

# NATIONAL URBAN POLICY ARAB STATES REPORT





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# FOREWORD



I am very pleased to present the State of National Urban Policies Report in the Arab States, an insightful assessment of urban policies in one of the most urbanized regions of the world. The Arab States account for 56 per cent of the world's urban population. The report is a valuable source of information, and is based on case studies undertaken by UN-Habitat.

The New Urban Agenda, the outcome document of Habitat III, as well as Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, recognize the transformative power of urbanization as an endogenous source of development, prosperity and employment. Within this new framework, the role of national governments in harnessing the opportunities and mitigating risks of urbanization is emphasized, with national urban policies recognized as a primary instrument. The New Urban Agenda emphasizes the leading role of national governments in the definition and implementation of inclusive and effective urban policies .

The report serves as an important tool for policy makers, practitioners and academia, providing insights in a complex region which shares a series of common social and political circumstances: a tradition of political centralization, large populations of youth demanding equal social, political and economic opportunities, extreme vulnerability to climate change, with the potential for food and water insecurity, and the destabilizing effects of political turmoil and conflict. We must not forget that cities of the Arab region are some of the oldest continuously inhabited human settlements in the world; the region continues to remain a source of great relevance when analyzing the development of national urban policies.

The Arab region now finds itself at a particularly turbulent but pivotal time. Policy choices made to manage rapid urbanization will determine the future of cities there, and to a certain extent, the path of national development. Investing in strong, well-developed national urban policies as part of the fundamentals of urbanization – rules and regulations, planning and design and a financing model - guarantees prosperity.

The report is part of a series of five regional reports assessing the state of national urban policies that complement the Global State of National Urban Policies Report, conducted in collaboration between UN-Habitat and the OECD. These studies are timely, as they follow up on Habitat III and Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, and accompany the Second International Conference on National Urban Policy.

**Dr. Joan Clos**

Executive Director, UN-Habitat

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Purpose of study

UN-Habitat defines a National Urban Policy as “a coherent set of decisions derived through a deliberate government-led process of coordinating and rallying various actors for a common vision and goal that will promote more transformative, productive, inclusive and resilient urban development for the long term” (UN-Habitat, 2014a). A National Urban Policy, therefore, can define the strategic objectives, policies and priorities for action needed to promote sustainable urbanization and urban resilience. The thematic components of sustainability and resilience are multidimensional and include an important spatial dimension.

The use of strategic spatial plans at different territorial scales has been a long-standing European tradition reinforced by the landmark European Union guiding policy framework European Spatial Development Perspective and its subsequent updates. However, in the Arab states, as in many developing countries, there has often been a lack of clarity between the national policy frameworks that provide development strategies at the national and regional scales and master plans that are primarily urban infrastructure investment frameworks and land-use regulatory instruments.

The significance of a National Urban Policy is to provide a coherent framework integrating growth potential with policies promoting equity, inclusion, and resilience. It enables coordination across sectors and among actors involved at the different levels of governance, in the private sector and within civil society.

The focus of this report is, therefore, to review the state of national urban policies in the states of the Arab region against this standard. It identifies the legal and governmental articulation of the national urban policies, the main actors involved, how their objectives and priorities address the challenges of urbanization, and

what achievements have been accomplished in this regard. It also considers aspects of the policy cycle, looking at the means of formulation, implementation and evaluation of national urban policies put in place. Finally, it tries to identify the factors affecting longer-term trends in national urban policies in the countries reviewed.

## Key findings

Starting in the 1960s, massive population movements to urban areas in the Arab region resulted in their densification and a proliferation of peri-urban informal settlements. To address these issues, many of the region's 22 countries developed more or less detailed national urban strategies that combined Western spatial planning principles, mainly derived from the United Kingdom and France, with local administrative and legal traditions. It should be noted that the region's tradition of strong central governments has tended to limit the participation of local governments and civil society in the formulation and implementation of urban strategies.

Significant differences in wealth, levels of development and political circumstances exist among the Arab states. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries' oil wealth and the remittances of their expatriate workers have played a significant role in fuelling urban development in other Arab countries, as well as in Asia. They stand out in sharp contrast to the Southern Tier, whose countries – the Comoros, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen – are the least economically developed, have the highest concentrations of urban poverty and slums, and lack a national urban strategic vision.

All the Mashreq and Maghreb countries have developed national development policies that focus on strengthening the economic role of cities, managing their spatial development and eliminating slums. In all the Mashreq countries but Egypt, their effectiveness has been hampered by recurring regional conflicts and internal upheavals

that have affected the region since the early 2000s, not only in the countries concerned but also their immediate neighbours as waves of refugees fled to safer havens. Some of the conflicts have also affected local administrative structures. Iraq, for example, has evolved from a highly centralized political system to a quasi-federal one as central government functions have been transferred to relatively autonomous governorates.

The effectiveness of the urban policies of several of the Maghreb countries stands out. Tunisia and Morocco, for example, were able to reduce dramatically the percentage of their population living in substandard housing through public programmes that encouraged the participation of the private sector.

An important issue in some of the countries is the progressive devolution of power to regional and local governments and, in some cases, the consultation of civil society. It should be noted that the implementation of decentralization objectives has not been easy, as non-national administrations generally lack the financial (and often the human) resources to take on new responsibilities.

The motivations to develop and implement a national urban policy vary from country to country. In the countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), urban policy has focused on the diversification of their economies and the use of their oil wealth to develop a knowledge economy, particularly information and communication technology and finance. In the other countries of the region, the need to deal with a “crisis” has been the impetus for the region’s governments to conceptualize a national urban policy. The original motivation, in most cases, was the desire to eradicate sub-standard housing and manage urban growth to curb the development of informal housing on the urban fringe.

More recently, urban policies have become an integral part of broader national development strategies. In Egypt, the need to protect scarce agricultural land and broaden the country’s economic base to create employment for its large and increasingly better-educated youth by

stimulating the urban economy has driven urban policy decisions. In the Maghreb countries, the need to diversify the economy to take advantage of the opportunities offered by access to the Eurozone was a strong motivation to develop a national urban policy. In Lebanon, national planning was an integral part of the post-civil war reconstruction.

In some countries, the process of policy formulation and implementation has been affected by regional wars, the post-2011 turmoil and recurring civil conflict. Longer-term stability is an underpinning factor in the development of a vision of the future.

## Key recommendations

Based on the analysis found in this report, it is suggested that, due to specificities of the Arab region, national urban policies for countries in the region should take into consideration seven major issues:

1. The ongoing conflicts in Iraq, Palestine, Syria, Libya and Yemen, which trigger changing conditions in affected cities, and the broader impact on urban growth patterns.
2. The prospective post-conflict measures regarding return, resettlement and housing for internally-displaced people (IDPs) and refugees, and the anticipated challenges in terms of fostering social inclusion and providing access to land and urban services.
3. The numbers of IDPs and refugees displaced by wars and conflicts has reached crisis point. Host cities and countries, namely Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, Libya are the most affected, although the accommodation and provision of basic needs differs markedly between the two countries but impacts equally on urban policies.
4. The economic and social effects of the general instability in the region on countries less affected by turmoil, such as Morocco and Algeria.

5. The new economic and social policies and urban priorities of countries recovering from revolution and turmoil, namely Tunisia and Egypt.
6. The special situation of GCC countries, including the anticipated increase of expatriate workers and the policies on accommodation in existing cities and planned new towns.
7. The necessity of integrating a high level of environmental awareness and consciousness in urban policies to reflect climate change forecasts for the region and their anticipated impacts on urban spatial plans and patterns in the different countries. Already, some countries have to cope with water shortages and insufficient energy sources that affect most informal settlements and areas on the urban fringes.



Rabat, Morocco © Médina Oudaya



# 1

## INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 National Urban Policies and the global agenda for sustainable development

With the world's population expected to double by 2050 and to be concentrated primarily in urban areas, and particularly with the urban population of developing countries set to double as soon as 2030, the process of urbanization is increasingly recognized as a crucial issue in global sustainable development.

Urbanization is an essential part of wealth creation and social prosperity and it can also hold the promise of environmental sustainability through the efficient use of resources and energy. However, if left uncontrolled, urbanization can also worsen socio-economic inequalities and exclusion with rising unemployment, slum proliferation and spread of diseases, and environmental degradation. When these challenges and opportunities move beyond urban boundaries, so too should their political management; "cities are too important to be left to their own devices" (UN-Habitat, 2014b, p.13). Urbanization has, therefore, been acknowledged globally as an agenda priority and, nationally, as a governmental responsibility.

In the past, global agreements and programmes have included considerations of urbanization. For example, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction recognized the vulnerability and responsibility of urban areas to climate change-related disasters, and this was confirmed by the subsequent Paris Agreement on Climate Change in which cities were represented as important actors. More importantly, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development dedicated one of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to cities, with the SDG 11: "Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable". Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the first major intergovernmental conference following these sustainable development milestones was the United Nations' Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), where the New Urban Agenda was adopted. This advocates for proactive policies to leverage the dynamics of urbanization as instruments of sustainable development.

This new emphasis on urban issues in intergovernmental frameworks and agreements also demands increased responsibility by national governments in adapting, implementing and monitoring these global imperatives. National Urban Policy (NUP) has been identified as one of the key instruments to articulate this global agenda for sustainable development, national development visions, and the successful management of urbanization. In the preparation for Habitat III, NUPs were selected as one of ten thematic policy units. The Policy Paper from Policy Unit 3, National Urban Policies, recommended that NUPs should constitute one of the instruments of implementation and measurement of the SDGs at the national level. In the New Urban Agenda, launched at Habitat III, NUPs are identified as a "driver of change", a tool that can harness and capitalize on the complex forces of urbanization to participate in sustainable urban development.

Indeed, "good urbanization" - leading to economic, social and environmental benefits - does not occur "naturally or by chance" but through carefully planned policies accompanying and accommodating demographic growth and shifts. A successful NUP becomes an instrument for guiding sustainable urban development by: creating an enabling and cooperative institutional environment, with increased vertical and horizontal coordination; mobilizing stakeholders from all levels of government, the private sector and civil society; assessing and building capacities; and defining an urban vision for the country, with jointly defined and transparent responsibilities.

Given this potentially instrumental role of NUPs, it is necessary to assess to what extent actual governmental policies managing or influencing urbanization are fulfilling these objectives. This report on the Arab states is, therefore, part of a series of five regional reports that consider the state of national urban policy at the regional level. These regional reports complement the Global State of National Urban Policy report. This report will analyse the particular challenges and opportunities of urbanization in the Arab region and will identify the relevant governmental policies and initiatives that address them.

## 1.2 Background

The Arab region as discussed in this report is comprised of 22 countries sharing the Arabic language and culture. It is home to some of the oldest human settlements in the world. It is one of the most urbanized regions, with many of its largest cities located along the trade routes and waterways of ancient civilizations. Several of the world's cities with the longest continuous occupation, including Byblos (Lebanon), Luxor (Egypt), Damascus (Syria) and Carthage (Tunisia) are in this area.

Today, many of the region's urban areas face unprecedented challenges in their effort to manage rapid and sustainable urban growth. Large youth populations and rapid rates of household formation have increased the demand for affordable housing, while the housing supply, increasingly produced by the private sector, caters to upper-income households. This mismatch between housing demands generates the growth of informal settlements. The impacts of climate change are projected to increase temperatures and decrease rainfall in nearly all the Arab states, putting enormous pressure on an already scarce water supply and jeopardizing the food security of the region. The challenges of housing provision and basic service delivery in urban areas are compounded by armed conflicts that create large movements of refugees and internally displaced people.

The region's recent rapid urbanization is the result of several converging trends: the movement from rural to urban areas by people searching for better economic opportunities; the concentration of economic activities in urban areas to achieve economies of scale; and the forced displacement of people due to conflict. The result is rapid urbanization, urban sprawl and a proliferation of unplanned or spontaneous development which, together, threaten the ability of Arab cities to equitably and sustainably provide basic infrastructure and services, to ensure affordable housing for their populations, and to preserve their unique architectural and urban heritage.

Arab states have diverse demographic characteristics and levels of urbanization, leading to a range of national policy responses. Concentrations of different ethnic and religious groups create or sustain social tensions in some cities and are reflected in the physical form and growth pattern of several agglomerations. In terms of the proportion of the population living in cities, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are among the most urbanized in the world, with Kuwait and Qatar being nearly 100 per cent urban. Other countries, such as Sudan and Yemen in the Southern Tier sub-region, have predominantly rural populations, with only 34 per cent of their populations living in urban areas. (UNDESA, 2014).

Some Arab states have experienced very high rates of urban population growth, particularly Morocco, Algeria and Saudi Arabia. The generally young population - about 50 per cent is below the age of 25 in nearly all these countries - is a defining determinant of national urban policies because of its impact on the labour force and household formation rates (Roudi, 2011). Governments in non-oil producing countries are particularly hard pressed to generate jobs for the expanding cohorts of new entrants in the labour force every year. With youth unemployment a serious concern, lack of opportunity is driving migration primarily to the GCC but also to southern Europe, the United States, Canada and Latin America. Since the 1970s, remittances have been a major driver of formal and informal urbanization in some of the countries in the region.

### The Region

The Arab region, as it is referred to in this assessment, consists of 22 countries across four sub-regions – the Maghreb, the Mashreq, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and the Southern Tier (Table 1).

Mashreq	Maghreb	GCC	Southern Tier
Egypt	Algeria	Bahrain	The Comoros
Iraq	Libya	Kuwait	Djibouti
Jordan	Morocco	Oman	Somalia
Lebanon	Tunisia	Qatar	Sudan
Palestine	Mauritania	Saudi Arabia	Yemen
Syrian Arab Republic		United Arab Emirates	

Table 1: The Arab Sub-regions

Significant differences in climate, wealth, levels of development and political circumstances exist among and within the sub-regions. The GCC countries' oil wealth stands out and the expatriate workers' remittances have had a significant role in fuelling urban development in other Arab countries as well as in Asia. The Southern Tier is the least economically developed and has the highest concentrations of urban poverty. The effectiveness of the urban policies of several of the Maghreb countries also stands out, particularly their ability to reduce dramatically the percentage of the populations living in sub-standard housing in Tunisia and Morocco, for example, while the progress made by most Mashreq countries since the 1980s has been hampered by unrest and civil wars since the early 2000s, for example in Iraq and Syria. The prevalence of slums is still high in the Southern Tier countries.

Regardless of their national wealth or level of development, all Arab countries are characterized by a young and increasingly better educated population who, collectively, drive the demand for new urban housing and economic activities.

The highly centralized governance structure of most Arab states has led to national government agencies playing a key role in planning and managing urban development.

Certain policy guidelines resonate throughout the region, including planning strategies and programmes that attempt to steer urban growth away from precious agricultural lands in this largely arid territory. Others are very country or sub-region specific, such as Jordan's policies to deal with the influx of refugees from Iraq and Syria who have fled to its urban areas. The ongoing turmoil in Syria and other conflicts throughout the region, and the heavy toll on urban populations, infrastructure and housing, pose formidable challenges. The formulation and implementation of post-conflict policies to repair and rebuild urban assets will require massive investments. Developing a common, long-term vision for urban development is a challenging task in areas with uncertain futures due to conflict and insecurity, and for governments with limited human and financial resources and several competing priorities.

By 2011, all the larger Arab states had national-level policies to govern urban areas, inspired by Western spatial planning principles, particularly from the United Kingdom and France, with locally defined policies adapted to their cultural and urban traditions. The process of policy formulation and implementation in many countries has been affected by the 2011 turmoil since longer-term stability is an underpinning factor in the development of a vision of the future. It is therefore important to consider the urban policies that existed at the national level prior to the conflict, their logic, and the new orientations that countries are introducing to cope with the challenges generated by the turmoil. Potential post-conflict reconstruction in countries experiencing armed conflict on their territory will entail projects to rebuild and expand infrastructure systems, provide new housing, and guide population return and resettlement.



