoing experiences and good practices with other Local Urban Observatories
- Maintain a local Internet homepage and a newsletter for providing civic society with information on the city and for reporting on activities of the LUO and its partner groups
- Produce a biennial *State of the City* report, including comparative analysis of indicators and presentation of best practices

ii. National (NUO)

National urban observatories coordinate and consolidate data collection at the national level using the results for evidence-based policy-making. They can either coordinate the activities of local urban observatories in the country or produce their own data and information resources at the national, regional or local level.

The GUO encourages the establishment of National Urban Observatories (NUOs) to monitor national trends and conditions and to inform national level policy and decision-making. The NUO's could take many forms: as part of an existing national consultative structure or agency; as a national coordinating body for LUOs; as secretariat to the National Habitat Committee (NHC), established in most countries in preparation for the Habitat II Conference; as part of an academic or research institution, NGO or professional association. The NUO serve as consultative bodies on national policy. The first goal of the NUO will be the formulation of a national urban policy framework, if that does not already exist.

To these ends, it is recommended that NUO's:

- Conduct broad-based consultations to review or to formulate the National Plan of Action (NPA) in light of the commitments and recommendations of the *Habitat Agenda* and priorities expressed through consultative processes

- Propose a national urban policy framework to guide the implementation of the NPA and the formulation and implementation of Local Plans of Action (LPAs)
- Propose options for harmonizing sectoral objectives, based on urban indicators and best practices analysis
- Provide a coordinating framework for the collection, analysis and application of urban indicators at the national and local levels
- Organize, in conjunction with other partners, national best practice competitions and exhibitions
- Organize training programmes, for policy makers and technicians at the national and local levels, on the generation and use of empirical information
- Maintain an indicators programme to monitor implementation of the NPA
- Coordinate the assessment and provision of capacity-building resources for the implementing, monitoring and evaluating NPA and of LPAs
- Organize, with relevant partners at all levels, networks for training and peer-to-peer learning among agencies, local authorities and civic organizations engaged in improving the living environment
- Maintain an Internet homepage for providing civic society with information on the national urban policy and for reporting on activities of the NUO and its partner groups
- Produce a biennial *State of the Nation's Cities* report, including comparative analysis of indicators and presentation of best practices

iii. Regional (RUO)

Regional Urban observatories are hosted in regional organizations or academic institutions to provide technical assistance to the NUO and LUO through localizing monitoring tools, capacity building and also in policy guidance using evidence-based knowledge. RUO can also support the local and national bodied in standardization of Indicator, data and information not only to enhance the local policy planning mechanism but also to enhance the regional harmony (through gap analysis). The RUO's are the technical hand of GUO at regional level to support the LUO and NUO's.

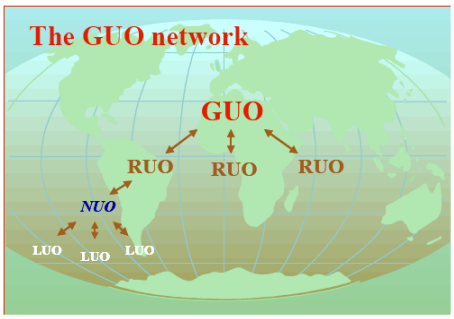
Regional (international) organizations, including the regional offices and commissions of the United Nations system, international umbrella NGOs, networks of research and training institutions and others are encouraged to organize urban observatory functions on a regional basis. Regional Urban Observatories (RUOs) can be organized on a strictly geographical basis, on the grounds of a shared eco-system, or other common social, cultural, administrative, political, environmental concern.

