GLOBAL PUBLIC SPACE PROGRAMME

ANNUAL REPORT 2019

PUBLIC SPACE
PROGRAMME

UN@HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

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Cover photo: Cité Faycal public space in Niger © UN-Habitat / Christelle Lahoud

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CONTENTS

Israels Plads Square, Copenhagen © UN-Habitat / Christelle Lahoud

OUR SHARED PURPOSE

"

We commit ourselves to promoting safe, inclusive, accessible, green and quality public spaces, including streets, sidewalks and cycling lanes, squares, waterfront areas, gardens and parks, that are multifunctional areas designed and managed to ensure social interaction, human development, building peaceful and democratic societies and promoting cultural diversity. We reaffirm the central role of inclusive public space in reducing social and spatial inequalities across urban areas (formal and informal) and that public spaces have positive impacts on health and well-being.
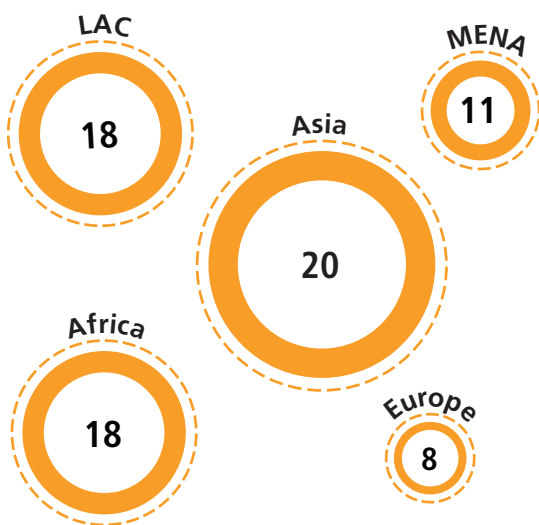
"

Transformative commitments for sustainable urban development,
New Urban Agenda

In 2012, UN-Habitat launched its Global Public Space Programme, now active in more than 75 cities across the world, with the objective to promote public spaces as the cornerstone for sustainable cities in order to ensure good quality of life for all.

The Global Public Space Programme adopts a consolidated and integrated approach to public space improvement across UN-Habitat. Over the last seven years, we have developed an iterative approach to public space that includes a variety of normative and operational tools, methodologies and practices that support local and national governments and other partners to make public spaces safer, more inclusive, accessible and green. This includes public space assessments, policy guides, strategies and design principles, capacity building, participatory tools, technology and innovation projects and carrying out advocacy work and actual implementation.

Our overall goal is to support local governments in creating and promoting socially inclusive, integrated, connected, environmentally sustainable and safe streets and public spaces, especially for the most vulnerable. We strongly believe that through our multi-sectoral approach we can create a greater impact on the community and the built environment. Ideally, our approach starts at the city-wide level by understanding the status quo as well as gaps and needs through a comprehensive assessment of public spaces. The data we collect can inform the local government on their city's performance, report on SDG11.7 and create a baseline to develop and adopt relevant planning frameworks and strategies to guide, prioritize and manage the public realm while contributing to the long-term transformation of the city.

Number of cities where the Global Public Space Programme is active

LAC 18

MENA 11

Asia 20

Africa 18

Europe 8

HOW WE WORK

Climate change

Gender

Human rights

Youth

NATIONAL

Innovation

CITY

SDG 11.7.1

Monitoring and Evalutation

Data

Participation

Heritage

NEIGHBOURHOOD

Pilot projects

Assessments City-wide

Site-specific

SITE

Strategy and policies

Partnerships

Crisis and refugees

Action plan

Planning and design principles

Capacity building

Health

...socially inclusive, integrated, connected, environmentally sustainable and safe streets and public spaces.

SOCIALLY INCLUSIVE

Good public spaces must be designed to meet the needs of all users. This means paying attention to quality and inclusive design and accommodating the values and preferences of different groups, ages and abilities. Public participation and civic engagement are key to empowering communities and ensuring both inclusion and greater longevity in the sense of ownership and custodianship.

BETTER INTEGRATED

Integrated planning encourages a dialogue between all departmental actors with a stake in the public realm. The Global Public Space Programme adopts both vertical and horizontal integration approaches. Vertical integration is in terms of the early integration and involvement of the various government, administration and non-government players involved in urban development. Horizontal integration is in terms of integrating the various sectorial policies and actions of the public and private sector for sustainable development. Integration links the spatial aspect with other dimensions of urban life such as social, economic, political and cultural factors.

BETTER CONNECTED

For maximum positive effect on the neighbourhood, public spaces should be connected through networks that enable people to move around freely and easily. This requires policy makers take a holistic view of the city and seek to maximize the potential of existing infrastructure. Policies coupled with good urban planning and design can offer better physical and social connectivity for urban residents.

ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE

A well-planned city-wide public space system can create green networks to regenerate ecological systems, restore environmental connectivity and support biodiversity in urban areas. This can, in turn, create ample benefits for local residents and attract visitors. The role that public space can play in the provision of ecological services is extremely important in mitigation and adaptation strategies to climate change.

SAFE

A mixed and diverse public space provides a place that is vibrant, busy and automatically reduces insecurity. Fear of crime and crime itself can deter all people, not just vulnerable groups, from using high-quality public spaces. Physical changes to, and the better management of public space can help to alleviate these fears. Public spaces can reduce feelings of insecurity by attracting a large cross section of people at all times of the day.

Luthuli avenue transformation project in Nairobi © UN-Habitat / Kristen Milhahn

CONTINUED PROGRESS

Where we started and where we are now

STRATEGIC PLAN

2014-2019

2012	2013	2014	2015	2016

210,000 PEOPLE IMPACTED

340,000 PEOPLE IMPACTED

450,000 PEOPLE IMPACTED

2012

Launch of the Nairobi Public Space Programme

Partnership between UN-Habitat and Mojang

2013

First Future of Places Conference, Stockholm, Sweden

2 upgrading projects completed in Nairobi, Kenya

First Block by Block workshops in Kenya, Haïti and Nepal

Launch of the Charter on Public Spaces

Publishing of UN-Habitat technical report, "Street as Public Spaces Drivers of Prosperity" to address the importance of streets as public spaces

2014

Second Future of Places Conference, Buenos Aires, Argentina

4 public space projects completed in Nepal, Haïti and Kenya

Crowdsourcing Public Space designs using Minecraft with over 7,500 youth in Mexico

2015

Launch of the Nairobi City-wide public space assessment

International Public Markets Conference, Barcelona, Spain

Public Space Biennale, Rome, Italy

Establishment of the Block by Block Foundation

9 public space projects completed in Nepal, Haïti, Kosovo, Bangladesh and Kenya

Launch of the publication "Using Minecraft for Youth Participation in Urban Design and Governance"

Launch of the publication: "Public Space Toolkit: From Global Principles to Local Policies and Practice"

Adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals including a specific target on Public Space

2016

Bamenda city-wide public space and market place assessment

Launch of Regional Arab States Programme

First Nairobi Placemaking Week

9 public space projects completed in India, Nepal and Kenya.

Premiere of the documentary 'Gaming the Real World' featuring UN-Habitat and Mojang

Agreement and adoption of the New Urban Agenda in Quito, Ecuador

UN agencies Action Framework for implementation of the New Urban Agenda on public space

EGM on public space indicator to monitor implementation of SDG 11.7.1

STRATEGIC PLAN

2020-2023

2017

2018

2019

1.1 MILLION
PEOPLE IMPACTED

1.5 MILLION
PEOPLE IMPACTED

1.72 MILLION
PEOPLE IMPACTED

Launch of 2 city-wide public space assessments in Ethiopia, and South Africa

Over 100 members of the UN-Habitat public space network

Latin American Placemaking Week, Valparaíso

Global Placemaking Week, Amsterdam

47 public space projects completed in Peru, Kenya, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Bangladesh, Kosovo, South Africa and Madagascar

First tests of mixed reality technology for citizen participation and visualization of public space designs in Johannesburg, South Africa

Launch of 6 city-wide public space assessments in Kenya, Mongolia, South Africa, China and Uganda

World Bank and UN Agencies Public Space Working Group launched

Launch of the European Placemaking Network

Launch of the China National Network Public Space / Placemaking

17 public space projects completed in South Africa, China, Brazil, Vietnam, Palestine, Bangladesh, Kenya, Mexico, Colombia and South Africa

Tests of improved mixed reality platform and Expert Group Meeting in Stockholm, Sweden

Indicator 11.7 on public space upgraded from Tier 3 to Tier 2 by the UN Statistical Commission

City-wide public space strategy - A global guide for city leaders

City-wide public space strategy - Compendium of International Practices

Development of the Regional Strategy for Asia Pacific

Mainstreaming Public Space in NUP (Draft)

Launch of the Ethiopia flagship programme

Completed 17 city-wide assessments in Afghanistan, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Palestine, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Uruguay.