Avenue Mohammed V, Rabat City Center, Morocco © UN-Habitat

## 1.3 Methodology

### 1.3.1 Definition of National Urban Policy

UN-Habitat defines a National Urban Policy (NUP) as a “a coherent set of decisions derived through a deliberate government-led process of coordinating and rallying various actors for a common vision and goal that will promote more transformative, productive, inclusive and resilient urban development for the long term”. However, this analysis has considered a broader definition, as few states have such a policy meeting all definitional criteria (UN-Habitat, 2014a). Although most countries present the formal elements of a NUP as defined by UN-Habitat, such as coherent sets of decisions in the form of legislation, frameworks or strategies, they do not always share the more substantive aspects of the definition, such as the process of elaboration and implementation, and the objectives promoted. Indeed, the extent to which these policy decisions and directions have been the outcome of a government-led debate among

various stakeholders, and promote transformative, productive, inclusive and resilient urban development, has been limited. Moreover, the degree of explicitness varies among governments, in the sense that some countries have a clearly identifiable NUP, such as Morocco’s *Politique de la Ville*, while others, such as Sudan or Jordan, have a collection of legislations, frameworks or strategies influencing urban development which, accumulated over time or connected across sectoral themes, form an implicit national urban policy, illustrating the government’s directions and priorities to manage urbanization.

This analysis, therefore, makes a distinction between the officially defined *National Urban Policy (NUP)* as the standard of evaluation defined by UN-Habitat, and the *national urban policies* observed in the countries studied, which is defined more broadly and flexibly. A national urban policy is indeed understood here to be a government-approved set of policies, programmes, strategies and plans that guide and affect urban development to address the challenges and opportunities of urbanization.



### 1.3.2 Methods of data gathering, analysis and presentation

The methodology for the selection and analysis of case studies was based primarily on desk research and bolstered by informal discussions with key experts in the region, particularly in the identification of key policy documents. Information from planning, housing and urban development-related ministries was gathered from government websites of the region. Open government portals, for example Jordan's "Inform" database or Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Economy and Planning website, were also consulted for supporting documentation on national policy. Preliminary identification of source materials was conducted through key word searches on the Google search engine in the three dominant languages of the region – English, French and Arabic. When information on the implementation of various policies was lacking, local news sites were used to verify the progress and process of policy application. The Habitat III process, leading up to the global conference on human settlements in 2016, has also been investigated in the region, as this has offered an opportunity for many countries to consolidate and create an inventory of the state of their national urban policy.

### 1.3.3 Study limitations

A first constraint for the elaboration of the report is inherent to the method of desk research, as not all policy information was available online or through publicly available documents, and depended on the extent of the communication of the governments through the publication of official documents and updates, as well as on the media reporting on the advancement of urban policies. Aside from official objectives and achievements, other aspects of the policy process were therefore difficult to document in detail, such as mechanisms of evaluation and of participation of stakeholders, the exact status of implementation, or funding details.

Moreover, once again the discrepancy between the normative National Urban Policy (NUP) and

the observed national urban policies meant that certain aspects of the process recommended by UN-Habitat, such as wide-ranging stakeholder participation, were still non-existent or just emerging in Arab States, making some of the lines of enquiry for the analysis irrelevant in this context.

Finally, the political instability in the region in recent years has added another layer of difficulty in documenting the state of national urban policies in certain countries. Not only did conflict make it more difficult to obtain reliable and updated primary sources on the state of national urban policy, but it also sometimes meant that the policy process was fully interrupted and abandoned, such as in Syria.

## 1.4 Structure of the report

This first part of this report presents a general overview of the state of national urban policies in the Mashreq, Maghreb, GCC and Southern Tier sub-regions, with small case studies of each of their countries. It presents main urban challenges and priorities faced by these sub-regions, and policies put in place by individual countries to address them.

The second part presents five major case studies of national urban policies in Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Sudan. These case studies have a deeper policy analysis, detailing major documents and their objectives and achievements, but also analysing processes of decentralization and participation of stakeholders. The objective is that the lessons drawn from these major case studies can be applicable and useful for the wider region.

Finally, the third part analyses and summarizes the findings from this research, evaluating national urban policies along five main themes: climate change adaptation and resilience, economic potential, basic services and housing, governance and political instability.



# 2

## Overview of the Region and Minor Country Case Studies

## 2.1 Urban policies in the Mashreq sub-region: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic

The Mashreq countries are at the centre of the current turmoil in the region but are also the cradle of its cultural and urban traditions. Water shortages, shared watercourses and a common historical legacy have created similarities in urban form, management and development that are modulated by geophysical characteristics and natural resources.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) 2016 Mid-Year Trends Report, the region currently hosts over 3 million refugees (19 % of the total refugees in the world under UNHCR's mandate), 2.2 millions of which are concentrated in the Mashreq region (14% of total refugees under UNHCR's mandate). Lebanon and Jordan are the countries hosting the largest numbers of refugees, followed by Egypt and Iraq, but also Yemen and Sudan. In addition, five million Palestinian refugees under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency are in the region. In terms of internally displaced people, Syria alone accounts for 18% of the global IDP population, with more than 6.5 million IDPs, followed by Iraq with 4.3 millions (12% of total IDP population) and Yemen with more than 2 millions IDPs (6% of total IDP population) (UNHCR 2016). Combined with rural-urban migration, these involuntary population movements have put enormous pressure on urban settlements to provide job opportunities, adequate shelter and basic urban services. Urban policy has therefore been focused on managing and upgrading the densification of lower-rent housing areas, including informal settlements, on employment generation, and on directing urban growth along transport corridors where infrastructure can be extended.

Internal conflict has also set back past advances in national urban planning. In Syria, prior to the 2011 internal conflict, a major effort had been made to reform the municipal administration system and prepare a national framework for regional planning.

In Libya, continued unrest has impeded the implementation of its National Physical Perspective Plan. In Yemen, internal turmoil and protracted civil war since the 1960s has hindered the government's ability to formulate and implement urban policies. The country has historically relied on international development programmes funded primarily through the World Bank, the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ), and United Nations agencies to develop its urban areas.

In several Mashreq countries, the new generation of national urban policies under development will have to respond to post-conflict challenges as well as address issues such as living-wage employment and equitable access to food, energy, urban services, and affordable housing.

### Egypt

In Egypt, the National Urban Development Framework (2014), drafted by the General Organization for Physical Planning under the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Development, gives the country's spatial framework and outlines key projects. Law 119/2009 and its executive regulations detail the legal and institutional frameworks for planning and implementation, including visions, strategic plans and urban development plans at the national, regional and city levels. The national framework focuses on directing urbanization into corridors east and west of the Nile and along the coasts to alleviate the pressures of urbanization on agricultural land. Urban policy in Egypt advocates for preventing the urbanization of agricultural lands, inclusionary principles in informal settlements upgrading, and attracting investment to growth nodes outside of (yet connected to) existing urban areas. Climate resiliency is addressed through comprehensive national policies that address rural and urban settlements, such as the National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction (2011); the National Strategy for Crisis/ Disaster Management and Disaster Risk Reduction (2010); and Law 4/1994, the "Environment Law", which regulates, among other things, the integrated environmental management of coastal areas abutting the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea.



Children at the Dawodye IDP camp, Iraq , Iraq © UN-Habitat

## Iraq

Iraq does not have an explicit national urban policy but does have a National Development Plan 2010-2014 as well as a 2013-2017 five-year plan, which make reference to the importance of spatial considerations in urban development and provide the groundwork for what could become a national urban policy framework. Urban spatial development policy is integrated into regional development policies and identifies urban agglomerations for long-term development. Urban development is particularly focused on housing and durable shelter solutions for internally displaced people and recognizes the urban primacy of Baghdad in several sectoral policies. Iraq has also had an Outline for a National Spatial Strategy since 2010.

## Jordan

In Jordan, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs (MOMA) oversees municipalities, joint service councils, the Higher Planning Council, and the Cities and Villages Development Bank. The country's first National Land-Use Master Plan was developed by MOMA in 2006 to balance urban development, which had historically been concentrated in Amman. Urban policy is contained within multiple

national sectoral policies. The promotion of multi-modal transport and in-fill development using vacant land for urban condensation are seen as the policies to be pursued by cities to achieve more compact, better integrated and connected cities. An update to the National Land-Use Plan of 2006 will equip policy and decision makers with the tools to develop policies that promote environmentally sustainable and adapted urban management and resiliency.

## Lebanon

In Lebanon, the Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR) prepares master plans and finances projects. The council prepared the first national physical plan in 2005 (The National Physical Master Plan of the Lebanese Territory), which serves as the basis for urban planning policy in the country. The plan promotes unity, equitable regional development, sustainable use of resources, economic productivity, social development, environmental protection, and heritage conservation through the management of land use (UN-Habitat, 2011). The CDR was originally mandated in 1977 to plan for the rehabilitation of the country during the civil war and has since taken responsibility for planning and managing urban projects in Beirut and

other Lebanese cities. Urban policy in Lebanon is streamlined into national sectoral policies and programmes only to a certain extent, as the national government has historically played a minimal role in the development of urban policy and management. Lebanon has been an active member in the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction's "Making Cities Resilient Campaign", with Beirut in the process of developing a disaster risk reduction plan.

## Palestine

Palestine was recently recognized as a non-member observer state at the United Nations, though the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), which has a long history of engagement in planning for urban development and participating in international dialogues on human settlements. Territorial fragmentation, along with other physical and legal restrictions that have resulted from the Israeli occupation has, however, complicated the formulation of a national urban policy and implementation of urban development programmes. Urban development takes place in a divided manner across cities in the West Bank and Gaza, which are host to 75 per cent of the Palestinian population (World Bank, 2013). A lack of final negotiations over the governance of East Jerusalem and its subsequent annexation by Israel has produced a city that is physically and socially divided. More broadly speaking, the physical separation of the West Bank and Gaza and the division of the former as per the Oslo Accords creates a situation of discontinuous and physically restricted urban development, over which the PNA has varying levels of control.

## Syrian Arab Republic

In 2010, the Government of Syria had established the Higher Commission for Regional Planning, which was charged with formulating the National Framework for Regional Planning. This commission was the result of a five-year planning effort funded by the European Commission, the United Nations Development Programme and UN-Habitat. With technical assistance from UNDP, the Higher Commission for Regional Planning was

anticipated to set national standards for regional and spatial planning; develop and implement the National Framework; and launch a regional planning process following the adoption of a 2005 market economy policy after decades of centralized, sectoral planning. The onset of armed conflict in the country in 2011 halted this process and disrupted population growth and distribution in the country. By the end of 2014, the number of internally displaced people in Syria was estimated at over 7.6 million (IDMC, 2015). The scale of destruction to infrastructure and homes, particularly in urban areas, will require an enormous reconstruction and resettlement effort if and when a resolution to the conflict is agreed.

## 2.2 Urban Policies in the Maghreb sub-region: Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and Mauritania

Except for Mauritania, Maghreb countries are relatively well-off and recent urban policies have tended to focus on the development and promotion of interior secondary cities to balance economic opportunities by redirecting growth from the highly urbanized coastal areas. As in the Mashreq, Maghreb countries have large youth populations facing high unemployment rates. As part of a job creation effort, countries have been diversifying their tourism-based urban economies by creating light industry zones and ICT poles. For many years, the urban policies of Morocco, Tunisia and to a lesser extent, Algeria have been marked by a strong political commitment to provide replacement housing to lower-income families living in informally developed substandard units developed in the 1960s and 1970s. Tunisia has had a comprehensive national housing strategy since 1988, while Morocco's Villes Sans Bidonvilles – Cities Without Slums programme as well as its modestly priced TND 140,000 housing programme for limited income groups are noteworthy examples. Furthermore, Morocco's and Tunisia's achievements in the preservation and rehabilitation of their historical cities (medinas) stand out and have received international recognition.

## Algeria

Algeria has experienced very rapid urbanization since independence, with the urban population growing from 31 per cent of the total population in 1966 to 66 per cent in 2008 and the number of urban centres exploding from 95 to 751 during the same period (Office National des Statistiques, 2008). This rapid urban growth led the Algerian Government to prioritize access to decent housing. Public investment in housing from 2008-2013 allowed for the completion of two million dwelling units with a concomitant decrease in the number of people per unit from 5.51 in 2000 to 4.89 in 2010 to 4.60 in 2013. Despite these achievements, the accelerated urbanization to meet the housing needs of the population has left gaps in urban structure and form. Algeria's National Territorial Plan (SNAT) defines eight specific programmes regarding cities and urban development: urban regeneration and urban policy; detailed sequential urban order; modernization of the four largest cities – Algiers, Wahran, Constantine and Annaba; growth poles and integrated industrial development zones; major hazards; sustainable resources; cultural heritage; and rebalancing coastal development. Specifically concerning urban territories, Algeria disposes of two important policy instruments – the Land Use Plan (Plan d'Occupation de Sols) and the Urban Planning and Development Master Plan (Plan Directeur d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme). Furthermore, Law N°06 – 6 February 20, 2006, stipulates the legal framework and first orientations for the development of the Algerian Politique de la Ville. The general principles governing the urban policy rest on: coordination and consultation; deconcentration and decentralization; neighbourhood-based management; human development; sustainable development; good governance; citizen awareness; culture; heritage preservation; and social justice (Ministère de l'Intérieur et des Collectivités Locales, 2006). Certain cities, such as Algiers, have set up commissions to conduct technical studies relative to climate adaptation and the urban environment.

## Libya

Continued unrest in Libya has significantly impeded the sustainable implementation of physical plans and urban development strategies produced by the Urban Planning Agency, including the revised and expanded National Physical Perspective Plan (NPPP) 2006-2030. The NPPP provides the primary framework for the elaboration of sub-national plans at various levels, including the preparation of urban plans. UN-Habitat activities in the country have supported capacity building of personnel within the Urban Planning Agency as well as plan evaluation (UN-Habitat 2006).

## Morocco

Morocco recently embarked on the preparation of an explicit national urban policy known as the Politique de la Ville (PdV) or City Policy. A national debate around the content of this policy began in April 2012 and produced a document of Proposed Standards in June 2012. The Villes Sans Bidonvilles (VSB) scheme, initiated in 2004, has also been identified in UN-Habitat's "New Generation of National Urban Policies" as constituting the de facto NUP for Morocco prior to the elaboration of the PdV (which, it should be noted, contains directions for the continuation of the VSB programme). The Ministry of Housing and Urban Policy is leading the preparation of the PdV and managing its implementation in collaboration with a wide variety of stakeholders. The Permanent Inter-Ministerial Commission on City Policy is charged with evaluation and held its first meeting in August 2014 to assess the activities of the PdV process. Combating forms of social exclusion is one of the explicit goals of the PdV. Furthermore, Morocco's Ministry of Urbanism and Regional Planning is working to integrate climate resiliency into its practices and policy.



New Bridge and Tram in Rabat, Morocco © UN-Habitat

## Tunisia

Though Tunisia has not yet prepared a unifying national urban policy, master plans are used to guide urban development and are prepared at the village, municipality, metropolitan and governorate level. The Master Plan for Grand Tunis 2016, for example, has defined the evolution of the capital from an urban agglomeration to a metropolitan area. Urban policy considerations in Tunisia put a special emphasis on housing, as evidenced in the country's adoption of a national housing strategy in 1988 and more recent diagnostic and recommendations towards a new housing strategy (2014). This strategy has been implemented in the redefinition of urban planning standards, the identification of new financing sources to produce housing, and improved quality of life for citizens (Ministry of Equipment, Housing, and Urban Planning, 2012). Coherent with a government policy of economic liberalization, urban policy in Tunisia has been marked in recent years by a withdrawal of the state and its public agencies in infrastructure, housing and service provision and increased engagement with the private sector (Letaief, 2009). In 2012, following a revolutionary period in the country's history, the Ministry of Regional Development and Planning produced a "Development Strategy for the New Tunisia", which insists on balancing the development of urban areas, rural zones and coastal regions with those of the interior (Ministry of Regional Development and Planning, 2012).