RUOs are set up to:

- Hold regional consultations on common issues, including trans-boundary issues and issues derived from shared ecological, administrative or cultural systems
- Sponsor regional workshops on the development and adaptation of region-specific tools, guidelines, methods and indicators

- Organize, in conjunction with other partners, national best practice competitions and exhibitions
- Contribute to development and dissemination of training materials in languages of the region
- Coordinate training for trainers in national and local capacity-building institutions
- Assist NUOs and partners in the region with the collection, compilation and analysis of indicators data and best practices
- Facilitate the sharing and exchange of lessons learned among countries and cities of the region
- Coordinate regional urban research programmes
- Identify regional correspondents and focal points for technical cooperation and research
- Report on new development, opportunities and constraints to the GUO for the inclusion of region-specific issues and priorities in inter-governmental processes
- Produce a biennial *State of the Region's Cities* report, including comparative analysis of indicators and presentation of best practices

2.3 The GUO-Net



Global Urban Observatory Network (GUO-Net) is a worldwide information and capacity-building network established by the United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-HABITAT) to help implement the *Habitat Agenda* at the national and local levels.

The purpose of GUO-Net is to support governments, local authorities and civil society:

- To improve the collection, management, analysis and use of information in formulating more effective urban policies;
- To improve information flows between all levels for better urban decision-making;
- To stimulate broad-based consultative processes to help identify and integrate urban information needs;
- To provide information and analyses to all stakeholders for more effective participation in urban decision-making;
- To share information, knowledge and expertise using modern information and communication technology (ICT);
- To create a global network of local, national and regional platforms for sharing information about the implementation of the *Habitat Agenda*.

Some tools and benefits provided by the GUO network:

- Training on using the urban indicator toolkit for data collection and analysis

- Training on GIS software and provision of GIS software (to a limited extend, upon special agreement)
- Training on how to use the results of the urban indicators data for fund raising activities
- Conferences of the network members for information exchange and city-to-city networking
- Access to internet resources available at UN-Habitat's website including urban indicators databases and Urban Info system
- Your data will be used for evaluations done for the global reports published biannually by UN-Habitat (Global Report on Human Settlements, State of the World Cities Report)

UN-HABITAT achieves these objectives through a global network of Local, National and Regional Urban Observatories and through partner institutions that provide training and other capacity building expertise.

2.4 Framework of Urban Observatory

The Urban Observatory includes the identification of the major development priorities, reforms, policies and programmes in the urban sector that could provide a framework for monitoring, including measuring progress towards Millennium Development Goal 7, target 11. Partners should understand the current and potential use of monitoring in urban policy-making, planning and management, and in the promotion of good governance in the context of their country or city. This relates to the **demand** for monitoring urban development, municipal performance and the Millennium Development Goals.

It is important to assess the **feasibility** of setting up an urban observatory in a country or city (new initiative). Collaborate with Global Urban Observatory and inform the intentions or interest of the new initiative in order to learn how other urban observatories managed their early development. GUO certifies urban observatories that follow GUO Standard guidelines and tools for indicator development, monitoring and reporting. GUO can also provide technical assistance with identifying relevant stakeholders and create awareness among stakeholders about the usefulness of urban indicators for the policy planning decision making process.

The main precondition for **the successful development of an urban observatory** and monitoring system is local demand – an indicators system should not be imposed on a government. This will help to consider incentives as well as disincentives or "roadblocks" to developing the monitoring system and the urban observatory.

Some guiding questions may help in assessing demand:

- Are there sources of local demand or are stakeholders developing monitoring systems mainly because of pressures from development agencies?
- Is there a "champion" at the national or local level who can take the initiative forward?
- Where is the local demand focused?
- Will the indicators support planning, policy-making, management, accountability or reporting to donors

i. Institutionalization of Urban Observatory

The existing organization or entity involved with monitoring urban development, and government policies and programmes are involved in specific priorities. Therefore there is a need for key inter-departmental or inter-organizational collaboration to enhance the urban monitoring as well as cross sectoral prioritization mechanism. These organizations influence government's resource allocation decisions, the management of sectors and programmes, and its accountability relationships. They have responsibilities in one or more of the following areas: public expenditure management; strategic urban planning; management of public investment programmes; policy formulation; policy advice; monitoring and evaluation. These organizations include central ministries and local authorities, NGOs, local governmental agencies, academia and the private sector.