17 public space projects completed in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ethiopia, Mexico, Kenya, Peru and Uruguay

Launch of the publication "Mixed reality for public participation in urban and public space design"

Launch of the site-specific assessment tool

Finalising the Block by Block Training Kit

Conducted 12 Training of Trainers on Public space tools in Ethiopia, France, Somaliland Scotland, UAE, etc

Launch of the city-wide public space assessment guide

Public space featured prominently during the First UN-Habitat Assembly

604 cities are included in the cities database of public space

Launched UN-Habitat's partnership with the Journal of Public Space

2019 KEY RESULTS AT A GLANCE

Active in
23
countries

started
36
public space upgrading projects

Completed
17
public spaces projects

Completed
17
city-wide assessments

Completed
27
site-specific assessments

Conducted
21
Block by Block workshops

Trained
900
people on public space assessment and tools

Engaged
1600
citizens in participatory planning

Engaged
750
citizens in digital participation workshops

Impacted the lives of more than
295,000 people
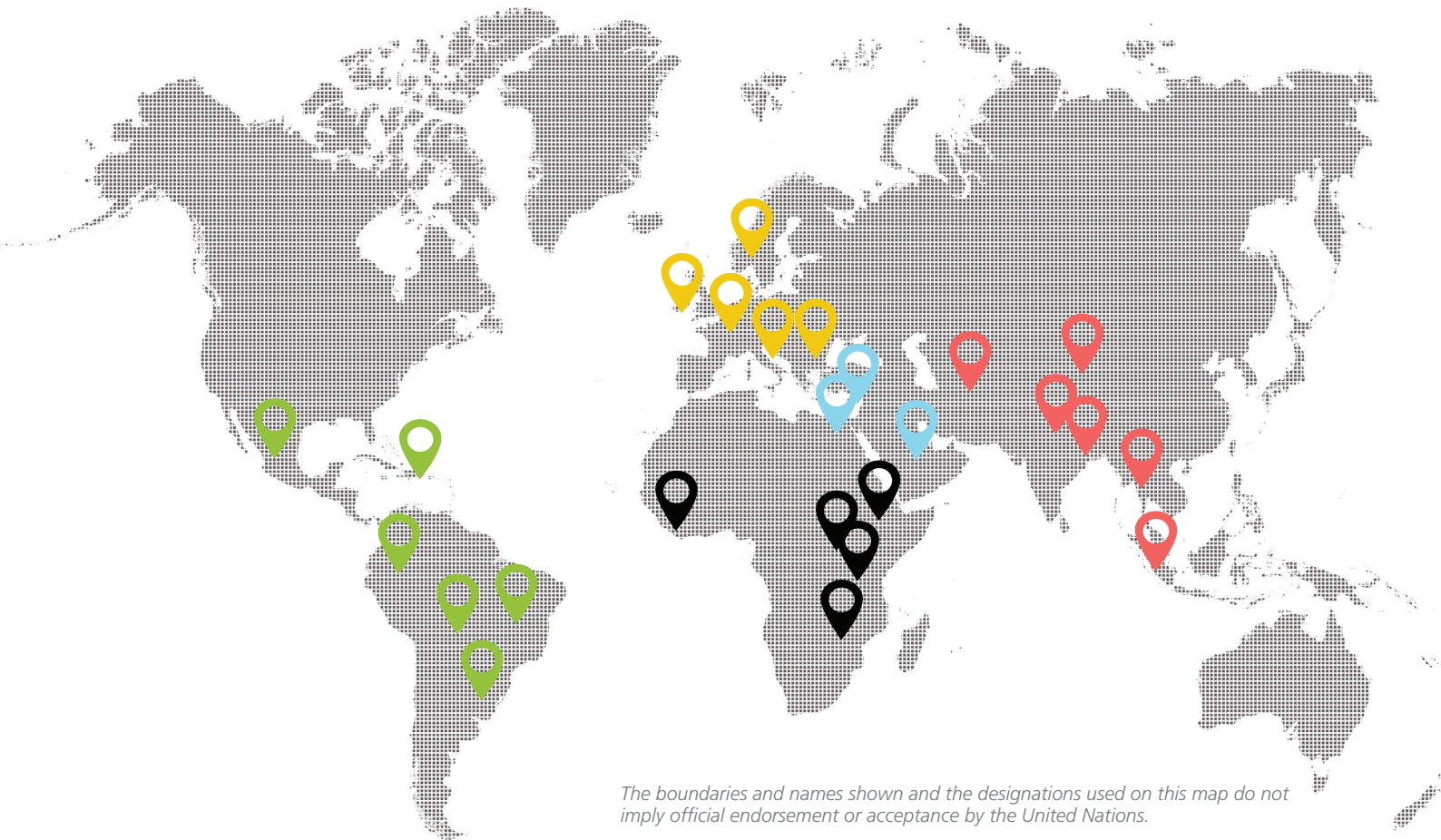
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Cross-cutting focus

Environment
1 (5.88%)

Safety
2 (11.76%)

Age
4 (23.53%)

Youth
3 (17...)

Resilience
4 (23.53%)

Gender
3 (17.65%)
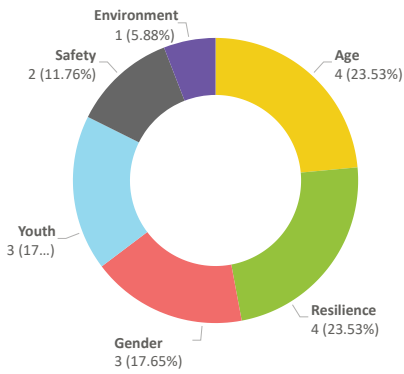
Typology of public spaces

Typology	Count
Open space	12
Neighbourhood space	4
Playground	2
Streets	2
Waterfront	2
Heritage site	1
Informal settlements	1
park	1

Count of projects
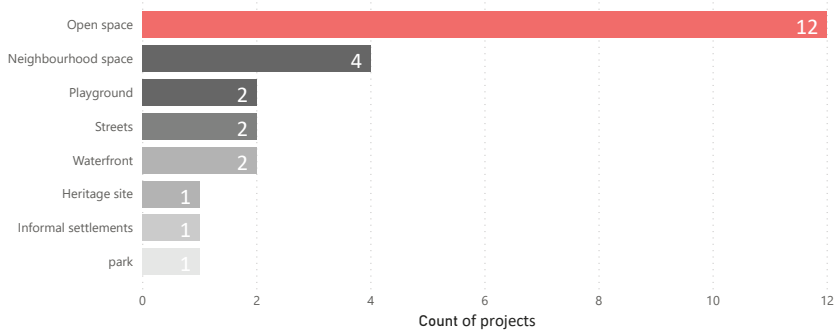
Thematic areas by region

REGION ● AFRICA ● ASIA ● EUROPE ● LAC ● MENA

Count of Themes

Citywide approach | Children and youth | Environment and climate | Culture heritage | Safety and security | street and public spaces | Women and girls | Basic services
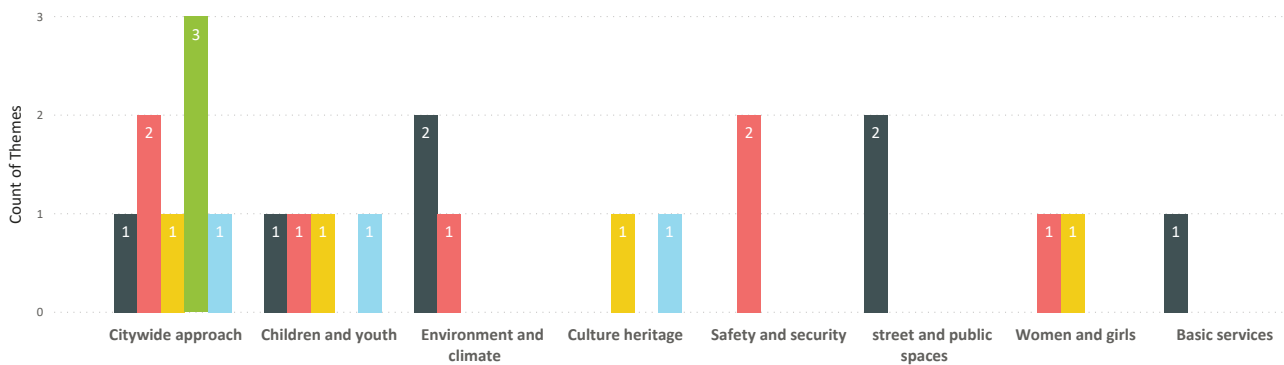
kids sitting in the public space at Tan Mai ward in Vietnam © Healthbridge Vietnam

IMPROVING THE LIVES OF 600,000 INHABITANTS WITH FOCUS ON CHILD-FRIENDLY PUBLIC SPACES

The Programme encourages children and youth to participate in the public space design process by using tailored tools to re-imagine and co-create their surroundings. Children and youth constitute the primary users of open public spaces, however, their voices are rarely heard and they are often left out of decision-making. We have been working on child-friendly initiatives since 2017 in China, Emirates, Mozambique, South Africa and Turkey.

Together with UNICEF, we have been supporting cities to improve accessibility and provide more child-friendly public spaces, especially to underprivileged children. In Sharjah, more than 100 children were involved in participatory workshops, including children with special needs. The findings from the engagement process will inform the Action Plan towards a child-responsive city that the Programme is currently finalising. In Maputo, we focused on urban mobility, accessibility and the perception of safety since more than 80% of children walk to school. Around 110 children were involved in participatory activities and have identified key recommendations to make streets more friendly such as adding lights, reducing speed limits and improving the infrastructure.

BY THE END OF 2019
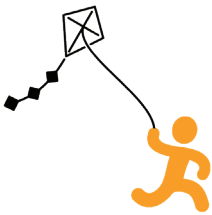
600,000 CHILDREN

have access to child-friendly public spaces

15 PUBLIC SPACES

completed with a child-friendly design focus

10,000+ CHILDREN

engaged in participatory workshops to co-design public spaces

Reconstruction of the housing with lower standards in Munhava, Mozambique © UN-Habitat / Sara Thabit

WORKING TOGETHER TO BUILD RESILIENCE IN CRISIS-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

THE CASE OF MOZAMBIQUE

In the first 6 months of 2019, extreme weather events displaced 7 million people of which 1.85 million were in Mozambique. The Programme, through the financial support of the Block by Block foundation, supported the affected communities of Beira and Dondo in the process of recovery and reconstruction of their own settlements.

The project contributed to increasing local capacity through a series of Training of Trainers on participatory approaches, building an action framework for short, medium and long-term actions for resilient recovery. This led to the establishment of close collaborations between local authorities and the local communities, allowing the latter to take an active part in the post-disaster needs assessment and recovery planning.

BY THE END OF 2019

663,500 PEOPLE

living in or recovering from crisis improved their livelihood

8 CITIES

have plans to build resilience through well designed public spaces

250 MIGRANTS & REFUGEES

engaged in needs participatory planning

Engaging with hearing impaired girls in UAE © SUPC

MAINSTREAMING AND DESIGNING GENDER INCLUSIVE PUBLIC SPACES

The Global Public Space Programme has made gender mainstreaming a key priority. The participatory processes we use have been specifically designed to give girls and women a voice in public space strategy, assessment and design. Across the 90 Block by Block workshops, the participants are split between 60% boys and men and 40% of girls and women. As we move ahead, we are strongly committed to push for an equal percentage of gender participation.