## Mauritania

Formulation and implementation of national urban policy in Mauritania is the responsibility of the Ministry of Equipment, Urbanism and Housing, and has focused on poverty reduction to improve urban quality of life since 2000. The Agence Mauritanienne d'Exécution des Travaux d'Intérêt Public pour l'Emploi (AMEXTIPE) has undertaken numerous studies meant to lead to the elaboration of various urban development master plans. The capital, Nouackchott, is the focus of a Master Plan to the Horizon of 2020, prepared by the Urban Development Agency, the Buildings, Housing, and Urbanism Branch, and an international firm. In 2008, Mauritania passed Law No 2008-07 relative to the Urban Planning Code, which defines the regulations and instruments relevant to planning in Mauritanian cities.

### 2.3 Urban Policies in the Gulf Cooperation Council sub-region: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates

Countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council are focusing on the diversification of their economies with a strong interest in developing the knowledge economy, particularly ICT and finance. They are promoting the development of centres for technology and innovation, primarily funded by public resources, to be leveraged over

time through the private investment attracted, which has an important impact on their urban policy. There is also a significant effort to integrate nationals into the labour force to reduce the sub-region's traditional dependency on both skilled and unskilled foreign labour.

In the Gulf States of Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, given their relatively small size and urban populations accounting for over 85 per cent of their total population, national policy and urban policy are often synonymous. Since the discovery of oil, the region has been drawing increasing numbers of expatriate workers from South and South-East Asia. National urban policy deals primarily with promoting economically productive urban areas, and housing policies are focused almost exclusively on guaranteeing housing and property rights for nationals, while housing for expatriate labourers generally comes under the purview of private employers through the kafala system. Urban development has been an integral part of Saudi Arabia's national development strategy since the 1970s. Given its centralized administrative structure and the dependency of local administrations on central transfers, the strategy is primarily interventionist, with responsibility for both strategic decisions and project implementation primarily vested in the Ministry of Economy and Planning and the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs in Saudi Arabia.

## Bahrain

The Ministry of Works, Municipalities Affairs and Urban Planning (formerly the Ministry of Municipalities and Agriculture) of Bahrain is the primary body responsible for national urban policy. It completed the 2030 National Planning Development Strategy in 2007, in collaboration with international firms, after an 18-month planning process. The implementation of the strategy was also done by an international firm. The strategy emphasizes a centralized planning effort, coastal protection, heritage preservation, economic productivity enhanced by an inter-modal transport network, compact community

form, and green space in the city-state (SOM, 2007). Review of the plan is meant to happen every five years. The government's programme for 2015-2018 also continues a long history of providing social housing to low-income citizens. The construction of new towns is a key element to achieve this policy (Al Hermi, 2015).

## Kuwait

The General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development is the entity responsible for Kuwait's 2035 vision. With 98 per cent of the Kuwaiti population living in urban areas, most development planning in the city-state produces implicit national urban policies. Kuwait's achievement of the 2035 Vision and the Kuwait Development Plan 2010-2014 contribution towards achieving this vision has been evaluated by a private Kuwaiti firm, showing positive progress (EXCPR, 2014). The 2035 Vision rests on pillars that aim to: diversify the economy to improve gross domestic product; engage the private sector by developing the business environment; enhance human development through education, health, and social services; restructure the labour force; promote human rights; and increase governance efficiency. Kuwait also has a city-state master plan known as the First Revision of the Third Kuwait Master Plan - 2005 (3KMPP - 2005) that operates at the state level as the National Physical Plan Strategy (2005-2030). The master plan also functions at the Kuwait City and Metropolitan Area level as Structure Plans ("Future Urban Development in Kuwait" 2010).



Kuwait © UN-Habitat



## Oman

The Supreme Committee for Town Planning of the Sultanate of Oman launched a process to develop a national spatial strategy in 2010. The strategy is under development and its outputs will include a planning information system and an institutional and legal framework for planning, in addition to the general land-use strategy and framework for spatial planning (Freiland, 2015). Regional Spatial Strategies are also being conducted under this project for all 11 governorates. Implementation plans for the strategy will be elaborated and aligned with the national development strategy - Oman Vision 2040 (Prabhu, 2015).

## Qatar

Although Qatar does not have a specific national urban strategy, Qatar's Ministry of Development, Planning and Statistics has a national development strategy for 2011-2016 and the Qatar National Vision 2030, both of which serve as de facto urban policy documents, as 99 per cent of the population live in urban areas (World Bank, 2013). The national development strategy promotes sustainable urbanization by advocating for the greening of urban spaces (particularly in Doha), protection of coastal habitats, and the creation of healthier urban environments (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2011). The vision lays the foundation for a comprehensive urban development plan for Qatar – one of the previewed environmental development outcomes of the document. The Qatar National Vision 2030 was formulated in 2008 through a consultative process with Qataris representing the public, private and civil society sectors, including women and youth (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2008). It should be noted, however, that Qatar has the highest ratio of expatriate labourers to citizens in the world, with nationals representing only 12 per cent of the total population. The most represented nationalities in the country are from the Indian sub-continent (Qatar Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, 2014). The Ministry of Municipality and Urban Planning currently deals with matters of national urban policy by enforcing and implementing various development and building standards.

## Saudi Arabia

In Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Economy and Planning is responsible for national development planning while the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs (MOMRA) develops spatial strategies for all levels of government. Saudi Arabia's approach to managing urban settlements and guiding urban development focuses primarily on the National Spatial Strategy (NSS). The 9th Development Plan (2009-2014) initiated an ambitious strategy to balance urban development in the Kingdom by promoting a shift away from the three prime urban agglomerations – Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam – to secondary cities and to new technology driven cities (MEP). The National Spatial Strategy advocates compactness, inclusivity and climate resiliency to varying degrees. In 2016, Saudi Arabia launched the first integrated vision for the country "Vision 2030", led and moderated by the Council for Economic and Development Affairs (CEDA). This vision brings together all sectoral dimensions into one integrated and consolidated vision, building on the cooperation between the government and non-government agencies and bodies. This integrated vision resulted in agreed programmes and finance for supporting initiatives. This vision currently replaces the 10th Development Plan and launches several integrated initiatives - one of the priority initiatives is to review the NSS. Urban issues and the roles of cities is at the centre of the main vision and many programmes (municipal transformation programme) and initiates (NSS review and updating).

## United Arab Emirates

In the UAE, national urban policy is highly concentrated on the development of the capital Abu Dhabi. Established in 2007, the Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council is charged with the development planning of the emirate's urban environment. Urban and Regional Structure Framework Plans to 2030 have been prepared for Abu Dhabi, Al Gharbia and Al Ain (ADUPC, 2015). Dubai also has a 2020 Urban Master Plan prepared by the Dubai Urban Planning Steering Committee in conjunction with foreign consulting firms (Dubai Municipality, Planning Department, 2012).

## 2.4 Urban Policies in the Southern Tier sub-region: The Comoros, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen

Economic circumstances and political unrest have constrained the ability of the Southern Tier countries to manage rapid urban development. Though plans are emerging for specific cities to address the challenges of providing basic services and adequate shelter for urban populations, the prevailing instability has stalled the formulation of a national urban policy in Somalia and Yemen. Sudan's federal structure has, in effect, delegated the responsibility of urban policy development and implementation to the provincial governments. In Djibouti, as in many former French colonies, comprehensive master plans (Schémas Directeurs d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme) have been prepared for the major cities and incorporate many of the elements of a national urban policy. In the archipelago state of the Comoros, with less than 30 per cent of its population living in urban areas, elements of a national urban policy are incorporated in the Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy adopted in 2009.

### Comoros

The Union of the Comoros, an archipelago state located off the east coast of Africa is one of the least urbanized in the Arab world, with less than 30 per cent of its population living in urban areas (World Bank, 2013). Economic policy has recently promoted the development of the agricultural food production sector and the fishing sector, both of which contribute largely to GDP (UN-Habitat, 2012). The government adopted a Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy paper in 2009 and began implementing the strategy in 2011. The strategy addresses several cross-cutting issues that impact urban development, such as road rehabilitation (infrastructure provision) and alleviation of urban poverty driven by the continued rural exodus and rapid demographic growth in new suburbs. In 2011, Comoros also adopted Law N°11-026/AU of December 29, 2011, relative to urban development and construction. Risk assessments are theoretically integrated into planning procedures by the Directorate General of Spatial Planning of Comoros (UNISDR, 2014).

### Djibouti

While there is no national urban policy in Djibouti, one of the primary tools used to guide urban development, like in many former French colonies, is the Schéma Directeur d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme (SDAU) or Master Plans for Urban Planning and Development. SDAUs have been prepared for several cities including Djibouti, Ali Sabieh, Dikhil, Obock and Tadjourah. These plans attempt to advance the policy of shifting the demographic pressures on Djibouti to secondary cities in the eastern and southern parts of the country and developing new economic poles to better link the evolving sea port to the hinterland. The preparation of these plans falls under the Ministry of Housing, Urbanism and the Environment (Mohamed, 2013). The recently updated SDAU for Djibouti places an emphasis on inclusivity in the formulation and social mix as a key social objective of the plan. Despite the orientation of the previous SDAU, development in the capital has been drawn westward and has produced two dichotomous development poles – one marked by organized planning and a high quality of life and the other marked by informal settlements and precariousness (ADDS, 2012).

### Somalia

The UN-Habitat-sponsored "Urban Development Programme for the Somali Region" has produced spatial analyses and strategic urban development plans for Garowe, Berbera, Hargeisa, Sheikh and Gardho. The security situation and lack of functional governance in several parts of the country have inhibited the formulation of a coherent set of policy decisions at the national level regarding urban development.

### Sudan

One of the key priorities of the Government of Sudan in regard to urban development is addressing the squatter settlements which have been developing and expanding since the 1920s due to rural to urban migration, international migration and, more recently, internal conflict causing displacement. The formulation of a

national and urban development strategy to mitigate the kind of migration that contributes to the proliferation of these illegal settlements is seen as a longer-term strategy within the context of balancing urban development. The government is currently focusing on shorter-term plans, including the establishment of different laws, courts, housing schemes (such as the National Fund for Housing) and monitoring bodies. Khartoum State, which is home to 80 per cent of Sudan's total urban population, has implemented a series of policies to provide land (sites and services), add rural villages to the urban agglomeration through mergers, and to provide houses through a dedicated fund, leading to a reduction in the proportion of the population living in squatter settlements from over 60 per cent in the late 1980s to less than 20 per cent in 2005. Moreover, the National Council for Physical Development also considers environmental imperatives, overseeing for instance a programme for the preparation of a Sustainable Urban Development Strategy,

## Yemen

Prior to the outbreak of the 2015 civil war, the Yemeni Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation was the government entity responsible for elaborating economic and social development plans, preparing and implementing regional plans, and assisting local authorities with local development plan (MPIC, 2012). Turmoil beginning in 2011, however, had already begun to compromise the government's ability to formulate urban policies and implement programmes. Balancing urban growth in the highlands and in areas with scarce water resources will continue to be a critical concern for urban policy makers, regardless of the government's ability to formulate or implement a coherent national urban policy. Though only 34 per cent of Yemenis live in urban areas today, the population is growing at a rate of 1.7 per cent and by 2050 over 50 per cent of the population is expected to live in cities (UN-DESA, 2014). Urban housing needs to 2025 have been projected at 1.5 million new units (Ministry of Public Works and Highways, 2013).



market\_kutum, Sudan © UN-Habitat



# 3

## MAJOR CASE STUDIES

Sinai from top, Egypt © UN-Habitat

The following case studies were selected to present the diverse experiences of Arab states with national urban policy formulation and implementation. The selection illustrates a wide range of demographic, economic and institutional circumstances, of challenges and opportunities brought about by urbanization and of policy approaches to address them.

Sub-region representativeness was one of the primary criteria of selection and resulted in the choice of Egypt and Jordan (Mashreq), Morocco (Maghreb), Saudi Arabia (Gulf Cooperation Council) and Sudan (Southern Tier). The relative significance of states within sub-regions was also considered. With regard to the GCC and Southern Tier sub-regions for instance, Saudi Arabia and Sudan account for over 50 per cent of the population of their respective sub-regions and are home to some of the largest and most dynamic urban areas in the Arab world, including Khartoum, Riyadh and the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah.

In most cases, the assessment of the effectiveness of urban policies in the region to manage rapid growth, particularly in recent years, has to be cognisant of the succession of conflicts and political upheavals that have plagued the region since the 1990s. In many countries, such as Jordan and Sudan, successive waves of refugees and internally displaced people have added a new dimension to the normal challenges of managing urban dynamics driven by successive waves of rural-urban migration, and the necessity of developing an urban economy to create the jobs needed by a young and increasingly better-educated population. Jordan was selected because of its notable historic and contemporary role as a major destination for refugees and IDPs. Also, its analysis of national urban policy highlights some of the urban security priorities and urban policy considerations of many Mashreq countries feeling the impact of protracted conflict and turmoil. However, security and freedom are often understated and assumed prerequisites to urban development planning, as these allow a visioning process to occur; all the countries selected still

share a relative level of stability that has allowed national urban policy formulation and planning around growth potential to occur and offers an opportunity for longitudinal analysis.

## 3.1 Egypt

### 3.1.1 Introduction

Egypt is the geographic, demographic and intellectual centre of the Arab world. Its capital, Cairo, is the only mega-urban region and the country's population is estimated at 82 million and is spatially concentrated in the Nile River Valley and the Delta Region. Approximately 25 per cent of the population lives below the national poverty line, though that percentage is lower in cities than in rural areas (World Bank, 2013). Egypt is a lower-middle income country with a GDP per capita of approximately USD 3,300. The growth rate of the national GDP averaged 4.8 per cent annually over the past decade (2000-2010) but fell to an average of 2.1 per cent annually from 2011-2013 as a result of the 2011 turmoil, which provoked a sharp drop in tourism and in foreign direct investment. The two primary economic engines of the country, Cairo and Alexandria, which host nearly 80 per cent of manufacturing activities in the country, were especially impacted by these economic and socio-political events. GDP is projected to recover to near 2010 growth levels by 2017 (World Bank, 2015).

As of 2013, 43 per cent percent of Egypt's population lived in urban areas. Projections for 2050, however, predict the proportion of the population living in cities then at 57 per cent, which demands urgent policy guidelines in order to sustainably manage this urbanization (UN-DESA, 2014). Furthermore, human settlements are heavily concentrated in approximately 5 per cent of the country's land area and are continuously encroaching on agricultural land in the fertile Nile Valley. Approximately one-third of the population is under the age of 15, higher than the world average (26 per cent) (PRB, 2014).

National urban policies since the 1960s have been dominated by three major concerns:

1. Containing the growth of Cairo;
2. Preventing the conversion of agricultural land to urban use; and
3. Dealing with the spread of informal urbanization on the outskirts of cities - primarily their rural fringes, but also on the adjacent desert fringes.

These urban policies are formulated through three different national ministries. The General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP) in the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and New Communities is responsible for development of the national urban spatial policies and plans, with a special emphasis on shaping urban extensions and large projects. It has traditionally focused on the Greater Cairo Region (GCR) and the regeneration of strategically located sites. The ministry is also responsible for government housing programmes. The Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation issues laws and decrees relating to agricultural land, including regulations governing its conversion to other uses. Because agricultural land is predominately privately owned, the ministry has given special attention to reclamation of desert land.