Institutionalization of the urban observatory will be more sustainable as well as bring success. It is therefore important to review the (i) Host Institute, (ii) Capacity Assessment (iii) Capacity Building (iv) Plan sustainability for the Urban Observatory.

- **Host institute**

It is important to identify the institute to operationalize the Urban Observatory. The checklists on hosting institute are:

- Long term and short term interest of the Institute to host the Urban Observatory.
- Strategic location of the institute in terms of Information, resources (skill HR & Financial) and policy planning mechanism.
- Sustainability of the Urban Observatory.
- High Ability of partnership and coordination among other stakeholders.
- Finally the organizational commitment and cooperation.

- **Capacity assessment**

Assess the capacity of existing entities to:

- Urban indicator data collection and analysis; to establish benchmarks for monitoring urban conditions and trends.
- Geo-Spatial analysis for developing monitoring capacity (GIS, Mapping).
- Skill human resources to perform High level statistical analysis
- Coordination among all stakeholders in generating, analysis and management of relevant information for local-level policy development, implementation and policy impact monitoring and evaluation

- **Capacity building**

In countries and cities where technical capacities are high and further consultation to define priority areas of intervention and meaningful set of urban indicators is often needed. In cases or contexts with fewer technical capacities, there is a need to organize training and capacity-building sessions in various areas, particularly in the design of the monitoring system and the development of an action plan.

- Design the monitoring system, identifying key areas of intervention and urban indicators that can be adapted from the global framework and localize the core set of indicators. At the end of this exercise, partners should agree on (i) core set (ii) specific sets of indicators.
- Design capacity building (Training on Urban Indicator, urban info, Statistical analysis) and lesson learn pogamme for the urban Observatory team.
- Develop a general action plan for the urban observatory, identifying milestones and targets as per the objectives pursued by the observatory. At this stage, there is a need to formalize necessary institutional agreements.

Why are indicators important? Indicators are needed to:

- support the design of policies and programmes and monitor progress towards achieving local and global development goals;
- target resources more effectively;
- raise awareness of urban problems and mobilize community support;
- make local government more accountable to citizens.

- Plan sustainability:

- Urban observatories are sustainable when:
  - there is a clear political commitment from the national government and the local authorities to their success;
  - they are conceived through participatory processes involving local stakeholders, including the private sector, NGOs, community organizations and others;
  - financial provisions are made by a variety of stakeholders in a clear and systematic manner;
  - efforts are made toward building consensus among different constituencies;
  - sufficient capacity and leadership exist. Successful observatories typically have an institutional or individual "champion".
- Proposals to establish new urban observatories must assess potential sustainability risks in each of the above areas.

ii. Steering committee.

An urban observatory is a network of local stakeholders that express interest in working together on the collection, analysis and dissemination of data. The main partners of the Urban Observatory should be represented in the steering committee.

The steering committee should work closely with local policy makers, professional associations and representatives of non-governmental and civic organizations to:

- Identify existing key structures or organizations involved in the collection of urban data and the monitoring of urban development.
- Assess government policies and programmes in the urban sector, their formal inter-relationships and their data needs.
- Bring policy makers, practicing professionals and the community together to exchange views about urban issues and the need for an urban observatory.
- Identify preliminary urban indicators and types of expertise required to gather and analyze indicator data.
- Sensitize stakeholders to the overall local conditions, trends and issues concerning urban development.

iii. Members of Steering committee

The Steering committee must represent the key entities in city or national level, considering the limitation in total number. GUO recommend including representatives from national statistics agencies, entities that are potential sources of funding and organizations that are already producing data. The steering committee plays a role in building consensus on the creation of the observatory and guiding its general orientations.

iv. Expertise in Urban Observatory

The skill sets of urban observatory professionals in participating organizations should complement each other according to the objectives and focus of the observatory.