Through a collaboration with Plan International, an applied research project was carried out with 80 adolescent girls in Hanoi, Vietnam and Delhi, India to assess how to make the Block by Block process gender transformative and how it can contribute to safer cities for girls. The Programme has also supported the 'Urban Girls Movement', a Swedish project that has been developed to strengthen girls' engagement in planning processes. With funding from Vinnova and together with Global Utmaning, we will start a new two-year project to develop an advocacy and communication campaign and to create an open-source set of digital tools on how to reinforce women and girls' voices in city planning.

BY THE END OF 2019

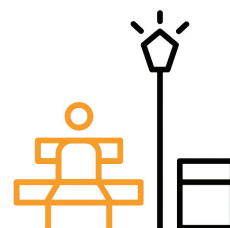### 8,000 WOMEN & GIRLS

engaged in participatory planning to co-create public spaces

80 PERCENT

of the projects mainstream gender throughout the planning process

185,000 PEOPLE IMPACTED

from 15 gender sensitive public space design projects

SPECIAL FEATURE:
NATIONAL PROGRAMME IN ETHIOPIA

With a population of about 109 million people, Ethiopia is the second most populous nation in Africa, after Nigeria, and the fastest growing economy in the region. The country is witnessing drastic urban population growth followed by rapid and unprecedented urbanisation putting pressure on the built-environment, especially on open public spaces and their accessibility.

UN-Habitat has been active in Ethiopia since 1998 however it was only in 2017 that the Global Public Space Programme started working in Addis Ababa. Today, we are active in five cities in Ethiopia and working on the national, city and neighbourhood level.

At the start of the National Programme, our work focused on capacity building where we trained community members, local government civil servants and over 300 youths from four universities. Some of the trainings focused on gathering data and mapping public spaces at the city level, how to better engage the community in reshaping their public spaces and how to implement and upgrade projects on the neighbourhood level.

We supported the city to rehabilitate an area that had become a dumping ground along the Banti-Ketu River called Ras Mekonnen, located in the old part of the city in Seba Dereja. The project proposal looked at accessibility points to the site and identified one key staircase that leads down to the river from the Armenian quarter. Today, the stair has been upgraded through a sensitive design tailored for the main users; students from the blind school. Another project is a 6-kilometre streetscape, one of the main thoroughfares in the city starting from Meskel Square to Shiro Meda and passing through several neighbourhoods. The project is in the process of being finalised with seating, shade, a mobile bookstore and an area for elderly people to meet and socialise.

The public space project in Addis Ababa was spearheaded by the Beautification, Park and Cemetery Administration Agency and Addis Ababa River Basin and Green Development Administration Agency. The two departments were recently merged into the River and Riverside Rehabilitation Project Office as the main counterpart for the implementation of the public space project.

We are also supporting the city in developing a design guideline for different government entities to adhere to when upgrading public spaces. This would help ensure alignment between the work produced by the various departments and their respective disciplines as well as avoiding the overlapping of standards.

Results from the project include:

• Strong collaboration between the Road Authority and the River Basin and Green Development Administration Agency. The two agencies are now implementing several public space projects together;

• Close collaboration between the River Basin and Green Development Administration Agency and the Botanical Garden working and advising on plant strategy types and vegetation in public spaces;

• Commonly agreed definition of public space;

• High interest and serious commitment towards achieving good quality public spaces from high level officials including the Ethiopian Prime Minister;

• City-wide public space assessments completed in 5 cities in Ethiopia;

• Rehabilitation of an iconic public space in the centre of the city; and

• Experience sharing from Addis Ababa with other cities in Ethiopia.

Two women enjoying their time at Ras Mekonen site, Ethiopia © KATLA studio

Scaling-up of the public space project in Ethiopia:

Ethiopia was selected as the first flagship project with the objective to build a national public space programme to scale-up, ensure sustainability and have an impact on policy. The National Public Space Programme is anchored in the Ministry of Urban Development and Construction, Resilience and Climate Change Department and several meetings have been held to prepare the way forward and embark on the scaling-up phase. Five cities (Adama, Dire Dawa, Hawassa, Mekelle and Bahir Dar) have been selected as part of the Programme and we have already completed their city-wide assessment, identified potential sites to upgrade, engaged the community in participatory planning and are in the process of framing their public space strategy. Three highlights from the national programme are:

1. Adoption of the Block by Block approach on community engagement in the design of public space;

2. 300 community members trained on data gathering and engaged in public space digital mapping activities; and

3. National public space policy draft formulation

Some of the takeaways and lessons learned from the three years of working in Ethiopia include:

Providing continuous guidance and capacity-building to local governments which in turn ignites strong political will and creates public space champions that are essential for the successful implementation of the projects;

Ensuring city-wide distribution of public spaces is a way for local governments to reduce inequalities, reallocate benefits and protect and create a network of high-quality public spaces;

Working at the micro level to create an impact at the city level. Beyond the city-wide strategies and policies, it is important to showcase how pilot projects can be designed to improve livelihoods;

Adopting innovative participatory methodologies like the Block by Block can increase community engagement and build a stronger sense of ownership of public space . Participatory workshops should be able to easily capture the communities' needs and help them re-imagine their cities;

Engaging residents to document their public spaces through digital data collection tools. This helps the community to have a better understanding of the importance of public spaces and eventually work towards protecting them; and

Anchoring data collected on public space with city plans so as to improve the network of good quality and better connected public spaces. Collected data should be made available for other departments and different sectors in order to monitor and measure achievements on the implementation of public spaces.

Kids playing at Ras Mekonen site in Addis Ababa© UN-Habitat

CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME

The evaluation of UN-Habitat's City Planning and Design Strategy was conducted in 2017 - 2018 and provided a forward-looking assessment of the Global Public Space Programme and the Urban Planning and Design Lab (LAB). The assessment covered both completed and on-going activities and reflected on the outcomes and impact of the Programme's activities.

In summary, the results highlighted that the Programme has achieved more than what was outlined in the Strategic Plan (2014 – 2019) and the Annual Work Plans. The Programme was recognized for its innovation, expertise and integration across the different thematic areas of environment, safety, planning, health, slum-upgrading and urban regeneration. The assessment demonstrated that the Programme is most effective when working closely with local partners and UN-Habitat country and regional offices. The report flagged that the Programme has focused more on successful implementation of projects, rather than on developing national and local policies and city-wide public space strategies that can have long-term impact on projects' sustainability. In consequence, it was recommended by the evaluators to develop more normative products, produce learning and knowledge tools and focus on scaling-up globally.

The strength of the Global Public Space Programme is its focus on "leaving no-one behind" and working directly with beneficiaries and target groups. One of the successes of the Programme is the diverse partnerships that have been established on different levels with governments, donors, the private sector and civil society organizations. Our work in integrating the youth and the most marginalized groups in planning processes has been positively acknowledged by the evaluators, however they stressed to focus more on human rights-based approaches and integration of women and girls.

The evaluation outlined recommendations for immediate action, while the longer-term actions will depend on the reform process and the implementation of the new Strategic Plan (2020 – 2023).

Below are ten core recommendations brought forth from the evaluation:

1. **Consolidate the gains and keep strengthening the Global Public Space Programme** and ensure that it remains a core priority area of UN-Habitat's strategy. This will require developing a collaboration strategy with other Units, Branches and Regional Offices of UN-Habitat as well as with other UN agencies and partner organisations. To be able to respond to the demand, there is a need to increase core funding (non-earmarked) and the number of core staff to strengthen the normative work;

2. **Keep fostering, embracing and promoting our comprehensive urban planning and design process**. This may require broadening our skills and developing new tools and approaches that support implementation, operation, maintenance and monitoring, as well as defining 'exit' strategies for city planning and design approaches (the three-pronged approach - planning, legislation, finance - and urban governance as part of the new strategic plan);

3. **Consolidate and strengthen the role of the Global Public Space Programme in refining indicators (SDG 11.7)** and in the gathering and reporting of data. This may include conducting trainings to gather data and reinforcing public space as an integrative topic on national and city levels;

4. **Define the agency-wide role of the Programme** and provide mechanisms and incentives that enable the Programme to work in an integrative manner across the agency and set up 'flex teams' on public space;

5. **Keep mainstreaming and embracing pro-poor aspects and the "leaving no one behind" principle** that systematically highlights the mitigation of risks related to corruption, gentrification and other elements of the "vicious cycle of urban development";

6. **Close the learning loop** through monitoring impact, documenting lessons learned and targeting strategic "deep" projects. Institutionalise knowledge management and promote enhanced collaboration and coordination between global, regional and country offices.

7. **Establish knowledge generation and learning** as two new supporting activities. This includes developing strategic partnerships with universities, research institutions, innovation labs, and community-based organisations that are relevant to spatial planning and design of public spaces;

8. **Reinforce high quality normative outputs and activities** and build up essential knowledge and skills to achieve and sustain the highest possible global impact;

9. **"Package" the public space approach and enhance its visibility** and formulate a communication and dissemination strategy that takes into consideration the variety of outputs and activities; and