Managing the existing urban centres is the responsibility of local authorities: namely the governorates and municipal administrations. They manage informal settlements within their respective jurisdictions, as well as slum upgrading and the regeneration of dilapidated areas. In the rapidly growing cities, they control urbanization within their legal boundaries and can, in the absence of zoning regulations, move industries to new, better serviced and more appropriately located zones.

The 2011 turmoil highlighted the growing disparities and sharp rise in unemployment, particularly among youth. The differences in opportunity for upward mobility spurred on migration, and increased the economic and social divide visible in the larger cities. With official unemployment figures recorded by

CAPMAS increasing from 8.1 per cent in 2000 to 13.2 per cent in 2013 and poverty levels rising rapidly in the urban governorates from 9.6 per cent in 2000 to 15.7 per cent in 2013, the urban character of the turmoil is understandable.

### **3.1.2 Presentation of the National Urban Policy**

Egypt's national urban policy is articulated through two main documents:

- The National Urban Development Framework (2014), which gives the current spatial framework and outlines key projects
- Law 119/2009 and its executive regulations, providing the institutional frameworks for planning and implementation, including visions and strategic plans, at the national, regional and city levels.

## **Context**

### **a. History of Urban Policies**

Egyptian urban policies date back to the late 1950s and focused largely on the greater Cairo region.

Law 3 of 1982 was the first national urban planning law and introduced an integrated growth management approach at the governorate, markaz and city levels. In 2009, the General Organization for Physical Planning (GOPP) under the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and New Communities, with technical support from the United Nations Development Programme, prepared a Strategic Vision for Egypt's Development 2050, which contained the spatial framework underpinning the national urban policy.

### **b. Other Relevant Policies and Agencies**

In parallel, other sectoral national policies frame and complement the national urban policy: the Ministry of Local Administration oversees the activities of local authorities; the Ministry

of Agriculture issues regulations regarding the urbanization of agricultural lands; and the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Public Works, and the Ministry of Environment manage the protection and conservation of natural areas. The recently established Ministry of Urban Development and Informal Settlements (2014) focused on defining an approach integrating social and environmental objectives with economic and financial concerns to ensure that due consideration is given to issues of social inclusion in upgrading regeneration projects. It worked closely with the Ministry of Local Development, the governorates, and the municipalities to address key urban issues facing localities and formulate new approaches to the management of informal urbanization. It was however closed in 2015 and its portfolio merged with the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities. The New Urban Communities Authority is also located under this Ministry, and is responsible for the development of new cities.

Several other ministries are indirectly involved in implementing national urban policies. The Ministry of Social Solidarity, established in 2005, absorbed the functions of the former Ministry of Social Affairs. It manages social assistance programmes and support extended to vulnerable populations. It also registers non-governmental organizations, charitable organizations and civil society associations. Registering with the ministry is a precondition for legally operating and participating in the review and implementation of urban plans and projects.

The Ministry of the Environment established in 1997 focuses on the conservation of natural resources and the development of renewable energy. It undertakes studies to assess the anticipated impacts of climate change. However, management of Egypt's scarce water resources rests with the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation.

The Ministry of Industry, Trade and Small Industries has focused on the diversification of

manufacturing activities and the promotion of industrial and free trade zones to attract foreign investment and foster exports. The Ministry of Planning, Follow Up and Administration prepares Egypt's five-year development plans and the annual budget allocations. It has the difficult task of negotiating with the different ministries the funding requests that can be included in the budget given available resources and national priorities. The importance of employment generation and foreign exchange earnings has led to prioritizing large-scale public projects, tourism industry and high technology.

The migration of workers is an important component of economic policy. Egypt is the region's major labour sending country and ranks as the sixth largest remittance-receiving country in the world (Ahram, 2014). The Ministry of Manpower and Immigration assists immigrants abroad and maintains links with Egyptian diaspora worldwide. Remittance capital flows have had a major impact on urban development and fuelled informal urbanization. Since 2010, remittances have increased as have donations to the Long Live Egypt Fund, a fund established in 2014 by the Egyptian government to support the Egyptian economy and the implementation of major projects.

### ***c. Evolution of the Policy over Time***

The National Urban Development Framework has been modified since its conception to strengthen its effectiveness in reducing the urbanization of agricultural land and to divert urban development to desert sites. A major effort has also been made to increase the involvement of governorates as part of the decentralization process and to expand the scope of consultation and the role of popular councils and civil society.

The current version of the National Urban Development Framework is dated April 2014. Key projects were presented to foreign investors at the Sharm El Sheikh conference in March 2015.

## Current National Urban Policy

### a. Current Goals and Projects

Egypt's national urban policy aims to respond to the challenge of a growing population that is projected to reach 140 million by 2050, and to improve physical and social infrastructures not only in the two major urban agglomerations – Cairo and Alexandria – but also in secondary cities and new towns.

The stated goals of the National Urban Development Framework are to:

1. Maximize the sustainable economic exploitation of resources.
2. Draw new urbanization onto desert land on both sides of the Nile Valley to preserve agricultural land.
3. Develop the economic potential of the Suez Canal Zone and coastal areas along Egypt's Mediterranean and Red Sea coasts.
4. Improve the living environment in informal settlements through the provision of better-equipped public facilities and services and access to employment opportunities.
5. Promote investment, particularly in projects that generate employment.

Operationally, the framework is divided into three sections that discuss various programmatic approaches to achieving implied policy objectives. These include: national and regional development projects; urban and rural planning and development projects; and housing and urban regeneration projects.

Proposed activities in the three sections include:

1. **Preparing governorate plans:** Plans for 10 development areas with the objectives of:
  - Limiting urban growth in Cairo, Alexandria and the Delta governorates.

- Directing investment to depressed areas to curb migration to Cairo and Alexandria.
- Attracting investment to growth nodes along the desert fringes bordering the Nile Valley and Delta.
- Upgrade slums and deteriorated areas with stakeholders' support.

2. **Suez Canal Zone:** Developing the east bank of the canal: Port Said East; New Ismailia City and "Technology Valley"; development of the area of al-Sokhna in the north-western part of the Gulf of Suez.

3. **Southern Egypt:** A strategic plan will be prepared for the development of the region, including the Esna-Luxor Governorate, the Kawthar District and the Raas Hadraba region in the Red Sea Governorate.

4. **North Coast and Nile Delta:** Preparation of a strategic plan for the environmentally sensitive development areas along the International Road Corridor (Damietta to Rosetta), including economic activities and tourism.

5. **Strategic plan for the Greater Cairo Region:** The key elements of the plan are to:

- Regenerate under-used and strategically located areas through large-scale urban projects;
- Service informal areas, most of which have densified, with buildings over 12 stories in height;
- Decongest Cairo by developing a new administrative district to the southeast of New Cairo.

6. **Detailed city plans:** Detailed plans are to be prepared for 67 cities. In 2014, 17 had been approved, 21 completed and in the approval process, and another 29 are under preparation.



## **b. Means of Implementation**

The implementation plan for the national urban policy consists of an evolving combination of studies and projects with stakeholder consultation, including civil society organizations. Particular attention is given to opportunities to attract private investment in urban development. The instruments are:

1. A sequence of plans including visions, strategic integrated development plans, urban development plans, and detailed plans prepared by GOPP in coordination with governorate, city and village authorities, with stakeholder participation for consultation and review.
2. Law 119 of 2009 and its executive regulations provide the legal and institutional framework detailing responsibilities and competences at the different levels of local government in spatial planning and implementing urban policies and projects.

Financially, although comprehensive information on funding is not readily available, resources have been allocated for the planning phase:

- EGP 2 million for the preparation of regional plans;
- EGP 1.5 million for the preparation of the National Housing Strategy.

The public investment required for the implementation of the North Coast and Nile Delta is estimated at EGP 14.3 billion. Resources needed for programmes and projects are significant and exceed the capacity of central and local agencies to fund them, entailing a growing reliance on land-based financing and private investment.

Administratively, primary responsibility is at national government level with the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and New Communities, the umbrella Ministry for GOPP and the New Urban Communities Authority. The governorates and the municipal

governments are the executive authority over projects within their jurisdictions. The participation of village councils is being introduced.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation provides sectoral support for rural issues. The Supreme Council for Planning and Urban Development reviews and approves plans and projects presented to the council, including all projects requiring land allocations.

Finally, the GOPP is responsible for following up on the implementation of all plans and programmes and has to ensure that they comply with stated objectives and policies. The Supreme Council for Planning and Urban Development evaluates the results of national, regional and governorate strategic plans.

## **c. Nature and Extent of Stakeholder Investment**

The main stakeholders involved in the formation of the national urban policy are the council of ministers and the line ministries, with the participation of the governorates

In terms of implementation, line ministries that hold executive powers, the governorates and city governments are responsible. The role of village councils is unclear, although government policy is to give them more power than they have had.

Consultation with affected groups is still an emerging process in Egypt and occurs mostly at the governorate level. A significant effort has been made to expand stakeholder participation. For instance, Law 119/2009 mandates broad stakeholder consultation including mayors, city executive councils, popular councils, representatives of civil society, and local communities, and the preparation of a report outlining needs, priorities, proposed actions and projects. These reports are key inputs in the preparation of strategic plans and urban development plans.

## Assessment

### **a. Evidence of Impact and Effectiveness**

In addition to the five main projects of the National Urban Development Framework cited above, a significant effort is taking place to upgrade informal areas. Of the 1,171 informal areas in Egyptian cities, an estimated 17 per cent had been fully serviced by 2014 and another 58 per cent were being upgraded.

These projects have been successful in attracting a growing number of projects and an increasing volume of private investment to develop in desert areas. Informal development of agriculture land has not yet been curbed.

Policy goals are monitored and evaluated periodically by the GOPP in its reports to the Council of Ministers and the Supreme Council for Planning and Urban development. The Supreme Council for Planning and Urban Development also evaluates the results of the implementation of the national strategic plan and regional strategic plans.

### **b. Relationship to Other Policies**

The national urban policy is complemented by sectoral national policies cited above, but does not conflict with any other policy, the only constraints on implementation being the scarcity of financial resources and the limited capacities of local authorities, as well as institutional and legislative challenges.

### **c. Integration of the Cross-cutting Variables of Compactness, Integration, Connection, Social Inclusion and Resilience**

Overall, the analysis in this report suggests that the National Urban Development Framework supports the promotion of more compact, better integrated and connected, socially inclusive and climate-resilient cities. Climate resiliency policies are national and sectoral, addressing climate change adaptation, risk reduction and

environmental management of vulnerable areas. It is unclear, however, how it is integrated at the governorate level beyond the two larger governorates, Cairo and Alexandria, where issues of air pollution, solid waste management, water shortage and beach erosion among other problems are being addressed through remedial rather than resiliency building initiatives.

## 3.1.3 Reflection and Analysis

The Spatial Framework for National Urban Development Policy: Managing Cairo's growth

The dominance of Cairo has been an increasingly serious concern since the early 1950s. In 1966, Cairo accounted for 23 per cent of the country's population and encompassed its highest governance institutions, its major educational, cultural and commercial facilities, and 47 per cent of its manufacturing enterprises (El-Shakhs, 1971). Alexandria, the second largest city, is Egypt's major port and industrial centre and its most popular tourist location. The construction of the Alexandria Library, completed in 2000, has reinvigorated the city's cultural and intellectual role. The two cities are the most attractive locations for formal and informal investments in real estate.

The first plan for Cairo, completed in 1956, addressed the issue of a rural/urban migration that was estimated to account for over half of the annual increase in population of 5 per cent at that time. The plan aimed to contain the growth of the capital city at about 4.5 million (El-Shakhs, 1971). By the time it was completed, the city had exceeded 5 million. To slow and hopefully divert migration, the plan proposed the creation of industrial zones around the city in the rural areas from where the bulk of migrants originated. The four industrial zones recommended were established in the late 1950s and early 1960s. They generated significant commuting patterns as skilled workers travelled daily to jobs in the factories and villagers went to the city to sell their produce and wares and to look for jobs in the construction and services sectors.

The most detrimental and unanticipated consequence of the plan was fostering the conversion of agricultural land to urban use through the subdivision of fields into building plots. Uncontrolled urbanization around industrial zones spread, with subdivisions sprawling outwards from village cores in a pattern that has prevailed since. Between 1976 and 1994, the country lost an average of 8,000 hectares of agricultural land yearly to urbanization, and was only able to reclaim annually about 4,800 hectares of desert land and bring it under cultivation using the available water resources (Faramaoui, 2009).

The Greater Cairo Planning Commission established in 1966 put this issue at the centre of its objectives. Instead of trying to intercept migration flows, it sought to channel population growth to the desert by establishing new towns at about 50 km from the city. The 1969 plan included four new towns in the desert, three in the east and one to the west. The plan's implementation was delayed by the 1967 war and the budgetary constraints in its aftermath. However, the effort led to the establishment of a planning agency in the Ministry of Housing that was later expanded to form the GOPP. The concept of urbanizing on desert land became entrenched as a strategic objective of Egypt's national urban policy. Furthermore, by placing new urban centres around the city despite them being conceived as independent new towns, the plan contributed to the creation of a metropolitan region that has become the Arab world's only mega-urban region.

Construction started on the first new town, the 10th of Ramadan industrial city, in 1976. By then, greater Cairo's population exceeded 12 million. To create an economic base for the new towns, a 10-year tax exemption and subsidized serviced land was offered to investors in industrial projects. The incentives did not counterbalance proximity to markets and government agencies and industries did not start locating in the new cities until the issuance of new licences in Cairo was prohibited in 1983. The lack of coordination in the development of the residential and commercial components of the new towns led to substantial commuting

of workers, while a significant proportion of the building plots and residential units were purchased by land speculators and expatriate workers and remained vacant for extended periods. Delays in reaching a sufficient quantum of resident population to support public services and private commercial enterprises (shops and offices) impeded the growth of new towns, a situation which led to a reassessment of the implementation strategy.

The 1982 Structure Plan for the Cairo region, developed by GOPP with technical support from the Paris region planning agency (IAURIF), introduced the concept of the development corridors with strong, well-established anchors at both ends, satellite cities around the anchors, and new settlements around the satellites. Together with a series of ring roads around Cairo and the larger cities, the corridor configuration for urbanization on desert land remains the cornerstone of the spatial framework of Egypt's national urban policy. The New Urban Communities Authority (NUCA) under the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and New Communities was given the responsibility of implementing the different categories of new urban nodes.

A World Bank appraisal in 1982 noted weaknesses in the government's institutional and financial frameworks for the implementation of the new town programme. Lack of coordination in planning, financing and management of the new communities resulted in cost burdens that undermined the programme's effectiveness and hampered the implementation of an integrated urban development policy. The World Bank recommended increased reliance on the private sector in the development of satellite cities and drawing urbanization to the desert by building a succession of nodes from Cairo outwards along transport axis with good public transit connections to the capital. Ten years later, Egypt's largest private developer, ORASCOM Constructions, acquired the land on the eastern side of the ring road and initiated a large-scale project, "New Cairo", thereby demonstrating the major role that the private sector could play in the development of strategically located desert sites, as well as the pent-up demand for upper- and middle-income residential units.



Nile Towers, Egypt © UN-Habitat

A parallel approach introduced in the 1980s focused on integrated development at the regional level. The delineated regions were not units of local governance; they were primarily viewed as offering significant opportunities for new projects. The increase in domestic and international tourism shifted the focus toward large-scale resort and real estate developments along Egypt's Mediterranean and Red Sea coasts and economic development in the Canal Zone, particularly around Port Said and Suez.