The observatory core team should combine professional staff, including statisticians, GIS technicians and data analysts, with advisory service and communications experts. Decision-makers and civil society representatives should be part of the steering committee to ensure broad participation and representation.

Staff skills:

- Observatories that work on multi-sectoral issues require staff with a wide range of competencies in each area covered.
- Statistical experts are required for data collection and analysis.
- GIS experts are essential for processing geo-referenced data, performing spatial analyses, as well as for conducting participatory workshops that use GIS tools and technologies.
- Communication experts are necessary for disseminating the results of the work and producing quality reports.
- The observatory should also include staff with negotiation skills and political savvy to help facilitate the work.

2.5: Dissemination tools

The Urban Observatory needs to develop dissemination plans to inform the decision makers as well as the citizens on the outcome of their performance. It is therefore advisable to produce different types of products which are easily accessible and user friendly. This will enhance the impact of the analysis through regular update and circulation of the product. The products can be as follows:

i. Indicator Pocket book

ii. Cities report

iii. LUO web site

iv. Periodic publications

v. Urban Info System

Chapter 3: Translating knowledge into policy and informing decision-making

Local, national and regional urban observatories serve to “tell the right story” by engaging a range of stakeholders with a variety of skills and knowledge sets in the development of S.M.A.R.T. indicators. Indicators can build on the Habitat Agenda and

the Millennium Development Goals but should also be specific to the local context and be developed by local participants. Working together, local actors can achieve an important goal of the urban observatory development process: to help partners build their professional skills and aptitude in improving the quality of data and its use in policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation, which ultimately leads to sustainable urban development and the strengthening of public accountability

Urban observatories can provide an essential antidote to the information crisis in cities by creating partnerships to develop indicators, collect and analyze data, and communicate information in ways that meet the needs of citizens and urban decision-makers. Urban observatories are institutional homes for monitoring. They act as focal points for indicator-based urban monitoring systems and are hosted by an existing central government office, city department, non-governmental organization or university. A main objective of urban observatories at every level is to **enhance urban data collection and management to support the development of better-informed policies**.

Chapter 4: Problems to avoid in setting up an urban observatory

Urban observatories have the potential to become well-established institutions that generate data and inform urban policy and practice for many years. For observatories to succeed and become integral assets for urban strategic thinking and planning, they must be carefully designed and managed – or risk becoming obsolete. Many urban observatories have failed to develop into vital resources for their cities and countries, often owing to problems encountered at the beginning of the process. The following list describes some of the common troubles faced by urban observatories, provided to help new groups get off to a productive start.

To ensure the long-term viability of the urban observatory, adequate institutional and financial support is essential. Institutional support includes national or local government commitment to:

- endorse the observatory;
- establish horizontal linkages with different departments or units as possible data users and participants;
- ensure that information is used to strengthen decision-making and policy formulation.

An urban observatory should engage those institutions that can provide technical and institutional support in the data collection process, such as national statistics offices, academic research centres and non-governmental organizations.

At the proposal stage, the urban observatory team should prepare a well-defined implementation framework plan that specifies clear and feasible timelines and delivery mechanisms to ensure institutional commitment.

In addition to institutional sustainability in terms of outputs, observatory administrators can leverage the fact that the observatory will inspire change and add value to existing data collection and decision-making efforts to gain the financial support of vital institutional partners.

Financial support requires the provision of funds for the day-to-day functioning of the observatory by one or more stakeholders. A good funding strategy will ensure that resources are available for all projected expenses, including hiring experts to provide necessary skills and input. Financial support can be secured through a governmental budgetary allocation for a three- to five-year programme or through donations from partners. National urban observatories should encourage and facilitate replication of local urban observatories, taking into account their sustainability plans, potential to develop local partnerships and networking plans to ensure participation of local actors.