10. **P**r**omote and expand the Global Public Space Network** to intensify knowledge and practice for implementation.
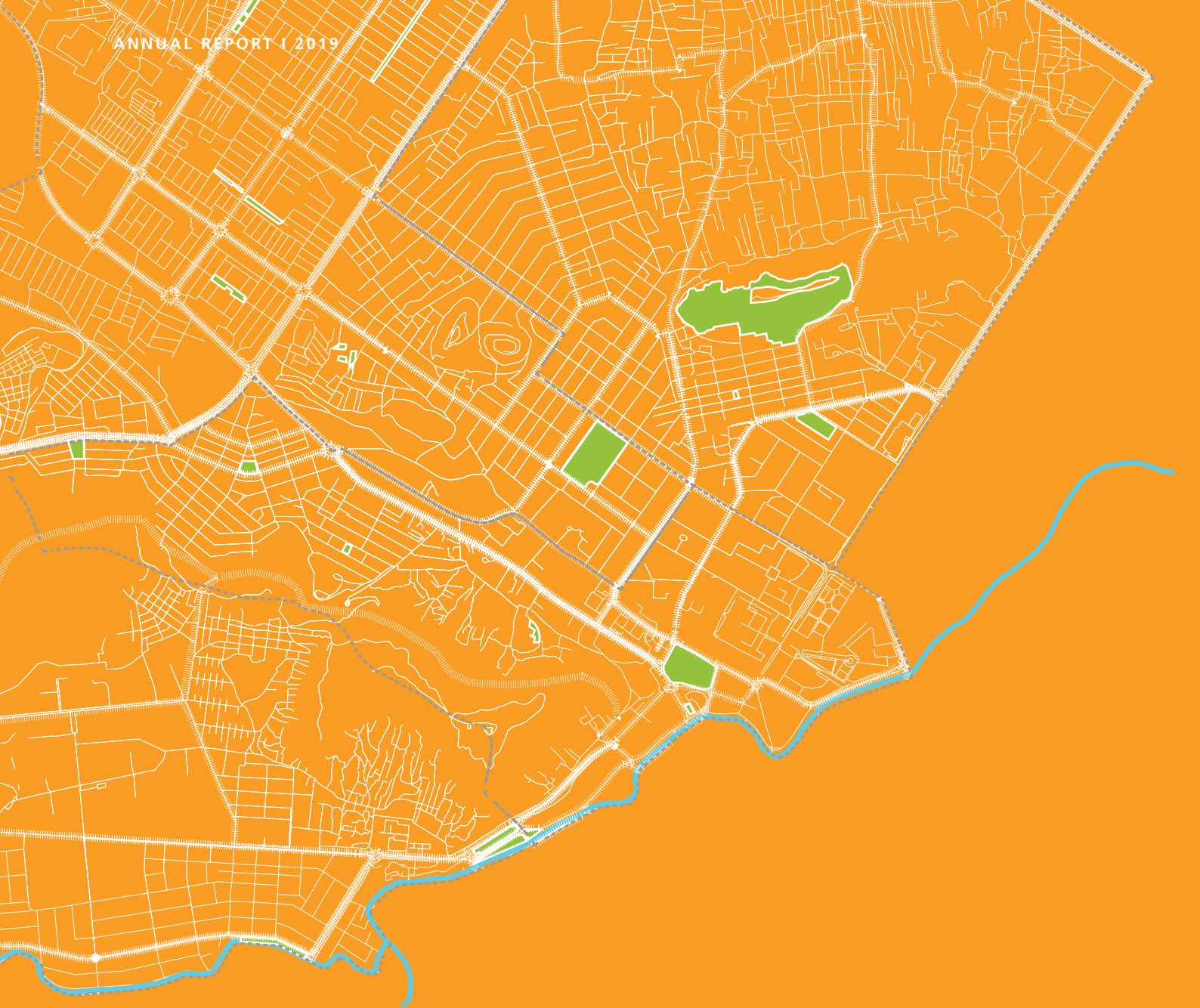
LESSONS LEARNT FROM

CITY-WIDE PUBLIC SPACE ASSESSMENT

In 2019 we delivered **17 city-wide assessments** in **7 countries** and **trained 700 volunteers** in public space data gathering and evaluation.

map from Kabul city-wide public space assessment

THE CITY-WIDE PUBLIC SPACE ASSESSMENT TOOL PROVIDES AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION, ACCESSIBILITY, NETWORK, QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF PUBLIC SPACES AT THE CITY LEVEL.

The city-wide public space assessment is a tool developed to assess public spaces and identify gaps in order to develop long-term strategies and policies at the city level. The tool helps local governments gather accurate data on the state of public spaces, identify areas to be secured for the creation of public spaces and develop future plans. The assessment tool helps cities answer the question *"where do we stand now?"* in terms of the public realm and inspires them to think about *"where do we want to go?"*. Cities like Edinburgh that already have a comprehensive public space strategy in place have already conducted a thorough assessment covering the entire urban area.

We've adopted a structured questionnaire that can be tailored to specific contexts and is digitally accessible using an open source application called Kobo Collect. In 2015, we supported the city of Nairobi with its first public space assessment and in just four years, we have trained 2,000 volunteers to apply the tool in 28 settlements in Ethiopia, Palestine and Afghanistan among others. With the data gathered we directly supported the monitoring of SDG indicator 11.7.1 and provided a basis for policy change at the neighbourhood, city and national scale.

We commit to support more cities with their city-wide public space assessment and as we move forward, we look back at the lessons learnt using our past experience to ensure that our tool is further refined.

Main takeaways

1	**Securing political support and commitment and balancing external influences** to achieve progress, in particular with actions that require legislative changes, and to ensure buy-in and allocation of both financial and human resources.	**15 local governments** committed towards working on improving public spaces at the city-wide level in Afghanistan, Uganda, Kenya, Mongolia, Bangladesh, etc.
2	**Building capacity of local partners** to ensure scalability and sustainability of projects. Limited capacity to conduct the survey can lead to lack of accountability and responsibility for taking the findings towards a long-term plan or aligning it with already existing plans for the city.	Conducted **52 Trainings** for more than **2,200 volunteers** in 20 countries
3	**Mobilizing financial resources from alternative sources.** When cities do not have the financial and human resources to implement all the recommendations from the assessment's findings, securing additional funding and creating opportunities and incentives for private sector involvement should be highly prioritized.	Mobilized **USD$9,800,000** from alternative sources like civil society organization, private sector and international organizations. In 2019, co-funding was **USD$4,200,000.**
4	**Creating enabling institutional and regulatory frameworks** to accelerate public space development by ensuring an action-oriented process and connecting strategic thinking to project implementation.	Supported the **establishment of a public space unit** within the planning department of Nairobi City County and **developed 6 action plans** that support the creation and protection of public spaces in Addis Ababa, Wuhan, Jianghan, Nairobi, Kisumu and Kabul.
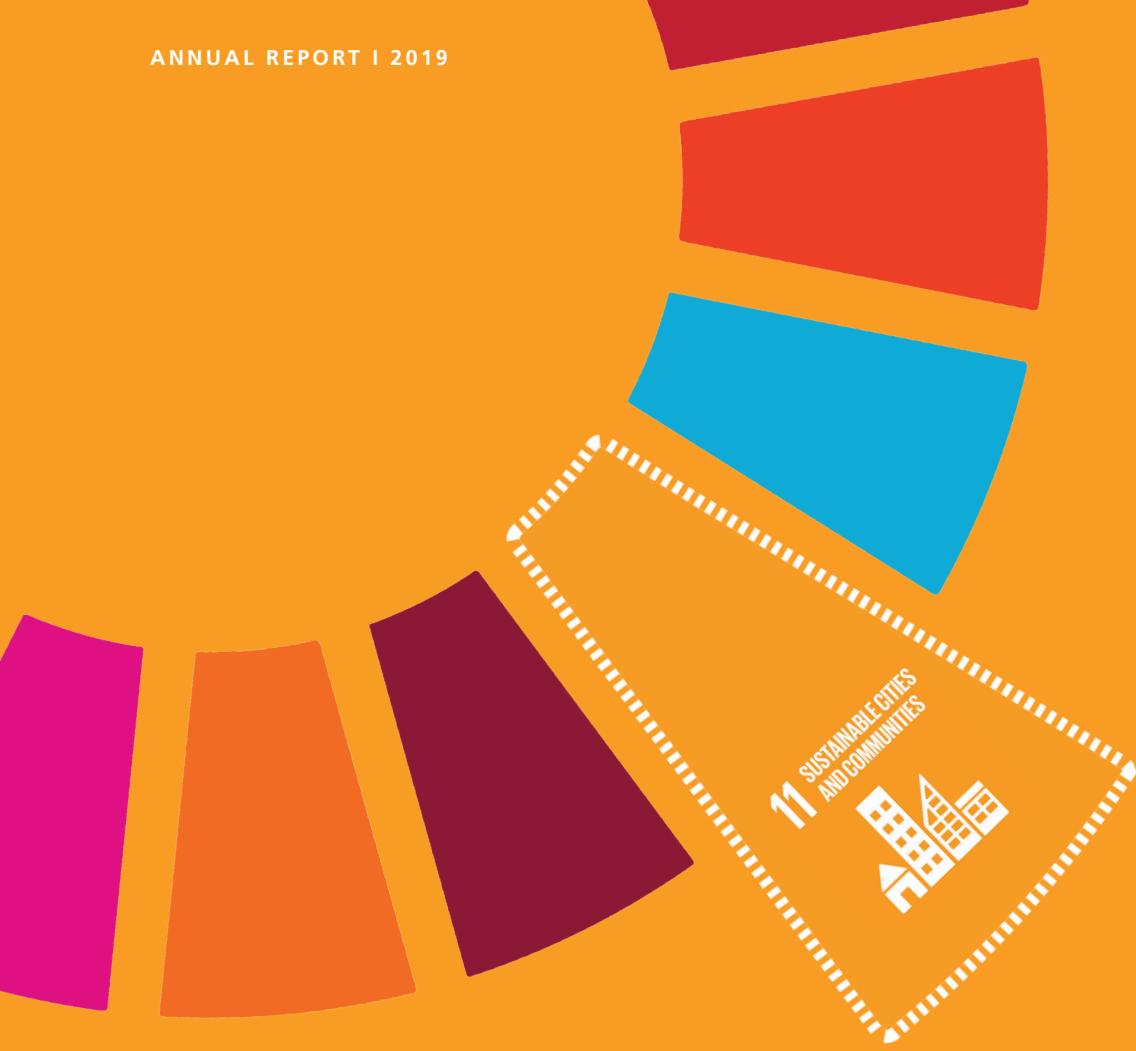
LESSONS LEARNT FROM

MONITORING SDG 11.7.1

In 2019, we supported over **600 cities** and local governments with the collection of spatial social demographic data on public spaces

"AVERAGE SHARE OF THE BUILT-UP AREA OF CITIES THAT IS OPEN SPACE FOR PUBLIC USE FOR ALL, BY SEX, AGE AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES"
– SDG 11.7.1

Member States made commitments to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals by mobilizing efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind. With support from partners, UN-Habitat has continued to work on developing the methodology and training toolkit to guide national and local governments in data collection and monitoring the achievement of the public space targets. The purpose of monitoring progress on SDG 11.7.1 is to enable decision makers and key stakeholders, through evidence-based data, to make informed decisions towards achieving universal access to safe and inclusive public spaces. The process ensures comparability among cities and countries and therefore, promotes higher accountability, better performance assessment and stronger coordination between the central, regional and local governments.