### ***Decentralization of Urban Planning Policy Formulation and Implementation***

Since the mid-1960s, the steep increase in out-migration of workers to the Gulf Region resulted in increasing inflows of remittances into real estate that led to a large expansion of informally urbanized land. Greater Cairo's urban area doubled between 1966 and 1982, while the rapid appreciation of urban land accelerated the densification of informal subdivisions (GOPP/OTU/IAURIF, 1983). Starting in 1966, periodic legalization of informally urbanized areas with a concomitant expansion of city boundaries created a situation whereby national and local planning offices had to deal with de facto urban areas harbouring multiple violations of existing laws, codes and regulations. Municipalities could only

extend services in accordance with their capacity to finance the public works. With local authorities deriving about 90 per cent of their funding from central transfers, the constraints on budgetary resources in the 1960s and 1970s prevented the formulation of a proactive urban policy on informal urbanization (Arslan, 2009). Bilateral donors funded upgrading projects and brought the lack of an appropriate legal and institutional framework to address informal urbanization to the forefront of national urban policy concerns.

Law 3 of 1982 was the first national urban planning law. It refocused attention on the management of transformation in the existing urban centres and the role of the four subnational tiers of government: governorates, markaz, cities and villages in a decentralized administration system. The governorates and markaz levels have appointed heads of executive councils grouping local representatives of line ministries and popular councils assembling elected representatives. Prior to Law 3/1982, building activities in the cities were regulated by the revised building code Law 106 of 1976 and other older subdivision regulations that had, in practice, lost their effectiveness due to the expansion of informal urbanization and widespread code violations, including uncontrolled densification.

Law 3/1982 coincided with decentralization efforts embodied in the local administration law (Law 43 of 1979), which stipulated the competences, responsibilities and sources of revenue for the four levels of local governance. Law 3 assigned responsibility for land-use planning and project development to the local level. It enabled governorate authorities to designate areas including historic centres and informal settlements requiring special treatment, and to issue substitute regulations to some of the stipulations of Law 106/1976 to allow for narrower street width, greater land coverage, different height limits and setback requirements. The law was well received by the governorates. However, containment of informal urbanization and code violations within and outside of municipal boundaries eluded local authorities due to the high rate of household formation, pervasive shortages of housing, lack of urban land affordable to low- and moderate-income families, the workings of the remittance driven land markets, and the inefficiency and corruption of local permitting and inspectional services. Furthermore, local finances were adversely affected by the civil unrest and turmoil. Between financial years 2006/07 and 2013/14, expenditures increased by close to 300 per cent, while own revenue barely grew by 50 per cent. The share of local expenditure covered by local revenue declined from 14 per cent to 7.4 per cent, and local authorities' reliance on central transfers to cover their expenditures rose from 86 per cent in 2006/07 to 92.8 per cent, severely constraining their ability to manage urban development, as the local share of national public expenditures remained around 15 per cent (Ministry of Finance, 2007; Ministry of Finance, 2014).

### ***Developing a Coherent Framework to Address the Challenge of Informal Areas within the National Urban Policy***

The post 2007 period witnessed an intensified effort to foster private investment in the development of affordable housing, improve public services in the informal neighbourhoods, and enhance security and liveability in the

key cities to attract foreign investment in productive activities and generate employment opportunities. The lack of attention to the need for microcredit to foster the development of small enterprises is still a major shortcoming.

The first Informal Settlements Development Programme from 1994 to 2004 focused on basic service provision in 325 informal areas. The chaotic expansion of informal settlements around secondary cities, most of which had evolved as market towns in rural areas, was a cause for concern. With technical assistance from UN-Habitat from 2003 to 2008, GOPP delineated urban perimeters for secondary cities to support their planning activities. The boundaries took into consideration their future expansion needs, but aimed to contain informal urbanization of agricultural land by encouraging compactness and moderate density.

The El Deweka rockslide disaster in 2008 focused attention on settlements on hazardous sites and was a turning point in national urban policy regarding informal urbanization. The Informal Settlements Development Facility (ISDF) was established to extend credit to local governments to finance investments in informal areas, with the main objective of ensuring safe housing.

The ISDF prepared a national action plan, which included the first survey and mapping of all informal settlements; classifying the settlements in four main categories according to the action required: 1) technical assistance and capacity-building; 2) partnerships with stakeholders; 3) priority interventions in unsafe areas; and 4) regeneration of in strategically located pockets of dilapidation within the urban fabric. This approach helped to harmonize definitions and identify priorities. ISDF financed over 100 small projects in 22 governorates. Land-based financing was estimated to generate a leverage ratio of 2.5. Its 2012/2013 plan was disrupted by civil unrest. The turmoil made it politically difficult to compel governorates to repay their loans when lack of funds made the land obtained through "reblocking", a resource they could use for their own economic and social projects. In

early 2014, an agreement was signed with the armed forces providing the facility with E.G.P. 350 million to implement the improvement of basic service networks (water, sanitation, fire, street lighting and roads) in 30 “slum areas” in Cairo and Giza. Given the magnitude of the challenge, the government created a Ministry of Urban Development and Informal Settlements and put ISDF under the umbrella of this ministry in 2014 (Farid, 2014).

### **National Urban Policy Frameworks**

The legal and institutional framework for urban planning was reformulated by the enactment of Law 119 and its executive regulations by the end of 2009. The rationale for the law was that various laws, ministerial decrees, executive regulations and their amendments contributed to unclear and overlapping mandates and cumbersome procedures regarding all actions relating to land tenure, building construction and real estate ownership and occupancy, impeding the implementation of a coherent urban policy and associated development strategies at the national and local levels. Law 119 of 2009 aimed to assemble, harmonize and update the five different laws or clauses within these laws that affected urban planning and development, but it did not substantively change their content. It did reinforce the role of GOPP in overseeing the preparation of strategic plans for regions, governorates, districts, and cities to support the technical capacities of local authorities which suffered from perennial underfunding. The law also expanded the involvement of the private sector (consulting firms) in local plan preparation and reintroduced the regional level as a planning unit. Law 119 was criticized as being unwieldy and a lost opportunity to develop an effective framework that recognized the role of the multiple stakeholders, including civil society, that was driving urban dynamics.

Additionally, the law expanded the authority of governorate executive councils to enhance their involvement in local budgeting and promote accountability in financial management. The limited powers of the popular councils were also

expanded to encourage citizen participation in local governance. These changes reinforced the executive role of the governorates, but control of national urban policy, important planning decisions and major projects remained with the central government. Law 119 also established a Higher Council on Planning and Urban Development, chaired by the Prime Minister and grouping nine ministers, two key agency heads, and ten independent urban experts to review and approve proposed policies, plans and projects to ensure a coordinated and integrated approach to urban development.

Simultaneously a “Strategic Vision for Egypt’s Development 2050” was formulated in 2009 by GOPP with UNDP technical assistance. It was updated and served as the basis for the National Urban Development Framework of 2014 which aims at:

1. Expanding the agriculture in the north-west regions where water resources are more sustainable;
2. Drawing urbanization onto desert land on both sides of the Nile Valley;
3. Improving the living environment in informal settlements to promote equitable access to public services;
4. Developing the economic potential of the Suez Canal Zone and coastal areas; and
5. Expanding the generation of energy from renewable sources by identifying and reserving sites for solar and wind farms.

To draw urbanization onto the desert through development corridors, growth nodes, satellite cities and associated new settlements requires massive capital investments. Given the large spread between the value of serviced and unserviced land, the government has, since 2000, increasingly turned to land-based financing to cover the high cost of extending services to desert sites. To foster social inclusion, it offered land at reduced prices in new communities to developers to build housing affordable for

households earning below the national median family income with mixed results.

Focusing on the Cairo mega-urban region, the “Cairo 2050” plan proposed to:

1. Regenerate underused, strategically located sites, including deteriorated neighbourhoods and dilapidated older areas through large-scale urban projects that enable land value capture for the governorate and the state.
2. Address the problems of servicing informal areas, most of which - particularly in Giza - have densified with buildings over 12 stories in height and quasi-total land coverage.
3. Decongest Cairo by moving the ministries and central agencies to a new administrative district between the two ring roads in the desert to the east of New Cairo.

Interestingly, the plan was revised 2 years later, and renamed “Cairo 2052” with a stronger focus on social justice and local democracy, after the 2011 political turmoil. The plan indeed now aims at accommodating the population increase of the next 40 years, achieve population balance, with the objective of achieving social justice, decreasing unequal distribution of resources among different regions, providing job opportunities in the proposed areas of development and achieving quality of life. (MHUC, 2012)

The largest projects contemplated were detailed and presented by the Minister of Housing in March 2015 at the Sharm El Sheikh conference to attract private investment in Egypt. The Abu Dhabi-based IMAR Real Estate Management Inc. has proposed building a completely new town, which would include, at its core, the administrative centre. In general, the conference demonstrated the continued interest in Egypt as a touristic destination, a regional high technology centre, an industrial location for the export trade, and as a transport hub for maritime freight and air traffic. The effectiveness of its urban policy is a critical determinant for realizing this economic potential

### 3.1.4 Conclusions

Since it was first formulated in the early 1950s, Egypt’s national urban policy has evolved from attempting to manage the largely informal expansion onto scarce agricultural land of its two mega-cities – Cairo and Alexandria – to developing a coherent national strategy that diverts urban growth to a hierarchy of urban nodes in the desert, ranging from free-standing new towns to satellite cities, and the planned construction of interregional development corridors

Egypt’s current national urban policy seeks to respond to the demographic challenge of a rapidly growing youthful population - projected to reach 140 million by 2050. It will do this through a spatial framework addressing the necessity of moving beyond the Nile Valley and Delta to absorb the anticipated increase in the country’s population and generate jobs for over 700,000 young entrants in the labour force each year (El-Hefnawi, 2010). The strategic vision for Egypt’s integrated development to 2050 provides the basic spatial framework for the national urban policy. Law 119/2009, despite its shortcomings, provides the legal and institutional framework for urban policy formulation and the management of urban planning and project implementation.

Although the two frameworks were developed just prior to the 2011 turmoil, the policy orientation remains unchanged except for an overriding concern for security, a requirement of local urban liveability and inclusiveness, and a precondition on national economic competitiveness and recovery from the impacts of the turmoil. A major constraint on further decentralization of planning is the limited technical and financial resources of local authorities. That situation will not change until there is a significant economic recovery. It is unclear whether a coordinated and multi-sectoral approach to development can be implemented to allow an integrated regional perspective on urban policy due to the lack of an appropriate institutional framework.

The national urban development framework of 2014 updates the 2009 policy document but does not change its main orientation. Given the country's demographic picture and its resources, it is unlikely that these national urban policy directions will change in medium term.

## 3.2 Morocco

### 3.2.1 Introduction

Morocco has a population of just over 33 million and is home to many of the largest urban settlements in the Maghreb. The most rapid urban growth is generally concentrated in coastal areas and along major highway corridors. The post-colonial period saw unprecedented rates of urbanization with the number of cities tripling from 1960 to 1994 (Gharbi, 2006). Moroccan cities account for only 2 per cent of the land area of the country while hosting 62 per cent of the population, generating 75 per cent of the GDP, and attracting 70 per cent of all investments (Royaume du Maroc, 2012b). According to the Ministère de l'Habitat et de la Politique de la Ville (MHPV), 70 per cent of the Moroccan population will live in cities by 2020 (MHPV, 2014). Cities with populations of 200,000 or greater, including Casablanca, Fes, Tangier, Rabat and Marrakech, are currently home to over half of the urban population (Royaume du Maroc, 2012a). Furthermore, industry and services in Casablanca, Rabat-Salé and Tangiers account for 80 per cent of the country's economic activity.

The administrative sub-divisions of Morocco are the result of Ottoman and French historic legacies, as well as more recent decentralization efforts. The highest administrative division is the region, 16 of which were established with the 1997 Law Relative to the Organization of the Region (FEC, 1997). Regions are subdivided into prefectures and provinces and are governed by a wali, or governor, appointed by the government (formerly the king). The kingdom began a reform known as advanced regionalization in 2010 leading to the consolidation of the original 16 regions into 12 regions, with more fiscal autonomy than they previously held (Alami, 2014).

With the proliferation of urban centres in Morocco, territorial planning and associated policy have become increasingly focused on urbanization and cities. More specifically, meeting the increased demand for housing and stemming the proliferation of informal settlements in and around cities has taken centre stage in Morocco's urban policy development. In the past few years, Morocco has adapted the policy concept of *Politique de la Ville* (PdV) from the French model, which consists of a collection of actions by the state in coordination with local authorities, the private sector and civil society. These actions can be legislative, regulatory or programmatic measures that generally seek to integrate disadvantaged segments of the population and revalorize distressed areas with the objective of reducing social and spatial inequalities within and among urban settlements (MAPTVMaroc, 2014). The PdV regroups various aspects of sectoral policies and programmes together to act as Morocco's national urban policy. The PdV and some of these programmes, including the human settlements programme *Villes sans Bidonvilles* (Cities Without Slums), are discussed in greater detail below.

### 3.2.2 Presentation of the National Urban Policy

Morocco takes a relatively programmatic approach to national urban policy and has recently formulated an explicit NUP known as the *Politique de la Ville* (PdV) or City Policy. The *Villes Sans Bidonvilles* (VSB) scheme initiated in 2004 has also been identified in UN-Habitat's "New Generation of National Urban Policies" as constituting the de facto NUP for Morocco prior to the elaboration of the PdV (which, it should be noted, contains directions for the continuation of the VSB programme). Other sectoral policies and programmes also help to guide sustainable urban development. The national consultation for the *Politique de la Ville* began in April 2012 and is still underway. The latest iteration of this project is the "Proposed National Standards of the *Politique de la Ville*."



## Context

### **a. History of Urban Policies**

Several programmes and policies influencing and continuing within the framework of the Politique de la Ville had a much earlier genesis. Ville Sans Bidonville for instance was launched in 2004 following a Royal Decree that made social housing and the reduction of slums a national priority. Legislation governing urban strategies and plans dates back as far as 1914 with the first urban planning laws dealing with, among other things, urban expansion (Gharbi, 2006).

The primary urban planning tool in Morocco is the Schéma Directeur d'Aménagement Urbain (SDAU) executed at the city level. The SDAU was introduced in Morocco in the 1970s and was first implemented in Rabat Salé (1970-1976) under the authority of the Centre d'expérimentation, de recherche et de formation (CERF), linked to the Urbanism and Habitat branch (Direction de l'Urbanisme et de l'Habitat) of the Ministry of the Interior. The formulation of this pilot plan was underpinned by a multidisciplinary team of French and Moroccan urbanists, sociologists, economists and geographers, who undertook numerous technical studies and debates in the diagnostic phase; collaboration with sub-national authorities and other ministerial departments was mostly limited to formal presentations (Gharbi, 2006 and Philifert, 2010). The new constitution, adopted

in 2011, precedes and provides the fundamental basis of the process and content of the Politique de la Ville (Royaume du Maroc, 2012b).

### **b. Other relevant Policies and Agencies**

The Ministry of the Interior, and more particularly the Directorate General of Local Communities, is involved in developing and implementing Morocco's decentralization, regionalization and de-concentration agenda.

The Ministry of Urbanism and Regional Planning is the central agency charged with the elaboration and implementation of spatial strategies and plans to guide territorial development in Morocco. It should be mentioned that Urbanism and Territorial Planning have historically been regrouped with Habitat in various ministerial reorganizations and were most recently divided into separate ministries in 2012 (MHPV, 2015.)

### **c. Evolution of the Policy over Time**

The Politique de la Ville was initiated in June 2012 with the adoption of the Projet de référentiel national or Proposed National Standards of the Politique de la Ville at the national conference following the consultation of national stakeholders, which lasted from February to June 2012 (MHPV, 2014).



Doum + mosque, Morocco © UN-Habitat

The policy has not so much experienced modifications as it has evolved through central, regional and citizen consultations. The most recent development, as of writing, of the PdV's implementation has been the identification of 88 urban projects – 32 of which have been contracted since December 2014 - with a contribution from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Policy of MAD 5 billion (USD 510 million) (MHPV, 2014).