Urban Observatory Must Have:

i. Clear mission, vision or objectives

For urban observatories to succeed at any scale, they must serve a clear purpose that is championed by all partners. Take time to thoughtfully develop the mission, long-term vision and clear, concrete objectives of the urban observatory as a committed team at the beginning of the process.

ii. Have political support

Political leadership and senior management support is vital to the success of any urban observatory. GUO has found that in countries in which observatories are primarily coordinated by government entities, political support tends to be strong. Those initiatives driven by non-governmental organizations and academic institutions appear to have less support from their governments. For urban observatories not directly coordinated or managed by local government, linking indicators with action agendas that bridge issues and provide positive steps toward community improvement is important for engendering political support. Observatories that are supported by one person – a political "champion" – should immediately seek political support from other institutions to avoid obsolescence at the end of the primary supporter's term of office.

iii. Financial sustainability and institutional support

All urban observatory coordinators should carefully assess the sustainability risks they face when developing their proposals and develop plans to diminish those risks. During the development of a new urban observatory, partners should honestly examine the viability of the project, given their city's unique institutional environment.

iv. Indicators need to be connected to local concerns

For plans to be successful and sustainable, the urban observatory concept and indicators have to be practical and relevant to the needs of each community and its local decision-makers. Many existing urban observatories are in cities and countries that face challenges of managing their urban areas under severe resource constraints. They cannot afford to invest their limited resources on wasteful or meaningless data collection exercises. Arguably the most important achievement in the planning process has been to establish clear linkages between the indicators process and specific policy or planning areas in each

urban observatory. This process has helped to mobilize interest in the indicators and their value as a planning tool among the officials and other stakeholders involved. The global monitoring framework produced by GUO has proven to be a good guide and reference for localizing urban indicators.

v. Limit urban indicators

Some urban observatories have created monitoring mechanisms with more than 200 indicators covering a wide range of urban issues. Experience shows that the monitoring system of an urban observatory should be condensed into a small number of indicators, responding to the main focus of the observatory. These "key indicators" should be measurable and realistic to be politically relevant.

vi. Clear outcomes and a sound communication strategy

All of the hard work urban observatories do to collect and analyze urban data will go unrecognized as long as it remains disconnected from innovative, user-friendly and demand-driven products. One of the first processes urban observatory partners should undertake is a detailed discussion of exactly what the observatory will produce and how the partners will communicate it. Without concrete outcomes, social, financial and political support for urban observatories quickly wanes.

vii. Coordination among actors

This guide emphasizes the importance of collaboration in urban observatory development and maintenance. True collaboration means working together to accomplish the objectives of the observatory – not recruiting big-name supporters who cannot dedicate staff resources and their own time to help with the work that needs to be done. All partners – including government representatives, staff of local organizations and members of the public – should be made aware of their responsibilities regarding ongoing contributions to the urban observatory they support. Observatory coordinators should also take care to create realistic expectations and a workplan that suits the needs of those involved.

viii. Investment in training

A major weak link in developing urban indicators systems and observatories is the difficulty that government employees and other stakeholders have in implementing and using the developed processes. Both high-level and mid-level managers, as well as technical staff, should receive training in what indicators and observatories are all about and how the tools can help them in their work. Training is needed in the initial stages of implementation as well as later stages. A key challenge is employee, and particularly senior management, turnover in many cities, which necessitates ongoing training efforts.

United Nations Human Settlements Programme

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Annex 1:

Annex 2:

UN-HABITAT

Welcome to the Global Urban Observatory Certification process

Please, complete the form below, and send it to the Global Urban Observatory office at UN-Habitat (see address at the end of this guide). We will assess the Urban Observatory for certification process and send official endorsement.

URBAN OBSERVATORY

INFORMATION SHEET FOR CERTIFICATION

GENERAL INFORMATION

Name of organization/institution/municipality: .....

Proposed Urban Observatory for (name of city, country): .....

Proposed Name of the Urban Observatory:.....

Year of Establishment: ..... Established Independently: Yes☐ No ☐

Global urban Observatory involvement at: Initial Stage ☐ Intermediate Stage ☐ Final Stage ☐ Never ☐

TYPE OF HOST INSTITUTION:

☐ National Government ☐ Local Government ☐ Non-Governmental Organization/

☐ Academic/ scientific/research institution Community-based Organization

☐ Private sector ☐ Other (specify): .....