Since 2015, we have held a series of expert and stakeholder consultations to formulate the indicator computation methodology and approach. This has resulted in finalizing the indicator's metadata and workflow implementation module. The indicator has two broad elements, (1) a spatial (distribution) component and (2) a socio-demographic (access) component. The spatial component helps cities and countries to identify the location, size, shape and distribution of their open public spaces and streets, while the socio-demographic component aims to identify the share of the population who have good access to open public spaces. A great milestone was the reclassification of the indicator from Tier III to Tier II by the Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDG indicators during their 8th General Meeting in Stockholm, Sweden.

Main takeaways

1	**Supporting the establishment of urban observatories** to ensure consistency and better manage the data flow among different actors as well as to disseminate the gathered information to make them particularly suited for cities' public space development. Urban observatories can act as an exchange platform at the local, national, regional and global level.	We supported **cities in Africa** to establish their urban observatories.
2	**Consolidating the tools to strengthen capacities** of national and local authorities in data gathering and monitoring.	Working on a **tool to support local authorities** on how to better integrate public space data in existing and future city plans.
3	**Building strong political will and partnerships** amongst specialised agencies, civil society and the private sector. Committed partners will ensure implementation, better monitoring and reporting on indicator 11.7.1.	**600 cities** committed to engage in monitoring SDG11.7.1.
4	**Linking public space indicator with several goals.** Target 11.7.1 captures areas of overlap within and beyond SDG11 such as inclusion of women, environmental risk reduction and public health. This requires a great multi-stakeholder engagement and good coordination of actions at all levels.	Worked in 4 countries towards achieving **target 5.2** on reducing violence against women and girls in Vietnam, Palestine, South Africa and Afghanistan.

LESSONS LEARNT FROM

- -

REGENERATION PROJECTS

- -

In 2019, we completed **17 projects** in **9 countries**, engaging **1600 people** in participatory design processes and improving the lives of **295,000 people**.

map from Wuhan public space assessment

BUILDING MORE ACTIVE, VIBRANT, INCLUSIVE AND SAFE PUBLIC SPACES AT THE NEIGHBOURHOOD LEVEL

Each year, through an annual call for expressions of interest, the Programme selects a number of public space upgrading projects that are geographically distributed all over the world. The upgrading process is done using innovative and creative participatory approaches to better engage the community in co-designing their own surroundings. To make this possible, we work with a wide range of local partners and we provide, when needed, financial and technical support in designing and setting up a public space management framework.

We focus at urban design as a solution to meet the community's needs rather than just beautification. Prior to design we encourage residents to assess five indicators within a radius of 400 meters from the selected public space; (1) usage, (2) comfort, (3) accessibility, (4) green coverage and (5) urban facilities.

This is to ensure that residents have a good and safe access to enjoy a public space within 5 to 10 minutes walking distance.

In Vietnam, Nepal, Guinea and Lebanon, we are using the Block by Block methodology to co-create inclusive public spaces with the community, especially with disadvantaged groups including migrants, women and girls, children, and people with special needs. In Kenya, the transformation of Luthuli Avenue in Nairobi successfully showcased how designing streets as public spaces can be a great entry-point for urban regeneration. Well-designed streets can act as a catalyst for improved air quality in the context of climate action, a driver of economic revitalization and an exemple of sustainable urban and built heritage regeneration.

Main takeaways

1   **Changing mindsets and attitudes towards a "collective responsibility"** to public spaces. Participation at different levels can help bridge the gap between the general public and local governments and can change the relationship from being combative to supportive and collaborative.

2   **Promoting sensitively designed public spaces** that takes into account the needs of children, women, the older persons and people with special needs. The role of design is key to improving quality, to enhance social interactions and to make sure people stay and enjoy public spaces.

3   **Securing resources for long-term management and maintenance** of public spaces. Support from the private sector, other non-governmental partners as well as the community is important to ensure the longevity of the projects.

4   **Reaching greater impact at the city level by scaling up.** High quality public space is singularly important, however to have the greatest impact, there is a need to replicate and up-scale the process and strategize the location of additional sites.

LESSONS LEARNT FROM

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

In 2019, we conducted **21 participatory workshops** using the Block by Block methodology and **engaged 750 people** in co-designing their public spaces on Minecraft.

"BY 2030 ENHANCE INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION AND CAPACITIES FOR PARTICIPATORY, INTEGRATED AND SUSTAINABLE HUMAN SETTLEMENT PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT IN ALL COUNTRIES".
SDG11.3

Public participation and including marginalized groups in design processes and decision making have been the cornerstone of the Global Public Space Programme since the start in 2012. UN-Habitat's urban planning and design approach places people at the centre and recognizes fundamentally that engaging residents early through community engagement leads to effectiveness. Urban planning is a complex process that is beyond the reach of any local government or individual working on their own. Residents know their city or neighbourhood and can provide invaluable insights to strengthen the planning and design process. Often, failing to engage the community has resulted in unsuccessful policies, poor planning decisions and failed investments. For that, early and comprehensive community engagement can reduce the likelihood of planning and design mistakes.

In Brazil and UAE, we engaged children in an exploratory walk exercise to understand, from their lenses, how we can design child-friendly streets and public spaces. In Vietnam, safety audits were key to understanding hotspot areas where women and girls feel unsafe. Our series of Block by Block workshops in Ethiopia are expected to inform a national strategy and action plan on public space. In South Africa, we engaged children with special needs in a physical mapping exercise where they suggested ideas on how to make their school more inclusive, accessible and connected to the surrounding community.

Main takeaways

1. **Keeping the momentum going after the participatory workshops** through a series of other engaging activities. Placemaking can be a useful activity which shows what long-term results could look like by taking short-term actions.

2. **Ensuring a good sampling size of the engaged community** in order to have a fair representation of the neighbourhood. Participants should be mixed by age, background, social status, etc. However, inviting focus-groups like women and, people with special needs is also advisable.

3. **Choosing the right activities for the different groups.** It is important to adopt different strategies of engaging people tailored to different targeted groups. Block by Block was very challenging when we used it with children with special needs, and mapping sessions are often too heavy for non-experts.

4. **Incorporating the outcomes from the community into the designs and the plans.** It is important after public participation that the feedback and the priorities are translated and integrated into the public space design.

SEVEN YEARS OF USING THE BLOCK BY BLOCK METHODOLOGY

One group that is often excluded from formal planning processes are youth - who make up 50 percent or more of the population in many developing countries. The World Development Report 2016, Digital Dividends, argues that digital technologies can "provide new platforms for citizens to engage with the government, lowering the costs to citizens of providing information, and enabling policy makers and service providers to seek information and track the feedback loop." UN-Habitat's research, summarised in the report "ICT, Urban Governance and Youth", shows that digital technologies can help increase civic engagement of young people, giving them new avenues through which to become informed, shape opinions, get organized, collaborate and take action.

This kind of thinking led us in 2012 to look for a digital tool which could help engage youth in participatory processes as part of the newly started public space programme. When we came across a project in Sweden - Mina Kvarter - that had used Minecraft to co-create with young people in marginalized suburbs of Stockholm, it seemed like an obvious programme to test. Minecraft is an online building game, similar to a digital Lego, that enables people to easily construct buildings in a 3D world. The Minecraft online community is huge - hundreds of millions of players - and was very supportive in our early tests to develop what we call Block by Block and the Block by Block participatory design studio.

We quickly came to realize that Minecraft is an excellent tool for enabling people with limited spatial experience to sketch out digital public space design ideas and communicate with decision-makers. One of the strengths of Minecraft is that it is very easy to learn - even by people with no previous digital skills. By using a simple 3D design tool, it is possible to break down the digital divide and the skills gap, thus facilitating a more equal dialogue between experts and non-experts. Our evaluations show that it increases understanding of different perspectives and builds social capital and trust. It also gives people a visual language with which to communicate to the experts in the field.

Although our initial focus had been on engaging youth, in some of the early projects we realized that there was a demand to play Minecraft among other members of the community too. For example in Kirtipur, Nepal, one of the early projects, there was a women's group who observed their children being part of the participatory design process and started asking why it was only for young people. This led us to do a project in Les Cayes, Haiti, with a broader group of participants from the community. Seeing a group of adult fishermen with no previous computer knowledge quickly pick up Minecraft and redesign the area of the waterfront indicated that the tool could have broader application than we had previously thought.

Six years, 35 countries and 100 projects on, we can safely say that Minecraft can be used for public participation in almost any setting and with almost anyone. The level of engagement, creativity and commitment to the process among the participants - no matter where in the world - continues to amaze us. We have worked with mixed groups of children and older people in Peru, people with disabilities in

South Africa, street children in Ethiopia, boys and girls together in Gaza, community leaders in Indonesia and all members of the community in China. Almost anyone - young, old, educated or not educated - can use the tool to start sketching digitally within a few hours.

Minecraft is particularly suitable for urban design at the public space or neighbourhood scale. Due to the size of the blocks, most of which are 1m3, it is not so suitable for architectural projects that require a lot of detail or for large-scale urban planning projects. It's possible to use it for larger urban planning projects, but this requires quite a lot of resources and effort to build the large base model that is needed. The benefit of the "blockiness" of Minecraft means participants do not end up spending a lot of time on detail - which is best left for professional designers and architects - but rather focus on important issues to do with the spatial layout, services and functions and how the space is used.

For UN-Habitat, Block by Block is a design crowdsourcing methodology that can provide invaluable insights to design professionals and policy makers if used in the right way. What we have observed is that it is important that the process is taken seriously and that the experts are part of the whole process from the beginning whenever possible. For people not accustomed to Minecraft, it can sometimes be difficult to understand the design outputs and the thinking behind them. It is also important to follow the group discussions that take place during the design studios. By including the architects or designers who will produce the final detailed designs from the beginning, we ensure that the ideas that come out of the community discussions are fully considered at the professional level.

Another important lesson is that Block by Block works best when there is the right amount of time dedicated to the design process. Not enough time and the participants feel under pressure to design quickly and don't spend enough time discussing and being creative. However, if there is too much time, the participants get bored and often start adding impractical and unrealistic design elements to fill the time. The amount of time varies depending on the basic skills of the participants and the region of the world. We have found that 2-3 days is enough when participants have a high level of computer knowledge, whereas 4-5 days may be necessary with groups that have less skills.