## Current National Urban Policy

### a. Current Goals and Projects

The overall goal of the policy is to fight against forms of vulnerability and social exclusion in sensitive urban areas that have multiple deficits at various levels, including a lack of infrastructure and services and reduced competitiveness. To achieve this goal, the PdV aims to construct an integrated vision that guarantees the convergence of different sectoral interventions to ensure coherent and harmonious development and support the creation of new cities. The goal of the participatory approach is to overcome existing dysfunctions in the current policy formulation and urban governance approach by consulting elected officials, professional associations, economic actors and civil society to establish a new mode of governance based on shared vision and concerted action (MHPV, 2014).

Broadly speaking, to achieve the vision of inclusive, productive, united and sustainable urban development, the policy outlines the following objectives:

1. Strengthening the role of cities as development poles and wealth and employment generators;
2. Increasing the economic, social and residential integration capacities of cities;
3. Rehabilitating historic cities; revitalizing urban sectors experiencing decline;
4. Improving the quality of life in urban areas with insufficient housing, infrastructure and basic services;

5. Promoting sustainable urban development (Royaume du Maroc, 2012b).

Eighty-eight projects at the city and intra-city level were selected in early 2013, 32 of which are under contract. The remaining 56 are being studied by PdV partners.

There are three general categories of projects:

1. Integrated urban development projects, addressing infrastructure and facilities.
2. Rehabilitation projects for the historic medinas and dilapidated buildings. A 2012 national survey estimates that 43,734 buildings are threatening to collapse in the medinas.
3. Revitalization support programmes for urban centres and new towns, mainly concerned with activities in the new towns of Tamesna, Tamansourt and Chrafrate (MHPV, 2014).

### b. Means of Implementation

The plan for the implementation of the PdV has been delineated to a certain extent through various presentations and documents released by the MHPV. The “operational phase” of the PdV began with a national debate that produced the *Projet de référentiel national* or National Standards document, calling on cities to initiate integrated development projects to meet the policy goals outlined above.

Following the adoption of this document, a four-month phase began in September 2013, during which the MHPV mobilized local actors and supported the organization of various projects to be financed and implemented. The last phase, to unfold through most of 2013, was outlined as the contracting of projects.

This participatory approach to the national debate phase has been followed though the timeline of the entire initiative and has been extended. The project and contract phase carried on through 2014. More projects were anticipated to be contracted in 2015.

As for the instruments for the implementation, *contrats de ville* (contracts) are used for the first category of integrated urban development projects, to set the number of budgeted projects to be undertaken in the city and establish an agreement between the ministries and local authorities involved. Furthermore, a guide to the PdV has been completed for local actors to be engaged in the process and take advantage of the *contrats de ville*.

Other legislative measures are being formulated, including a bill to regulate interventions in the sector of housing threatening collapse, which is an issue that is still difficult to address in the historic medinas. Another bill in the preparatory phase would regulate urban renovation (Harmak, 2014).

Financially, the MHPV has been able to mobilize, through the *Fond de Solidarité de l'Habitat et de l'Intégration Urbaine*, MAD 11 billion (USD 1.1 billion). This is estimated to be 13 per cent of the resources necessary for total project financing; other financing sources include other ministries (49 per cent), local authorities (17 per cent), public bodies (11 per cent), and other (10 per cent) (Ministère de l'Habitat et de la Politique de la Ville, 2014).

In terms of governance, one of the key principles of the PdV is that central government ministries and local authorities are partners in the implementation of local development projects, working with the private sector, civil society and other interested stakeholders based on preliminarily voluntary rather than statutory actions (Royaume du Maroc, 2012b). Multiple levels of government therefore work in partnership to implement the PdV.

As of early 2015, the PdV had entered the operational phase after a national dialogue that informed the orientations of the policy. This operational phase is currently marked by the selection of projects, for which five criteria have been set. To be eligible for implementation under the framework of the PdV, projects must:

- respond to the objectives and reflect the principles of the policy;

- adopt a participative approach in its conception phase;
- contribute to the overall development vision of the concerned city;
- respect the principle of social, economic and environmental integration and sustainability;
- and unite several actors in a framework of partnership (MHPV, 2014).

It is unclear whether a systematic framework exists for evaluating how the projects contribute to meeting the policy objectives.

### ***c. Nature and Extent of Stakeholder Investment***

At the formulation stage of the PdV, the MHPV has made a concerted effort to engage all levels of government and citizens through a national debate. At the central government level, consultations regarding the PdV involved ministerial departments, public operators, councils, constitutional bodies, national political parties, parliamentary commissions and international organizations. Local and regional stakeholders that contributed to the policy formulation process include research institutions and universities, local urban agencies and their umbrella organization, local authorities, private service providers, NGOs and community associations.

As for the implementation, depending on the nature of the project, different actors at the local and ministerial level will be signatories to the appropriate *contrats de ville* that will define the responsibilities of each party, the budget and the timeline for completion of the project. The contracts anchor the theoretical considerations of the project in prioritized actions and intervention programmes. When the contract designates large-scale urban operations such as new urban clusters or rehabilitation of the medina, specific agreements are made due to their scale and complexity. City contracts are crafted around the specificities of the urban project; both the project and the contract are developed by local authorities in partnership with the relevant ministries.

Space for the inclusion of members of civil society in the formulation of projects and contracts is stressed in the National Standards.

The underlying PdV principles of solidarity and inclusion demonstrate an effort to incorporate all stakeholders in policy formulation and implementation. The extent of the participation of women and vulnerable groups is unclear.

The formation of the PdV was conceptualized as a national debate that took place at three levels: the central government level, the regional/local level, and the citizen level. Consultations were organized between February and June 2012. At the regional level, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Policy held various workshops for regional and local actors as well as thematic workshops around specific sectors. Several journées d'études were equally organized by research institutions and academic departments to discuss and debate aspects of the PdV. Lastly, citizen engagement was conducted through online tools such as Facebook and Twitter, along with the web platform ([www.poltiquedelaville.ma](http://www.poltiquedelaville.ma)) that ceased to be active after the consultation phase. Twitter was used primarily to disseminate information from news agencies or the Ministry's Facebook page about the progress of the process or announce upcoming events. The social media strategy reached 20,000 people (Ministère de l'Habitat et de la Politique de la Ville, 2014).

## Assessment

### **a. Evidence of Impact and Effectiveness**

The operational, implementation phase of the PdV is in its earliest stages, though agreements have been signed for 32 projects with a contribution from the MHPV of approximately MAD 6 billion. This first round of projects target large, small and medium cities, as well as new urban poles. Fifty-six additional projects are being studied in the categories of integrated development, rehabilitation of historic medinas and buildings threatening collapse, and the revitalization of urban centres and new towns. Two judicial projects have also been undertaken to establish

laws to govern construction relative to buildings threatening collapse and to create an agency responsible for issues of historic rehabilitation and urban renovation. Financially, the MHPV has embarked on restructuring the Fonds de Solidarité de l'Habitat (FSH) into the Fonds de Solidarité de l'Habitat et d'Intégration de l'Urbanisme (FSHIU) and diversifying its sources of financing (Harmak, 2014)

Because the PdV is in a nascent stage, it is difficult to evaluate how the projects, in their various stages of implementation, have or have not contributed to meeting the goals of the policy. In more mature programmes, such as VSB, successes are easier to measure. The overall goal of VSB at inception had been to ensure decent housing for the 212,000 households in 885 slum settlements in 70 urban zones (Banque Mondiale & Royaume du Maroc, 2006). While some of these figures changed between 2004-2010, the accomplishments over this period are clear: 45 of 85 cities concerned have been declared cities without slums, benefiting over 200,000 households and reducing the number of people living in slums from 8.2 per cent of the population to 3.7 per cent (UN-Habitat, 2011). The success of VSB has been recognized by several international organizations and, in 2010, the programme earned the UN-Habitat Scroll of Honour Award.

The Commission Interministérielle Permanente sur la Politique de la Ville (Permanent Inter-Ministerial Commission on City Policy), established by Decree N° 2-13-172 of 8 August, 2013, is charged with evaluating urban policies and assessing the projects implemented within the framework of the PdV. This committee regroups 17 ministries and is chaired by the head of government (Bank Al-Maghrib 2013). The first meeting of the commission took place in August 2014, during which an assessment of activities that have already been undertaken was presented to institutional partners (Magazine Innovant, 2014). The commission also monitors the engagements of different parties in projects contracted through the PdV (Badrane, 2013).

## **b. Relationship to Other Policies**

The National Spatial Strategy, consisting of the Charte Nationale de l'Aménagement du Territoire (National Charter) and the Schéma National de l'Aménagement du Territoire, is the output of a national consultation and debate process begun in 2001. The National Charter is based on six principles:

- consolidation of national unity;
- human-centred development;
- economic efficiency and social cohesion;
- harmony with the environment;
- territorial solidarity;
- and democracy and participation.

The National Plan contains 51 proposals regarding territorial planning, 28 of which are priority interventions in six domains. Urban growth is among the priority domains. Once completed, the Politique de la Ville will work with the National Spatial Strategy in a mutually reinforcing way.

## **c. Integration of the Cross-cutting Variables of Compactness, Integration, Connection, Social Inclusion and Resilience**

The cross-cutting variable of climate resiliency in urban policy has become a significant aspect of the Moroccan Government's reflection on national development since 2008. While Morocco's approach to managing risk associated with natural hazards has been multi-sectoral in nature, it has taken a particularly central place in the urban planning process and reflections of the Ministry of Urbanism and Regional Planning. Morocco has only recently embarked on a concrete path towards policy formulation to promote climate resilient cities, beginning with an information-gathering phase conducted between 2008 and 2012 by the Ministry of General Affairs and Governance, in partnership with the World Bank. The result of this phase was a report documenting the development

of models for various climatic events (including floods, droughts and landslides) and an inventory of the built environment in Morocco. The recommendations of this report include establishing a national office of risk management that would be integrated horizontally across relevant ministries and horizontally with local actors. This new body would be responsible for the development of a national, sectoral policy on managing natural risks (MUAT, 2015).

## **3.2.3 Reflection and Analysis**

The Politique de la Ville is illustrative of a shift from the exclusive responsibility of national ministries for the elaboration, planning, and implementation of urban development projects to greater responsibility being decentralized and deconcentrated to sub-national and local entities, including civil society. While previous national urban policies often focused on physical interventions to alleviate the pressures of rapid and informal urbanization on the primary cities, the PdV emphasizes an inclusive and participatory process to determine and achieve urban projects in the country. The events that took place across the Arab world in 2011 were marked by a call by citizens for social justice and political transparency. In Morocco, this dynamic led to the adoption of a new constitution, which provides much of the foundations of the new urban policy, including principles of democratic participation in decisions and projects, citizens' rights to a decent home, cooperation and solidarity in the promotion of sustainable development, and equity in access to basic services.

The civil unrest that unfolded across the Arab world, reverberating in Morocco with over a year of smaller-scale demonstrations, highlighted the inefficiency of a lack of coordinated governance in urban areas in many countries. The PdV addresses this issue by emphasizing an approach based on the convergence and coherence of public interventions in the urban sphere. The nature of the contracted projects to date and

their criteria for selection indicates coherence with the Ministry of Urbanism and Territorial Planning's focus on urban renewal projects as an alternative to further urban expansion. Through some ministerial restructuring in 2012, the Department of Urbanism was transferred from being part of the Ministry of Housing to being housed within the Ministry of Territorial Planning, which could account for some of the shared focus. This former ministerial proximity could help to ensure coherence between the PdV and various planning tools produced by the Direction d'Urbanisme, such as the National Urban Development Strategy and the Ministère de l'Urbanisme et de l'Aménagement du Territoire's national planning reference the Schéma National d'Aménagement du Territoire (SNAT).

The PdV, while giving new policy directions and adopting innovative approaches to participation, does not have a tabula rasa from which to be implemented. One of the programmes for which the PdV foresees a new orientation is Villes Sans Bidonvilles, which has been the preeminent policy for dealing with informal settlements in Moroccan cities since the early 2000s. While the programme has made great gains in urban centres across the country, the PdV hopes to give the programme new dynamism through greater responsibilities of local and regional actors in the governance of the programme, adoption of a land policy that is coherent with sustainable urbanism, and a more diverse choice of housing and financial resources for families concerned.

## Cities without Slums

Villes Sans Bidonvilles was launched in July of 2004, in part as a national response to the United Nations Millennium Development Goal objective of improving the lives of slum dwellers. It was equally aligned with royal directives prioritized around social housing provision and the eradication of slums and the National Initiative for Human Development. The implementation of such a policy has required an integrated strategy led by the launch of the public programme and

supported by the promotion of competitive alternatives to informal housing, effective partnership with cities, and strong monitoring and enforcement to reduce legal violations (ONU-Habitat et. al, 2012).

One of the key components of the policy, to which the success of the programme can be partly attributed, is the establishment of Al Omrane holding company as the principal institution charged with housing production and land development. Al Omrane consolidated the functions previously held by the Agence Nationale de Lutte Contre l'Habitat Insalubre (ANHI), the Attacharouk Company and the Société Nationale d'Équipement et de Construction (SNEC) under the supervision of the Ministry of Housing, Urbanism and Spatial Planning (since reconfigured into the Ministry of Housing, Urbanism and Urban Policy as of January 2012). (Ministère de l'Habitat et de la Politique de la Ville, 2015)

Financing for the programme mobilized MAD 25 billion (USD 3 billion) from 2004-2012, including a subsidy of MAD 10 billion (USD 1.2 billion) from the Fonds Solidarité Habitat (UN-Habitat, 2012). In addition to these investments, the programme's financing model mobilized contributions of 30 per cent of the unit cost from beneficiaries, international funding agencies, local authority budgets and as cross-subsidies. Al Omrane used a profit margin on sales of market rate units to cross-subsidize the units allocated for the relocation of low-income households (OECD, 2013; ONU-Habitat, 2012). The policy equally mobilized access to credit for beneficiaries of Villes Sans Bidonvilles through state mortgages guaranteed by the Fonds de Garantie pour les Revenus Irréguliers et Modestes (FOGARIM) (UN-Habitat, 2012). State-structured financing mechanisms have been mobilized to encourage private companies to offer low-income and social housing options and a special tax on cement has reinforced the programme's resources.

In addition to providing access to low-income units for the most vulnerable populations and developing land parcels for self-constructed housing, Al Omrane and other partners also operationalized other mechanisms such as land restructuring, in situ upgrading and delivery of property titles to fulfil the programme's objectives. The initial deadline of 2012 has been delayed several times, and Al Omrane continues to construct housing and fulfil their mandate. The Board of Directors of the holding company reported new construction of 66,843 units, the completion of 62,613 units, and the demolition of 66,278 shacks in 2014, which contributed, according to Al Omrane, to the declaration that 12 large cities were now without slums (ALM, 2014).

Morocco's urban policy, as articulated through Villes Sans Bidonvilles in particular, can be summarized as a territorialized approach to reducing poverty with a focus on adequate shelter solutions. This approach has most notably reduced the number of slums and other precarious living environments parallel with promoting the urbanization of new development zones and diversification of the housing stock through increased social housing production. The rhythm of social housing production, for instance, has increased from approximately 40,000 units per year in 2003 to close to 100,000 units per year in 2011. Partnership and the active participation of stakeholders in the design and policy roll-out are most often cited as the programme's best practices. At its inception, they benefited from the interest of several national and international organisations, which was critical for a collaborative approach to defining and operationalizing the programme, as well as identifying local synergies and complementary actions (ONU-Habitat, 2011). Beneficiaries of the programme were also active participants through their local representatives, neighbourhood associations and NGOs in decision making on the adoption of various programme elements and programming projects (Royaume du Maroc, 2012c). The sharing of responsibilities and contracting those responsibilities at the local authority level have resulted in different levels of progress across the 85 cities targeted by the programme, but contributed overall to the declaration of 45 cities as "cities without slums" in October 2012.