Coordinator's Contact:

Mr./Mrs. .....

Email of contact person: .....

Email of institution: .....

Postal address: .....

Fax: ..... Tel: .....

Homepage: .....

Setting up Urban Observatory

Purpose of Urban Observatory: (Please describe briefly the main purpose to establish the Urban Observatory)

UN-HABITAT

Certification Status:			
Certified	☐	Not Certified	☐

GLOBAL URBAN OBSERVATORY

Email: maharufa.hossain@unhabitat.org, guo@unhabitat.org

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Nairobi, Kenya

UN-HABITAT

Creation of Steering Committee:

Steering Committee: Yes☐ No ☐

Member in the Steering Committee (Name of the institute)

Participation of the committee members: Yes☐ No ☐

If Yes, Please Explain: (Brief Explanation)

Common understanding in UO's Decision Making: Yes☐ No ☐

Finalization process of the steering committee & the Coordinator

(Brief Explanation)

Nomination of Host Institute:

Steering Committee accepting the Host Institute nomination: Yes☐ No ☐

Commitment of Host institute: Yes☐ No ☐, if Yes, Explain

Long term sustainability of hosting UO: (Brief Explanation)

Neutral role of Host Institute Yes☐ No ☐,

Capacity Assessment

Technical capacity assessment: Yes☐ No ☐

GIS capacity assessment: Yes☐ No ☐

Data processing capacity assessment: Yes☐ No ☐

Planning for local capacity empowerment: Yes☐ No ☐, if yes (Brief Explanation)

LEVEL OF ACTIVITY:

☐ Regional level (indicate region and countries covered): .....

☐ National level (indicate country):.....

☐ City level (indicate city/ metropolitan area):.....

☐ Community or sub city level/s (indicate name/s): .....

SOURCE OF KEY DATA

Name of Institute	Type of Data	Year of Publication

MEHTODOLOGY USED FOR SECTOR ANALYSIS

Identifying the priority sector: Yes☐ No☐, if yes (Brief Explanation)

Methods of developing indicator: (Brief Explanation)

UN-HABITAT

FIELDS OF ACTIVITY:

Please, describe briefly your main fields of activities related to urban development / urban indicators (keywords only in 500 words):

YOUR RECENT ACTIVITIES:

1. Current programme of work (maximum 100 words)
2. Results achieved (maximum 100 words)
3. Lessons learned (maximum 50 words)

MONITORING TOOLS USED IN YOUR PAST ACTIVITIES:

- ☐ UN-Habitat key urban indicators (see http://www.unhabitat.org/guo/uip...)
- ☐ Nationally defined indicators (attach description)
- ☐ Locally defined indicators (attach description)
- ☐ Community level indicators (attach description)
- ☐ Urban Inequity Survey (UIS)
- ☐ Urban Info
- ☐ Geographical Information System
- ☐ "Best Practices"
- ☐ Other tools (attach description)

UN-HABITAT

WHO ARE YOUR PARTNERS?

☐ National Government ☐ Local Governments ☐ Non-Governmental Organizations/

☐ Academic/scientific/research institutions Community-based Organizations

☐ Private sector ☐ Media ☐ Other: .....

Please, attach a list of your partners using these categories and include their contact information.

YOUR EXPECTATIONS AND PLANNED CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS THE GUO:

1. The objectives you want to achieve by setting up an Urban Observatory (max. 100 words)
2. The strategies you are planning to reach your objectives (max. 100 words)
3. The human and financial resources you want to mobilize (max. 50 words)
4. Process for involving the civil society (max. 100 words)

REPORTING AND DISSEMINATION PROCESS

Attach a list of your publications and other relevant references.

COMMENTS

Please, feel free to add any information you think is important, and which was not covered by the questions above.

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ii