It is also important to not manage the process too much in a top-down way, particularly at the beginning of the studios, before the participants are fully confident with Minecraft. At this stage it can be quite easy to influence the designs that the participants produce by showing examples of previous projects or design ideas. Once the participants have become familiar with the mechanics of building in Minecraft and developed their own 'design style', it can be helpful to give design tips to move the process along, but not before. Building in Minecraft is very creative, but it takes some time to build up the confidence to experiment. We often therefore see very little activity the first few hours.

Using Minecraft as a public participation tool is an excellent way of using a digital tool to crowdsource urban designs with communities. Beyond the urban design element, it also has great potential for improved social inclusion - breaking down gender, skills and digital divides. As such, it has the potential to contribute to our understanding of smart cities by providing a tool that enables real people to impact the built environment around them. Going forward it is crucial to use digital technologies in ways that enable a diversity of people to imagine new futures for our cities, and enrich urban planning and governance with up-to-date understanding of the interaction between the lives of residents - especially the most marginalised - and urban challenges.

Check out some of the Minecraft models
https://sketchfab.com/blockbyblock
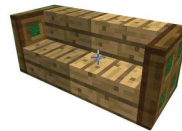
2019 RECURRENT INTERVENTIONS ON MINECRAFT

LIGHTS
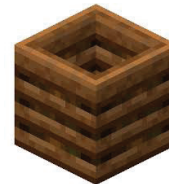to increase the
perception of safety

GREENERY
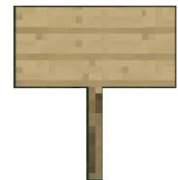for visual comfort and to
provide shading

BENCHES
in a shaded
resting area to
provide comfort

TRASHBINS
for a cleaner
public space

SIGNAGE
to know where
we are and
where to go

PUBLIC TOILETS
segregated by gender with
clear demarcations

BLOCK BY BLOCK
AN INNOVATIVE AND UNCONVENTIONAL PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN UN-HABITAT, MOJANG STUDIOS AND MICROSOFT

Among the most innovative aspects of the Global Public Space Programme are the partnerships behind it. Foremost Block by Block, which was initially launched in 2012 by UN-Habitat and Mojang Studios (the company behind Minecraft) with the aim of regenerating 300 public spaces and developing a digital public participation methodology. Seven years later we are a third of the way towards that target and the methodology has been used by tens of thousands of people in more than 35 countries to co-create public spaces. The collaboration has also generated around $8 million that has been used to advance the public space agenda globally.

In 2014, Minecraft was bought by Microsoft, and in 2015 Mojang, Microsoft and UN-Habitat established the Block by Block Foundation, a US 301(c) non-profit with the purpose of continuing the Block by Block partnership and raising more resources for UN-Habitat's global public space work. The Board of the Block by Block Foundation is made up of experts from a variety of sectors with skills in architecture and urban planning, digital technologies, community development, video gaming, finance and business development. They are a great resource to the Global Public Space Programme and in addition to financing, provide advice in many areas including public space design, policy, advocacy and partnerships.

> **By supporting Block by Block, you help lift the spirits and optimism of disadvantaged people all over the world. Seeing children, women, and elderly people attain a voice in their own future through Block by Block and Minecraft is inspiring.**
>
> — DAVID BOKER, BLOCK BY BLOCK

More information about the Block by Block Foundation can be found on the official website.

www.blockbyblock.org

WORKING CLOSELY TOGETHER: A SHARED VALUE TOWARDS PROVIDING QUALITY PUBLIC SPACES

The Global Public Space Programme aims to achieve sustained results at scale. This means maintaining and expanding support from both the public and private sectors as well as non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, development agencies and United Nations partners. Over the years, we have worked closely with committed partners to establish longer country presence, build better local programs and support project implementation. Through working with local partners, we have been able to reach out to more marginalized communities and create a bigger impact worldwide. Some of the long-term partnerships we have had are the five-year work in Kosovo and the multi-country upgrading projects with Healthbridge.

EXTERNAL INSIGHT:
THREE-YEAR PARTNERSHIP WITH UN-HABITAT

by Kristie Daniel - Director of the Livable Cities programme at Healthbridge

In many places in the world public spaces are used for public life, commerce and interaction. However, lack of funding, planning and maintenance, as well as the prioritization of motorized vehicles, has turned many public spaces into unsafe, unforgiving and unconnected places. In addition, many public spaces are difficult to access, especially for those living in vulnerable situations. In 2017, Healthbridge embarked on a three-year partnership with UN-Habitat to address these issues in Asia, Africa, and South America. The aim of our partnership has been to test innovative solutions for public space development, while modeling an approach to community engagement that could be replicated by government officials. We used a mix of strategies that involved community engagement, capacity building, infrastructure change and policy. Some of the key achievements were:

Community engagement was a critical element for all the projects and provided the basis for the infrastructure improvements. Local partners organized 115 meetings with the residents surrounding the public spaces to explain why public spaces are important, and to garner buy-in for the changes. A key activity organized for community engagement was the Block by Block workshop organized by UN-Habitat, which proved to be an invaluable tool for communities to be able to articulate the changes they wanted made.

Capacity building was a key element and in some cases the partners organized specific workshops among government officials to raise their awareness and support their skill development. However, for all of the projects, the Block by Block workshop and eventual implementation of the infrastructure changes played an important capacity building role as these activities allowed the government officials to experience community engagement methods and practice developing some of the innovative public space interventions.

Infrastructure change was the core activity for the projects and brought to life the ideas and needs of the community. However, it was during this phase of the project several of our partners experienced difficulties in meeting deadlines. Despite having key government officials as part of each project, the government process in many cities can be overwhelming. In Kochi, India, the local partner had to meet with government officials over 43 times in order to get the appropriate approvals. Despite the government officials choosing the two sites in Niger, they changed their mind just before implementation and the sites needed to be moved. Where government process is easier, delays were minimal including in Ghana, Vietnam, Bangladesh, and Brazil. In the end each of the partners were able to deliver innovative and community focused public spaces that has resulted in 11,401 people using the spaces.

Lastly, there are several key **policy achievements** as a result of the project including government funding for public spaces, and government enshrining accessibility into policy. For example, in India and Vietnam government officials agreed to continue to improve the site and committed USD$466,500 of funding to ensure the rest of the parks were completed. In India and Bangladesh, government officials committed to improve 30 additional parks as a result and agreed to use a community engagement approach for the upgrades.

Kids playing on the upgraded staircase in São Paulo, Brazil © Cidade Ativa

Success stories from the field

Each of the sites has continued to see a high level of usage and it is clear that each of the sites is addressing a previously unmet need in the community.

In Ghana, where we added children's play spaces to two local public markets, other vendors have been asking to replicate the process in other markets.

In Bangladesh, the city now emphasizes community engagement for all their interventions related to open public spaces, which is a key achievement. The government has committed to improve 19 public spaces and has already begun working on five.

In Vietnam, the local team had the benefit of a strong policy as the city had previously passed a Public Spaces Master Strategy that included the building of 79 new parks in five years. After our project, the space became a model for other neighbourhood parks and the lessons learned are being written up into a guideline document.

In Niger, the local partner is currently working on integrating public spaces into the Regional Land Use Policy Document of the West African Economic and Monetary Union. This policy will direct the eight countries within the Union to develop national public space policy.

Working with UN-Habitat has been a real pleasure. UN-Habitat's technical support in terms of public space design review has proved invaluable to help the partners enhance their public spaces. In addition, the Block by Block design studio have proven to be an exciting and interesting tool for community members and definitely enhanced the communities' participation.

There are several important lessons that have resulted from our three-year work with UN-Habitat:

1. There is a real need for public space development in communities. In many communities the spaces continue to be the only space for thousands of people. Our local partners are continually approached to assist communities in helping them to re-create their own spaces, but the demand definitely outstrips the local partners' capacity to support.

2. Building the capacity of local officials and policy development are critical to ensure projects are scaled up. Each of the partners continues to work towards ensuring there is strong public space policy at either the local or national level in order to provide the foundation for government development of public spaces. However, policy takes time to develop and that usually requires a much longer period of time than the time allocated for a pilot project.

3. The Minecraft workshop has proven to be very helpful in creating interest and engagement among local residents. However, there are challenges in having residents, especially the women of the community, attend a three-day workshop due to other chores in the household.

4. Maintenance of the spaces continues to be an issue and this is especially the case in lower income communities. Low-income communities typically do not have the same level of resources to maintain their spaces.

Worked in 7 countries	**244 improvements made to 12 sites**	**11,401 residents are now regular users of the 12 sites**
Government officials committed over USD$466,500 to continue to improve the public spaces	**Over 1,044 volunteers contributed 4,710 hours to improve public spaces in their communities.**	**The number of priority populations using the spaces increased, including more women, children, youth, and people with disabilities**

INTERNAL INSIGHT:

COMPREHENSIVE PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES IN POST-CONFLICT CONTEXT

by Gwendoline Mennetrier, UN-Habitat Kosovo

Public spaces are key in making cities truly sustainable, especially in post-conflict cities which are in the process of rapid development and redefinition. In this context, the Kosovo Programme undertook comprehensive participatory processes in designing public spaces using the Block by Block methodology to raise awareness on public space development and management, urban safety and accessibility. We supported the creation of the first skate park of Pristina in 2015. The experience showed how important it was to engage and mobilize communities, boosted by innovative engagement tools, providing an opportunity to strengthen municipal capacities to implement inclusive project development and community outreach. The project also contributed to strengthening social cohesion and increasing inter-ethnic interaction and upgrading the quality of life, economic opportunities and connectivity between the youth in Serbian, Albanian and Roma communities within the city. In addition, we pioneered the development of conducting Public Space Profiles for both capital cities and the localisation of public space related indicators of SDG 11, laying the ground for further development of a city-wide public space strategy.

Progress

The Programme is a good combination of community outreach and participation, local decision-making processes, creative design making and public space upgrading as well as influencing policy related to public space development at the local level.