## New towns

The availability of public land (8,000 hectares were made available by the state in 2011 within the context of Villes Sans Bidonvilles) has been a determining factor during urban policy design and implementation, most notably through the development of "villes nouvelles". These new towns feature prominently in Morocco's urban strategy to relieve development pressures in rapidly urbanizing areas and they have been one of the major areas of work of Al Omrane. While the concept of new towns has been in practice for half a century in Europe and drove urbanization through their application in the earlier part of the twentieth century in Morocco, the 2000s marked a turning point in the Maghreb's embrace of the concept in the context of urban policy.

The objectives of new towns from the twenty-first century Moroccan perspective have been, in part, linked to the national policy of eliminating slums by providing re-housing for former slum dwellers, as well as providing social housing for lower-income families as an alternative to informal settlement. Their development is also driven by a desire to maintain and enhance the attractiveness of the major economic growth engines of the country, develop new areas for tourism and recreation, anticipate future growth needs and prepare sustainable urban environments, and diversify the housing stock (UN-Habitat, 2012). These new urban settlements are often accompanied and aligned with large infrastructure projects that support Morocco's existing urban structures and networks.

New towns are an attractive policy option for property opportunities and have been successfully executed when linked to territorial planning objectives. One of the major challenges in developing new towns geared towards providing housing and decongesting urban areas is for service provision to keep pace with housing development. Adequate services provision is critical to attracting residents, encouraging growth and maintaining connectivity in these satellite cities. Four new towns are at various stages of construction by Al Omrane: Tamansourt

near Marrakech, Tamesna near Rabat-Salé, Sahel-Lakhiayta near Casablanca, and Chafate near Tangiers (Al Omrane, 2013).

These new towns serve a variety of functions in the articulation of Morocco's urban policy and, as such, promote various planning principles and reflect different regional urban policies. Tamansourat, built in 2004, was conceptualized on compact city principles to achieve a sustainable urban form, including density of the built environment, dedicated green space and space for tertiary economic activities to develop. However, whereas "Cities Without Slums" activities in urban centres focused on a participatory approach with local actors and stakeholders, the vision for Tamansourat has reportedly been disconnected from the work of the Agence Urbaine de Marrakech (Ballout, 2014).

Tamesna, where development began in 2007, not only serves as a host site to relieve urbanization pressures in the Rabat-Salé-Témara metropolis, but it has also sought to redirect development away from a linear, coastal trajectory (Al Omrane, 2013). The concept for Sahel-Lakhiayta includes an ecological city that functions on principles of a circular economy and emphasizes social inclusion. Chafate is also being developed with a strong sense of environmental sustainability and will primarily serve those working in the automotive industry growing around Tangiers, welcoming its first residents by mid-2015 (Amiar, 2013). It is too soon to evaluate whether the regional objectives of each of these new towns are being met, or whether the policy as a whole promotes inclusive, connected and climate-resilient urbanization in Morocco.

### 3.2.4 Conclusion

The prioritization of affordable housing provision in national urban policy is particularly critical in a region that has experienced uprisings and civil disturbances in recent years. Morocco's distance from major conflicts in the Middle East and its ability to develop effective policy instruments and mechanisms for implementation has, in part, allowed the country to weather more protracted

turmoil and progress towards the formulation of a new national urban policy. Given the sectoral nature of development planning in Morocco and in the region, an effective *Politique de la Ville* will need to have wide stakeholder buy-in and integration into programmes and policies with an urban dimension, including, but not limited to, historic preservation, tourism and housing. Coherence with spatial strategies at various levels will need to be evaluated in the future to ensure the broad objective of equal territorial distribution of development gains as far as the activities of the PdV is concerned.

Morocco's involvement and North African leadership in the global urban agenda and associated dialogues taking place within United Nations- and United Cities and Local Governments -sponsored networks offer an opportunity for the lessons of Morocco's city policy experience to be shared with a wider audience. The ability of the government to incorporate and manage different stakeholders in the implementation of the *Politique de la Ville* will certainly set an example for other North African and French-influenced Middle Eastern countries experimenting with this urban policy instrument.

## 3.3 Jordan

### 3.3.1 Introduction

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is an upper middle-income country in the Mashreq sub-region situated along the eastern bank of the Jordan River. The country is divided into 12 governorates, which are divided into 54 districts (*nahia*) that are further divided into sub-districts. Governors are appointed by the king and are effectively employees of the Ministry of Interior (European Union, 2010). Municipalities are governed by an elected mayor and council, with the exception of the mayor of Amman, who is appointed by the king. Governorates are primarily responsible for regional planning and the provision of basic services in alignment with national ministries. In theory, municipalities are charged with master planning, road maintenance, solid waste collection, issuance of construction permits, the



maintenance of public facilities, fire protection, primary education and water supply, among other services (UN-Habitat, 2012). In practice, however, apart from Greater Amman, municipalities are only able to fulfil some of their mandated responsibilities due to a lack of technical capacity and severe financial constraints (Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2013).

Over 83 per cent of the population in Jordan lives in cities, making the country one of the most urbanized in the region and the world. This urbanization has been driven by many historical factors, including mass relocations of Palestinians beginning in 1948 and, more recently, influxes of Iraqi and Syrian refugees. Internal rural to urban migration was also accelerated in the late 1970s and early 1980s by a period of rapid industrialization. Many of the largest and most rapidly growing urban centres are in the northern and eastern parts of the country, with an average urban population annual growth rate of 2.5 per cent (World Bank, 2013). The Greater Amman Region is the kingdom's administrative and financial centre, and hosts the majority of Jordan's economic activities and approximately one-fifth of the urban population (World Bank, 2014). The second largest city of Zarqa, a satellite town of Amman, together with Russeifa features

over half of the country's industrial activity (UN-Habitat, 2012). Irbid is the commercial centre of the northern part of the country and plays a key role in the country's tourism sector given its geographic position between two historical sites.

Jordan's human development index is higher than the average for Arab states due to advances in health, education and economic performance over the last three decades, particularly in urban areas (UNDP, 2014). The continuation of this progress, however, is under significant pressure from the nearly 625,000 Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR in Jordan, 85 per cent of whom live in cities, not in camps (UNHCR, 2015; JRPSC, 2014). This population influx has strained the capacity of municipal service providers to deliver quality services. Overcrowding in schools, frequent water shortages, the inability of refugees to find or afford adequate housing, and an overwhelmed and under-resourced healthcare system are just some of the challenges local authorities in Jordan are confronted with as conflict and instability continue in the region. It should also be noted that the growing refugee population of Za'atari Camp outside Mafraq City now makes this camp the country's fourth largest human settlement (Seeley, 2013).



Amman, Jordan © Andy Clarke/Shutterstock

Because of the sudden nature of many of the population movements to urban areas, which are largely influenced by external political situations in the region, Jordan's policy response has attempted to keep refugee populations out of the key cities and separate from the general population. Refugee camps run by the government and the United Nations have been the primary mechanism through which this policy has been implemented. Jordan has particularly pushed for emergency solutions with support from the United Nations.

### 3.3.2 Presentation of the National Urban Policy

National policy in Jordan does not address urban development through one single policy document, but rather through highly sectoral plans, strategies and visions regarding housing, economic development and, more recently, resiliency and climate change.

Jordan therefore does not have an explicit NUP but rather iterates urban policy directions through various national and sectoral policy agendas. Some of the national policy documents that address national urban policy issues include:

- the National Agenda (2006-2015);
- the Executive Development Programme (2011-2013);
- the Jordan Poverty Reduction Strategy (2013-2020);
- the National Climate Change Policy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (2013-2020);
- the National Housing Strategy (1989); and
- the National Resilience Plan (2014-2016) which – due to the predominantly urban nature of the impact of the Syrian Crisis on Jordan's development over the past five years – also provides policy guidelines for immediate, high priority investments to assist host communities to cope with the influx of Syrian refugees.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs oversees the activities of municipalities, joint service councils, the Higher Planning Council, and the Cities and Villages Development Bank. Municipalities are financially independent but work in close coordination with the ministry to undertake activities related to planning, street maintenance, solid waste collection, building permits and setting local taxes (ACE International Consultants, 2011).

The agencies responsible for the national policies mentioned above include the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (National Housing Strategy), the Ministry of Environment (National Climate Change Policy), Ministry of Planning and International Coordination (National Resilience Plan, Executive Development Programme). The Ministry of Municipal Affairs oversees the activities and policies of the Higher Planning Council and the Cities and Villages Development Bank.

## Context

### a. History of Urban Policies

The first National Land-Use Master Plan was developed in 2006 by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, followed by master plans for eight major municipalities in the second phase of the land-use project from 2008-2012 (UN-Habitat, 2012). The Land-Use Master Plan designates areas for urban development in cities and open areas for housing investment and industrial projects. The plan has also sought to balance urban development, which has historically been concentrated in Amman. The national plan serves as a guide to forecast trends in spatial development and population growth.

### b. Other Relevant Policies and Agencies

The central government has created over 40 public enterprises tasked with executing special initiatives, many of which are undertaken in urban areas (UN-Habitat, 2012). For example, many of the government's interventions in the housing sector since 1965 have been introduced with the establishment of specialized agencies. In 1965, the Housing Corporation was created and charged with affordable housing provision for

Jordanians. The Housing Bank was established in 1973 to provide subsidized housing loans to vulnerable populations, while the Urban Development Department began working to upgrade slum and squatter settlements upon creation in 1980. In 1992, as a result of the National Housing Strategy of 1989, the agencies that had been created were merged into the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDC, 2015).

### **c. Evolution of the Policy over Time**

Jordan's vision for future housing development foresees an update of the 1989 policy to address the imbalance caused by increasing land prices relative to household incomes.

## **Current National Urban Policy**

### **a. Current Goals and Projects**

Taking the country's various national strategies and initiatives collectively, urban development objectives begin to emerge implicitly that seek to advance decentralization processes in pursuit of economically, socially and environmentally sustainable urban development. The sectoral policies emphasize more balanced urban development that often seeks to redirect urban expansion and economic growth in major cities to new towns, economic cities and secondary cities for even more development gains across the Jordanian territory.

Determining Jordan's goals in terms of urban policy, therefore, requires a review of the primary national policies and an assessment of their relevance to the broad goal of pursuing urban development that generates economic prosperity, benefits all demographic groups and is sensitive to the environment.

The goal of the National Agenda is explicitly stated as improving quality of life, building a strong economy, guaranteeing basic human rights, and strengthening democracy, along with cultural and political pluralism (Government of Jordan, 2006).

The Executive Development Programme was prepared by the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation and was meant to serve as an action plan for the next stage of the national agenda. The document states 14 objectives across economic and social sectors, including a local development objective that seeks a high level of development balance between governorates in order to protect the middle class and reduce poverty and unemployment nationwide.

The overall goal of the Poverty Reduction Strategy is "to contain and reduce poverty, vulnerability and inequality in the current socio-economic environment of Jordan, from 2013 to 2020, through the adoption of a holistic and results-oriented approach, which targets poor and below middle-class households" (UNDP, 2013). The majority of poor Jordanians live in urban areas.

The objective of the National Climate Change Policy (2013-2020) is to build the adaptive capacity of urban and other communities and institutions in Jordan, and to increase the resilience of natural systems and resources to climate change. It is implied from the more specific, short-term objectives of the policy that climate change considerations should be mainstreamed into urban and land-use planning.

The overall objective of the National Resilience Plan is to mitigate the impacts of the Syrian crisis on Jordanian host communities and the country as a whole. This objective is articulated into sectoral aims. Relevant to national urban policy are the objectives for housing (improve access to affordable and adequate housing for Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanian households) and municipal services (ensure that local governments are responsive to the needs of host citizens and communities).

The objectives of the National Housing Policy, adopted in 1989, included the provision of adequate, affordable housing for all income groups, increasing the efficiency of urban land in major cities, and increasing the activities of the private sector to become more active in housing delivery. The strategy was also seen as a

coordinating mechanism to bring together various government initiatives and other institutions working on housing in the country around a common vision for the future of the sector (HUDC, 2015).

Lastly, the National Land-Use Master Plan was formulated with several spatial goals that align with the objectives promoted in other socio-economic policies. These goals include: preserving agricultural land, halting unplanned urban sprawl, considering the limitations of actual need and natural land features in urban development, de-concentrating economic activities from Amman and distributing them across the country, protecting the environment from pollution, limiting the size of cities, and designating pilot projects to catalyse development in more impoverished governorates. Planning outputs have designated different areas in and around urban areas for various developments including in agriculture, tourism, housing and industrial development. The Master Plan also establishes a system that regulates expansion to account for the dangers of flood- and landslide-prone zones and guides development away from areas where development risks polluting the environment (subsurface water sources, land, air, etc.).

Several projects and programmes have been framed within the objectives of sustainable urban development in Jordan. In the promotion of economic sustainability, various development and duty free zones have been established to continue to encourage economic growth and investment throughout the country and to create integrated, strategically located urban areas for investors, equipped with infrastructure, services and a labour force. The Development and Duty-free Zones Commission was established in 2008 and was charged with managing the development of these areas.

In terms of environmental sustainability, agricultural lands peripheral to rapidly growing urban Jordanian cities face the threat of encroachment. The Greater Amman Municipality experimented with a programme promoting urban agriculture in 2005.

Legislative and institutional reform projects have marked the urban housing sector, as well as projects targeting low-income groups. The 2008 initiative of King Abdullah II, “Decent Housing for Decent Living”, sought to increase the social and economic security of low- and middle-class families in Jordan through the construction of affordable, serviced and energy-efficient apartments (HUDC, 2015). The five-year project was meant to develop 120,000 affordable units throughout the country but has been stalled (Obeidat, 2013).

To enhance mobility in cities and overcome the challenges posed by the increasing number of private vehicles and the traffic they cause, the Ministry of Transportation has been working on a comprehensive scheme since 2014.

## ***b. Means of Implementation***

### ***Implementation plans***

Because there is no explicit national urban policy, there is not one implementation plan for achieving national urban policy objectives, but rather there are several implementation plans within different policy documents and at different territorial levels to achieve the country’s urban development priorities.

Through the National Land-Use Master Plan, for instance, a national system has been officially implemented that classifies land according to its potential character, which gives the Higher Urban Planning Council the flexibility to change land-use designation and stipulates regulations for uses and activities. The Poverty Reduction Strategy also outlines implementation structures (such as a specialized PRS Unit), monitoring and evaluation policies, a detailed action plan, communications strategy and outreach programme to ensure the strategy’s fullest implementation.

The implementation of various strategies to develop urban centres has, in some instances, been limited or disrupted by forced migration into the country, which has put pressure on Jordan’s urban infrastructure and limited natural resources. One example would be the

pressure on the already extremely scarce water supply exacerbated by the service needs of Syrian refugees, whose large numbers have overwhelmed the system.

### ***Instruments***

For the implementation of the National Housing Strategy, and in the broader promotion of sustainable urban development, the government embarked on a major reform programme in 1996 that resulted in the establishment of the Jordan Mortgage Refinance Company; increased involvement of the private sector in housing development through rights, tax exemptions and partnership schemes; and increased access to land for low-income groups through zoning measures (The Permanent Mission of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 2012).

Several planning instruments have been used at the city-level to implement sustainable urban growth. The Amman Metropolitan Growth Plan operationalizes infill and higher-density development along transport corridors to counter urban sprawl into precious agricultural lands. The city has also implemented a new decision-making process to include the urban periphery into urban development plans (Amman Institute for Urban Development, 2010).

### ***Financial resources***

Because of the sectoral nature of national policy, it is difficult to quantify the financial resources dedicated specifically. Budget allocations for sustainable urban development depend on the strategy and the resources of the responsible ministry. While much of the investment and financial resources come from the central government budget, urban development is also pursued through decentralization. Many sectoral strategies, therefore, emphasize increasing own source revenues and improving the municipal finance of local authorities to be able to contribute to the budgets of urban development projects and programmes.