A wide range of stakeholders are partnering with local governments to conduct participatory planning processes – Minecraft charrettes, technical designs, co-finance and implementation of public space solutions – and ultimately aim to develop frameworks to better manage sites, taking into consideration universal accessibility and safety.

"WE HAVE SUPPORTED THE BUILDING OF CAPACITIES OF 50 MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS TO CREATE, PROTECT AND MANAGE PUBLIC SPACES."

Project successes

The Programme has contributed to greater institutional understanding and capacity in addressing crime and violence in public spaces and the fear thereof and its relationship to urban design. This has been achieved through women's safety audits and participatory Minecraft workshops supporting the design of safer, more inclusive and accessible public spaces. We have also supported the development of a policy to improve public space. **More than forty women and girls, men and boys participated in the Safety Audits conducted in specific security hot-spots in Pristina city center.** Public outreach and awareness raising culminated with the launching of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence Campaign to remind us all about the Right to the City for All, including safe public spaces for women and girls.

Project impact

We have increased institutional capacity and community understanding on accessibility to safe and inclusive public space, crime and fear of crime, and multi-functional and adapted urban design. The programme has **involved more than 220 people** through participatory processes, and strengthened outreach to hard-to-reach groups like youth, women and girls, and persons with special needs, and further institutionalized participatory urban design approaches at the local level.

The participatory Minecraft design charrettes successfully involved the community and the youth in particular and their ideas were reflected in creative and inclusive urban solutions, for instance taking into consideration the needs of different ages and users. The concept design for the City Park have been finalised and implementation will begin shortly. The design includes: removal of surrounding fences, path improvement, lighting, ramps for strollers and wheelchair access, playgrounds and open fitness areas. The interventions will benefit the entire neighbourhood of around 15,000 people. The brand new skate park and surrounding facilities already serve an immediate area of more than 10,000 inhabitants.

The local governments are now equipped with tools to manage and develop a more inclusive, safer, gender and age-sensitive public spaces. The experiences and tools continue to be promoted at the regional level to inspire other neighbouring countries.

Support and coordination with other partners

The programme is being implemented with a diverse spectrum of partners. We partnered with university students to undertake analytical work in support of the development of city-wide public space strategies, involving students in urban design workshops and concept design work. At the heart of the programme are the voices of the communities and NGOs in the public space upgrading projects creating spaces that are more responsive to the needs of the most marginalised. Moreover, the programme has strengthened capacities in public space design and management and supported the development of policies and tools at the municipal level through on-the-job training and establishing a city to city cooperation mechanism which has reinforced current and future processes as well as coordination between different institutions and civil society. This has resulted in a sub-regional network of partners promoting and working on public space in the Balkan region. The Programme also engaged the Gender Equality Mechanisms, the Police and leading Women Groups. UN Women and the municipality of Pristina co-financed the Programme.

Lessons learned

We have been supporting raising awareness on public space development and management issues, notably with the youth community, strengthening capacities at the municipal level for public space design and management, coordination with other departments which has all contributed to up-scaling and replication of the initiative in the whole of Kosovo.

The public space profiling and assessment tools have enriched existing knowledge, approaches, tools and methodologies that are contributing to local democratic mechanisms, public space delivery and policy development in and beyond Kosovo.

The Programme helped to contextualize the relevant aspects of public space within SDGs, setting baselines and foreseeing targets and milestones, supporting national and local governments in achieving their commitments to meet the SDGs and ensuring measurement, implementation and monitoring are powerful instruments that can guide the relevant municipal departments to improve the existing public spaces and creation of new ones at the city level.

The programme has been instrumental in putting women and girl's safety at the heart of public space projects.The Women Safety Audits in Pristina and Skopje were valuable participatory tools to tackle safety, accessibility and inclusiveness in public space. The audits unveiled some existing taboos regarding the access to and use of public space by all segments of the society and triggered tools that can be used by the local administration and civil society to improve public space and the right to the city for all.

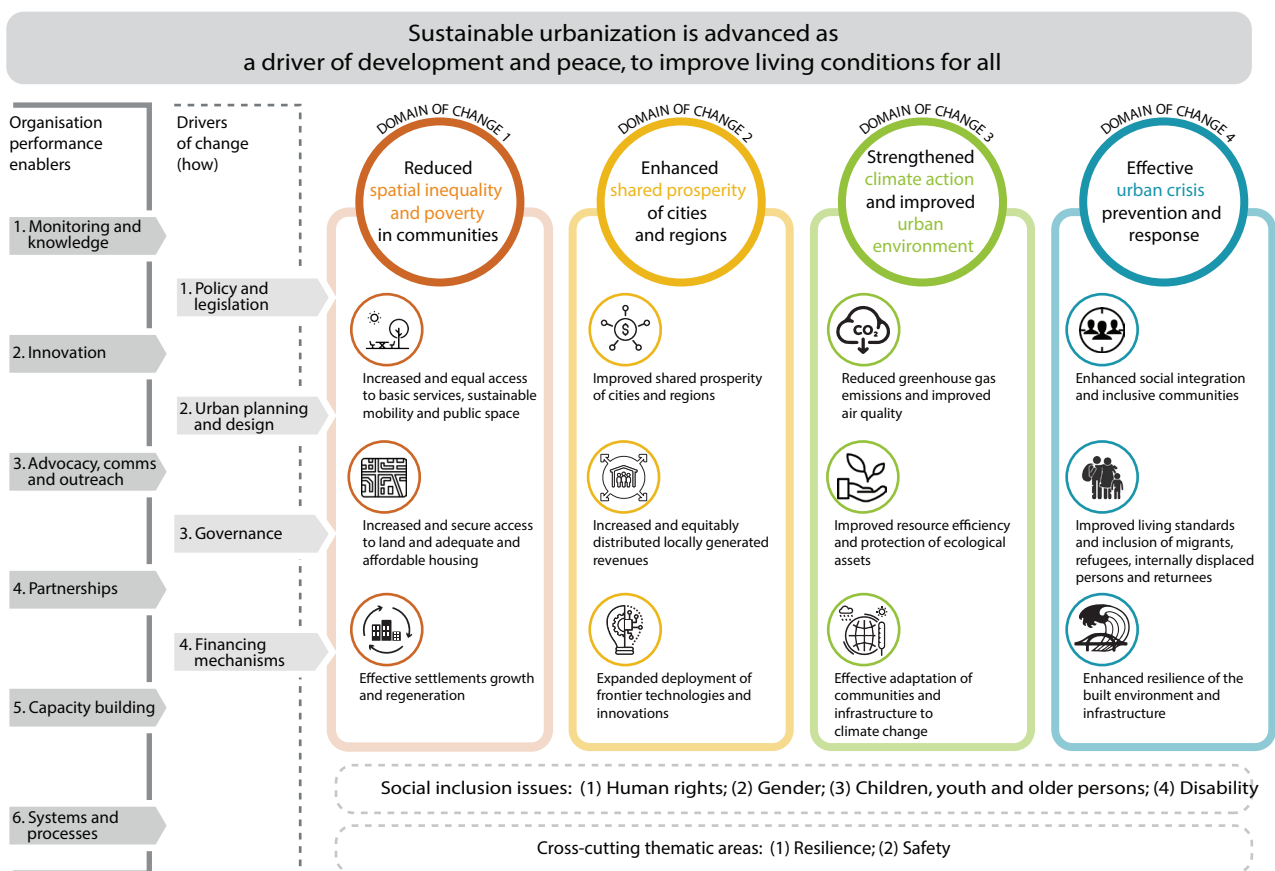*Block by Block design workshop in Mitrovica, Kosovo © UN-Habitat*

LOOKING BACK AND MOVING FORWARD

DELIVERING ON UN-HABITAT'S NEW STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2023:
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PROGRAMME

Sustainable urbanization is advanced as a driver of development and peace, to improve living conditions for all

Organisation performance enablers
1. Monitoring and knowledge
2. Innovation
3. Advocacy, comms and outreach
4. Partnerships
5. Capacity building
6. Systems and processes

Drivers of change (how)
1. Policy and legislation
2. Urban planning and design
3. Governance
4. Financing mechanisms

DOMAIN OF CHANGE 1 — Reduced spatial inequality and poverty in communities
- Increased and equal access to basic services, sustainable mobility and public space
- Increased and secure access to land and adequate and affordable housing
- Effective settlements growth and regeneration

DOMAIN OF CHANGE 2 — Enhanced shared prosperity of cities and regions
- Improved shared prosperity of cities and regions
- Increased and equitably distributed locally generated revenues
- Expanded deployment of frontier technologies and innovations

DOMAIN OF CHANGE 3 — Strengthened climate action and improved urban environment
- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions and improved air quality
- Improved resource efficiency and protection of ecological assets
- Effective adaptation of communities and infrastructure to climate change

DOMAIN OF CHANGE 4 — Effective urban crisis prevention and response
- Enhanced social integration and inclusive communities
- Improved living standards and inclusion of migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees
- Enhanced resilience of the built environment and infrastructure

Social inclusion issues: (1) Human rights; (2) Gender; (3) Children, youth and older persons; (4) Disability

Cross-cutting thematic areas: (1) Resilience; (2) Safety

"*A better quality of life for all in an urbanizing world*"

In December 2019, the current 2014-2019 UN-Habitat Strategic Plan will end and will be replaced by a new 2020-2023 Strategic Plan. The new Plan repositions UN-Habitat as a major global entity, a centre of excellence and innovation that sets the global agenda on sustainable urban development, drives political discussion and generates specialized and cutting-edge knowledge. The Strategic Plan recognizes that sustainable urbanization is essential to achieve global development goals as set out in the suite of global

agreements signed by the Member States in 2015 and 2016 including, most importantly, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Our vision of "A better quality of life for all in an urbanizing world" is bold and ambitious; it is a vision that challenges UN-Habitat and our partners to enhance national and international efforts in order to address challenges related to urbanization. We see urbanization as a process that can transform

"UN-Habitat promotes transformative change in cities and human settlements through knowledge, policy advice, technical assistance and collaborative action to leave no one and no place behind."

territories, connect human settlements across urban and rural areas and ensure access to adequate and affordable housing, basic services and infrastructure for all. We will work to promote urbanization as a positive transformative force for people and communities, reducing inequality, discrimination and poverty.

What are the implications for the Global Public Space Programme?

The Strategic Plan is structured around four Domains of Change: (1) spatial inequality and poverty, (2) shared prosperity, (3) climate action and (4) urban crisis. Public space, together with sustainable transport are considered one of the three key outcomes of 'Domain of Change 1' - Reduced spatial inequality and poverty in communities across the urban–rural continuum.

To reduce spatial inequalities, generate more local economic activities and promote social cohesion, we look at key dimensions like the availability, distribution, accessibility and quality of public spaces. We strongly believe that these dimensions should be reflected in national urban policies and sectoral plans that can be translated into concrete physical interventions.

UN-Habitat will continue working with a wide range of stakeholders towards this outcome, including all levels of government, civil society, communities and the formal and informal private sector, through both normative and operational work.

This will include work on:

- policies that are sensitive to gender, age and disability;
- plans and legislation for public space provision and mobility solutions;
- legislation for improved safety in public spaces through stakeholder engagement; and
- inclusive participatory slum upgrading that improves access to basic services, mobility and public spaces.

In the Domain of Change 2, the Strategic Plan recognizes the importance of using digital technologies and innovations to achieve sustainable urban development outcomes - Expanded deployment of frontier technologies and innovations for urban development. The New Urban Agenda calls for technology and communication networks to be strengthened and for smart-city approaches to improve service delivery and boost economic growth, while promoting broad-based inclusion, especially for people with special needs.

The Global Public Space Programme has been one of the pioneers at UN-Habitat when it comes to using innovative digital technologies. Our Block by Block, mixed reality and digital public space assessment tools have been used by tens of thousands of people in more than 35 countries and continue to showcase how 'smart cities' and frontier technologies can successfully integrate underserved populations in planning processes by means to address inequalities and bridge social and spatial divides.

In the new Strategic Plan, public space appears to contribute the most to the first Domain of Change, however our work in the past years has positively delivered great results in strengthening climate action and improving the urban environment as well as building resilience and effectively responding to urban crisis' challenges. Ultimately, the Global Public Space Programme is well positioned to make a significant contribution in reducing spatial inequality, enhancing the prosperity of cities and regions and ensuring that the overarching goals of the Strategic Plan are reached.

ADVOCATING FOR CITY-WIDE PUBLIC SPACE STRATEGIES

The Global Public Space Programme is widely known for its park activations, street redesigns and other site-based approaches to the improvement of urban public space. However, it is increasingly understood that certain benefits of public space are not conferrable through a site-based approach. Distribution, connectivity, locational accessibility and programmatic diversity usually require a networked, city-wide approach that is supported by a strong strategy. Yet many cities do not know the baseline condition of their public spaces. Even fewer have the aspiration or know-how to connect and improve such spaces as a cohesive, networked system.

As a first step, we have piloted our *City-wide Public Space Assessment Tool* in 28 cities. By enlisting residents, particularly youth, to walk their cities and map the public spaces of their own neighbourhoods, we have been helping cities produce public space inventories that assess both the quantity and quality of spaces throughout the system. The assessments have shown the importance of understanding the networks of public space and the need to ensure equitable distribution across cities, especially within marginalized and poor communities which have few open public spaces while needing them the most. The assessment has also brought forth the importance of the management and activation of the spaces to ensure diverse usage and to make sure the city is a vibrant place.

As a next step, we are advocating for cities to produce their own strategies for the improvement of their public space systems. To date, we are collaborating with several cities on the production of such strategies including Bamenda, Kisumu and Wuhan, among others. In the meantime, to inspire other city leaders to pursue their own strategies, we are producing a compendium and guidebook of public space strategies. Both will be launched at the 10th World Urban Forum in Abu Dhabi in February 2020.

The compendium summarizes and analyzes city-wide public space strategies from 26 cities around the world. It also tests the ambition and realism of these strategies, suggesting that those that are aligned with their administrative boundaries may manage to optimize both. Moreover, those that are lucky enough to be associated with generous jurisdictional boundaries encompassing large areas of as-yet-unbuilt land are likeliest to have the greatest impact in the coming years. Furthermore, the compendium illustrates a variety of entry points and champions for such strategies, showing that while one size does not fit all, the twinned essentials of legitimacy and longevity can probably only be achieved by balancing top-down and bottom-up approaches (regardless of the initial champion). Lastly, the publication then proposes a checklist of essential elements that successful strategies should aim to contain, and evaluates the 26 cities accordingly.

Complementing the compendium, the guidebook outlines the procedures that cities should follow to produce their own strategies (e.g. generating political will and consulting the potentially affected community). It establishes the minimum essential elements such strategies should contain (e.g. common ones such as a clear timeframe as well as rarer ones such as a conflict resolution mechanism) and it suggests the most important norms they should adopt. It grounds all of the above in a policy scan and literature review. Neither following the perfect process nor having all the right ingredients is, in itself, sufficient for such a strategy; it must have both. However, both cities should go one step further in adopting standards for quantity, distribution, connectivity, diversity, accessibility and city-wide quality

With the wide outreach that both publications are expected to enjoy we aim is to both inspire city leaders and put to greater use its own significant technical advisory services.

GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE

CITY-WIDE PUBLIC SPACE STRATEGIES: A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

This guide looks at the key dimensions and indicators that are necessary for a comprehensive city-wide public space strategy regardless of the thematic focus. It also highlights the necessary steps that should be followed to ensure that the process is transparent and inclusive. UN-Habitat proposes that all programmes included in city-wide public strategies and annual public space action plans be synchro-nized into municipal work plans. This synchronization is critical to achieving the objectives and targets set out in the strategy.
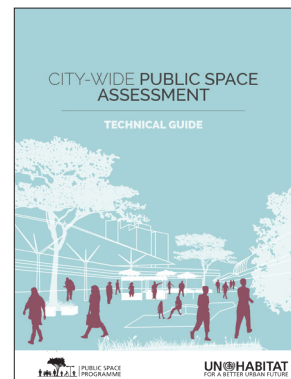
MIXED REALITY

This publication shows that that mixed reality technology holds tremendous potential for real-time digital visualisations, both at the street and neighbourhood level. This new visually realistic blending of reality with a virtual imagined version creates a more intuitive space for planners, architects, residents and other stakeholders to viscerally experience and re-imagine future environments from the city streets of today.

SITE-SPECIFIC ASSESSMENT

The site-specific assessment guide focuses on one selected public space and the five to ten minutes walking radius from it. The tool comprises a variety of methods to assess five main indicators; usage, comfort, accessibility, green coverage and urban facilities. The adopted methods are both quantitative and qualitative and can be obtained through open and closed questions, interviews, digital mapping and others. The tool also looks at the perception and the feeling of individuals in the public space at different times of the day; a non-physical indicator that gives deeper experiential insights into the place.

LIST OF DONORS

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Contributions received (2018–2019)

Country	DONOR	BUDGET (TOTAL COST)"	CO-FUNDING
Kosovo	Block by Block	$84,970	$35,000
Bangladesh	Block by Block	$80,750	$44,165
Vietnam	Block by Block	$90,385	$84,984
Lebanon	Block by Block	$80,750	$29,400
Guinea	Block by Block	$85,000	$50,000
Nepal	Block by Block	$85,000	$129,493
Ethiopia	Block by Block	$150,000	$150,000
Mozambique	Block by Block	$80,000	
Block by Block total contribution 2019		**$736,855**	**$523,042**
Turkey	Swedish Institute	$5,000	
Scotland	Greenspace Scotland	$5,000	
UAE	UNICEF UAE	$81,550	$150,000
Malaysia	Seberang Perai	$30,000	$80,000
Malaysia	Think City	$6,000	$10,000
Palestine	Canadian Development Cooperation	$15,000	$3,000,000
Somaliland	UN-Habitat Somalia	$5,000	
Afghanistan	Netherlands + Switzerland	$20,000	
Tanzania	UN-Habitat	$10,400	$40,000
Multi-country	IDB	$5,000	
Uruguay	IDB	$40,000	
Colombia	IDB	$40,000	
Dominican Republic	IDB	$40,000	
China	Wuhan Land Use and Urban Spatial Planning Research Center (WLSP)	$30,000	$300,000
Global	SIDA	$110,000	
	TOTAL	**$1,179,805**	**$4,103,042**

Budget allocated per thematic focus (2019)
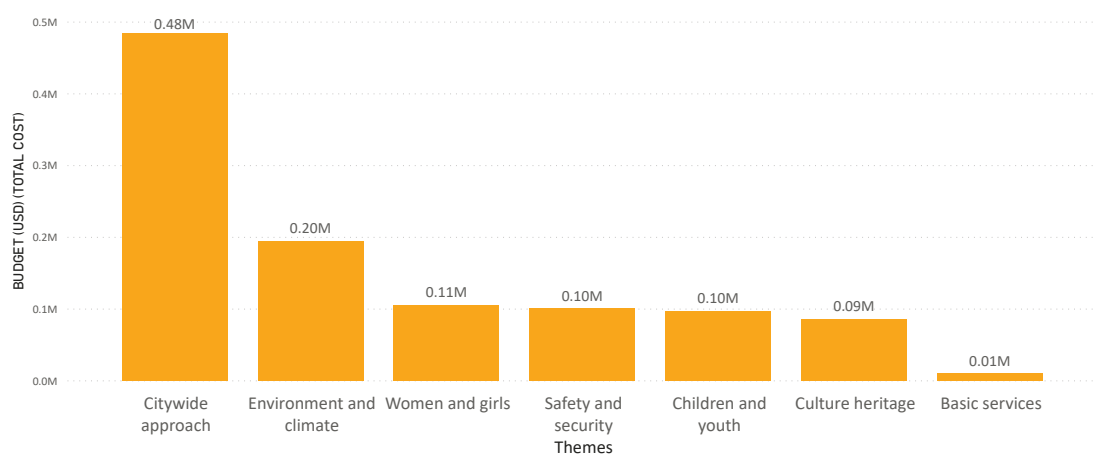
Uhuru park in Nairobi, Kenya © Flickr/Ninara

GLOBAL PUBLIC SPACE PROGRAMME STAFF 2019

A gender-balanced, geographically diverse team of experts supported by local partners now leads the Programme in and across the 36 countries and territories we currently serve.

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