### ***Governmental level involved***

The central government, through various ministries and public bodies (and institutional arrangements thereof), is the primary level responsible for implementation of the policies and strategies considered in this case study. However, many policies emphasize comprehensive planning processes that involve municipalities and other sub-national agencies. In general, project implementation units comprised of various ministries and national departments are created for the implementation of the different sectoral strategies and action plans. Many of these units are also supported by international partners.

### ***Monitoring and evaluation***

Various indicators relating to urban conditions have been established through current strategies and programmes of relevant ministries, commissions and departments, as well as of the National Executive programme. For the Poverty Reduction Strategy for instance, a monitoring and evaluation framework was established through which public agencies report quarterly to the PRS Unit created at the central government level. Thirty-one indicators have been identified by the Housing and Urban Development Corporation in its contribution to the Habitat III National Report to measure the country's progress towards its decentralized, sustainable urban development goals.

## ***c. Nature and Extent of Stakeholder Investment***

### ***Formation***

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs is the primary national body responsible for overseeing and supporting urban development activities. The ministry continues to provide various facilities to strengthen the ability of municipalities to fulfil their mandates, as they are primarily responsible for the management of their urban territories and for ensuring a decent standard of living for their citizens.

The private sector also participates in policy formation, particularly in the housing sector, and works together with government on legislative issues to govern the sector.

### ***Implementation***

There is a multiplicity of actors working on urban development-oriented strategies with different capabilities and under the auspices of different programmes.

In terms of urban development in its broadest terms, the Municipal Law (13) of 2011 instils municipalities in Jordan with the responsibility of managing and developing their territories. Other legislative measures have sought to implicate citizen participation in the formation of policies to manage urban areas.

For the development of the National Resilience Plan, the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation engaged all major agencies involved in humanitarian responses and development programmes to undertake the needs assessment that would inform the plan. The assessment was then validated at a workshop regrouping 80 participants from donor agencies, United Nations agencies, as well as national and international NGOs (Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2014).

### ***Civil society participation***

The Poverty Reduction Strategy acknowledges the benefits to social inclusion and government accountability of the meaningful involvement of civil society. Promoting citizen voices and accountability in national strategic planning is a key element of the PRS policy's implementation. The Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC), through the PRS, initiated a process with civil society to identify mechanisms through which citizens can participate more fully in the review of national policies and plans. MoPIC will ultimately be responsible for structuring and implementing the most appropriate and accountable mechanism. In addition, the PRS includes provisions for the development of a communications strategy to

inform civil society, as well as policies to undertake a participatory review of the Societies Law No.51 of 2008; establish a semi-autonomous National Registry of Societies, review membership, assess member needs and develop standard operating procedures; and increase support to the Societies Support Fund (UNDP, 2013).

There is an overall effort to increase the public's participation in planning in Jordan by ministries and local authorities. Legislation introduced in 2014 by the Ministry of the Interior shaping decentralized administration has recognized the contribution of increased public participation to improved service delivery in communities. The goal of introducing this legislation is to eventually codify and ensure civil society's participation in the implementation of decentralization programmes.

### ***Means of engagement***

Through the national Land-Use Master Plan project, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs has engaged local stakeholders in plan preparation through workshops and capacity building activities to promote participation and cooperation between municipalities, the private sector and residents. The content of workshops with local communities, leaders and civic institutions focused on identifying potential investment projects to inform regional development plans, while capacity building programmes have primarily been held in conjunction with international organizations and aimed at enhancing the institutional capacity of municipalities to promote participation. Volunteer committees and municipal development units are seen as a mechanism that could provide the institutional arrangement necessary to enhance and improve stakeholder engagement across sectors and levels of government.

In the preparation of the most recent policy addressing urban development, the National Resiliency Plan, stakeholders were organized into five task forces (led by government ministries and supported by donors) and three reference groups on priority sectors, which were consulted throughout the process, particularly during the needs assessment phase.

Ministries, United Nations agencies, international donor agencies and international non-profit groups were engaged through the Host Community Support Platform, established as a strategic consultative body to inform the Government of Jordan's response to the crisis.

## **Assessment**

### **a. Evidence of Impact and Effectiveness**

Several projects of a varying nature have been implemented in an effort to achieve a more balanced urban development, including projects to increase economic productivity and enhance the country's infrastructure. The launch of different development and duty-free zones throughout Jordan since 2008 has contributed to increasing the territorial balance of development gains.

Some of the most significant achievements of Jordan's implicit urban development policies, as they relate to decentralization and the management of urban growth, include the elaboration of comprehensive development plans for municipalities, the passage of the Municipalities Act of 2011, and an increased quota of women in local councils. With regard to the housing sector and the establishment of the Housing and Urban Development Corporation, this body has constructed 185 housing projects for low-income households, attracting urban growth in areas throughout the country.

The principle of healthy, green cities and the sustainability of economic production is monitored by the Ministry of Environment through indicators such as CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and concentrations of pollutants in the air.

The objectives of the national Poverty Reduction Strategy will be reviewed in 2016 and key stakeholders and evaluations will be commissioned from main governmental programmes and funds, such as the National Aid Fund, the Zakat Fund, the Social Security Corporation, the Development and Employment Fund, the Vocational Training Corporation, and the Enhanced Productivity Programme.

### **b. Relationship to Other Policies**

Urban development policies in Jordan integrate various economic and social policies set out by the central government. Sectoral policies do not interact or conflict with urban policy, but rather constitute its framework. As mentioned earlier, the first National Land-Use Master Plan preceded many of the social and economic policies unfolding in the urban sector of Jordan today and serves as a spatial guide to development and population growth for related policies.

### **c. Integration of the Cross-cutting Variables of Compactness, Integration, Connection, Social Inclusion and Resilience**

Urban connectedness and integration has been advocated for in Jordan, particularly as these principles apply to transportation and urban planning. The promotion of multi-modal transport and in-fill development using vacant land for urban condensation are seen as the policies to be pursued by cities to achieve more compact, better integrated and connected cities. The Ministry of Transportation is currently working on a sectoral strategy to the year 2030.

Jordan promotes social inclusion by taking into account the critical needs of the youth in the formulation of plans and programmes in urban areas, as well as those of the elderly through the national initiative Seniors Without Borders. A special division serving the elderly has been created within the Greater Amman Municipality. Jordan also seeks to enhance women's participation in urban development plans in order to increase awareness of women's needs in urban areas among decision makers. Attention to women in urban governance and planning is illustrated in the National Committee of Jordanian Women's Affairs' knowledge network for women in municipal government (founded in 2008), the establishment of gender sections in various ministries and departments, and the adoption of the National Strategy for Jordanian Women (2013-2017).

In terms of climate resiliency, the National Land-Use Plan of 2006 is currently being updated to take into account the impacts of climate change in the country. This update is meant to provide decision makers with the tools to form policies that promote environmentally sustainable and adapted urban management. The protection of agricultural land is being promoted on the grounds of its role in carbon dioxide absorption and climate change mitigation. Furthermore, the Jordanian Building Council, established in 2009, adopted the Green Building Manual in 2013 to promote sustainable urban design.

### 3.3.3 Reflection and Analysis

Jordan conceptualizes urban development challenges sectorally, addressing themes of demography, urban planning, the environment, urban governance, urban economy, and housing and basic services relatively separately. A focus on economic opportunities, growth and balance is present in several of the policies that together constitute different components of Jordan's urban policy. Demographic shifts, including a swelling working-age population and increasing numbers of labour migrants from neighbouring Arab countries and South-East Asia add social, economic, and spatial pressure to Jordan's primary urban areas, concentrated in Amman and Irbid governorates. These governorates constitute approximately 15 per cent of the country's territory and host nearly 75 per cent of the population. These pressures add to urban policy the priority of equipping local authorities with the ability to efficiently and sustainably perform their vested functions within a context of enhanced decentralization. These goals are compromised and pressures increased by conflict in the region forcing populations in neighbouring countries to seek refuge in Jordan.

Jordan's response to accommodate the recent influxes of Iraqi and Syrian refugees has been influenced by its history as the primary receiving country for Palestinians since the 1948 war. The scale of the recent influx of Syrian refugees quickly overwhelmed the government's ability to meet the needs of the 80 per cent of refugees

residing in urban areas, primarily in the northern part of the country.

As part of its attempt to keep refugee populations away from urban areas where services and infrastructure are already stressed by population pressures, Jordan pushed for a United Nations emergency solution that built refugee camps run by the government and the United Nations. Though refugees are less concentrated in urban areas of Jordan than they are in Lebanon, several cities including Ma'an, Karak, Irbid, Madaba, Ajlun, Jarash, Zarqa and Mafraq are increasingly becoming host communities, adding an urban dimension to its national policy on refugees.

Underlying Jordan's longer-term policy approach to managing urbanization in terms of urban expansion and densification within urban areas is attention to Jordan's population growth projections and its impact on the country's limited resources. Jordan is the fourth most water-scarce country in the world with a deteriorating water infrastructure system that exacerbates the country's vulnerability in terms of access to water (Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, 2014). Because of Jordan's geography and its relative lack of natural resources, human capital is particularly important to the country's development. Jordan's programmatic approach emphasizes increasing the economic opportunities of its citizens while acknowledging that providing adequate social services, including advancing education and health priorities, is a crucial component of accommodating a growing labour force and promoting urban development that is comprehensively sustainable.

### 3.3.4 Conclusions

National urban policy in Jordan is marked by the alignment and integration of urban development objectives within national sectoral policies as they affect the population and their settlements. Taking into consideration the global urban agenda as promoted by UN-Habitat, Jordan will need to continue integrating principles of sustainable development into urban management, including adopting comprehensive planning approaches



based on spatial schemes, improving services and resource management through partnership, and enhancing municipal revenues to implement urban development projects. Halting the spread of urban areas over agricultural lands is critical to the sustainability of urban development in Jordan as limited agricultural land (7.8 per cent of the area of the country) is important to food security and local rural economies.

The complexity of the urban sector and Jordan's sectoral approach to meeting its challenges require strong attention to coordination, integrated planning, integrated information systems, and clear mandates and responsibilities for partners. While national urban policy is highly centralized in Jordan, orderly, continued steps towards decentralizing responsibilities to local authorities will be necessary to effectively address the challenges and opportunities posed by cities.

## 3.4 Saudi Arabia

### 3.4.1 Introduction

With a population of 31,5 million (World Bank 2015), the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia occupies 2.2 million km<sup>2</sup> of the Arabian Peninsula of which 95 per cent is desert. It is among the most urbanized countries in the world and its urban population grew rapidly from 49 per cent of the total population in 1974 to 82.6 per cent in 2010 (MOMRA, 2016). This growth has been driven by the growing importance of urban-based oil sector related activities in the national economy with an emphasis on petrochemicals and energy-intensive export-oriented industries such as aluminium (12 per cent of global output), steel (6 per cent of global output) and fertilizers (16 per cent of global production). The immigration of expatriate workers attracted by a high labour demand has been an important vector of urbanization. Most of the population is concentrated in the capital Riyadh, in Jeddah and Dammam, and in the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

Saudi Arabia is a highly centralized country where local administrations – regions (emirates), governorates and municipalities – implement national policies. At the national level, responsibility for the preparation and implementation of the national urban policy is shared between the Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP), responsible for national development; the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs (MOMRA), responsible for the development and implementation of spatial strategies and the provision of the necessary infrastructure; the Ministry of Housing (replacing a number of national organizations, including the Real Estate Development Fund) provides a policy framework and programmes for financing for the construction of both market-rate and subsidized housing units for Saudi nationals. The country is divided into 13 regions and 105 governorates, and 1,356 urban and rural administrative districts.

At the local level, the head of the regional council, the emir, is appointed by the king and has the rank of minister. With the participation of a council, the emir oversees the governorates, districts and municipalities within the region. The council's membership currently consists of the local heads of the sectorial ministries and other government agencies, and of ten appointed citizens and local civic leaders. The responsibilities of the council, operating under the supervision of the Ministry of the Interior, are to maintain law and order and supervise socio-economic development within the region.

As in other GCC countries, oil revenues finance central government transfers that cover the bulk of local government budgets. The only local sources of revenue are the fees collected for building permits, annual business registrations and billboards. The level of these fees is established by the national government; they are collected by the Ministry of Finance and returned to the cities where they were collected.

Some local authorities in the emirates of Riyadh, Mecca and Medina manage their own finances and have separate budgets. In Mecca and Medina, local committees are responsible for

planning and development, and education and health services. Most importantly, they oversee the Hajj, the annual pilgrimage that annually brings over 3 million Muslims from all over the world to the holy cities. Medina's performance has been outstanding and its urban observatory has received wide recognition throughout the Arab world.

Major urban challenges include:

- Completing the upgrading of older, centrally located urban areas and of the peripheral areas developed informally in the 1970s and 1980s during the early years of the oil boom.
- Meeting the demand for affordable housing. It is estimated that 5 million units will be needed by 2020 to meet the demand of Saudi nationals.
- Developing an integrated public transportation system in the kingdom's four major urban areas: Riyadh, Makkah, Medina and Jeddah.
- Protecting the environment and addressing the challenges of climate change-induced threats.
- Managing the urban sprawl that was caused by the urban boundaries policies of the kingdom and ensuring this is replaced by more compact and well-connected part of the cities

- Offsetting the over-concentration of urban population in the major cities, despite the fact that major services, including universities and airports, are now well distributed all over the country and in most of the capitals of the regions.

### 3.4.2 Presentation of the National Urban Policy

The decisions and policies that guide urban development in Saudi Arabia are contained within numerous policies and programmes, most notably the 10th Development Plan and the National Spatial Strategy, which, given the highly centralized nature of government administration in the kingdom, are ultimately deliberated within the relevant ministries.

Despite recent efforts to devolve greater responsibilities to the municipalities, their autonomy is limited as they are dependent on central government transfers and higher-level officials have the power to overrule local decisions. The government's urban strategies are therefore not intended to provide a policy context for the development of local strategies.

Given this preponderant role of national agencies in planning and regulating urban development (as well as being the main source of financing for privately developed housing) it may be more appropriate to describe the approach of the Saudi government as a national spatial strategy rather than a national urban policy.



Riyadh, Saudi Arabia © Mohammed AlDeghaishim / Shutterstock

## Context

### **a. History of Urban Policies**

Urban development has been an integral part of Saudi Arabia's national development strategy since the preparation of the first national development plan in 1970. Driven by the decision to invest the kingdom's oil revenue in the development of permanent national assets and facilities, a series of five-year national plans were prepared. The plans initially focused on health, education and manpower skills, national and urban infrastructure and the provision of affordable housing to meet the demands of a young population with a high rate of family formation. Now, however, the focus of Saudi Arabia's national spatial strategy scope has been broadened to include the introduction of non-oil based economic activities, environmental issues, the functional improvement of existing cities and the development of knowledge-driven new cities.

### **b. Other relevant Policies and Agencies**

There are not any policies implemented by other agencies at the national scale. Comprehensive urban development plans have been prepared by specialized agencies for two holy cities (Development Commission of Makkah al-Mukarramah, al-Madina al-Munawara and al-Mashaer al-Muqaddasa); Riyadh (Riyadh Development Authority) and new towns (Royal Commission for Yanbuh and Jubail).

### **c. Evolution of the Policy over Time**

Starting in the 1980s, the scope of the development plans was expanded to promote economic diversification and a more balanced spatial development pattern.

As mentioned above, Saudi Arabia has a National Spatial Strategy rather than a NUP. The NSS was produced in 2001 with the support of UNDP and UN-DESA. Urban policy has also undergone periodic adjustments in each iteration of the five-year National Development Plan. The 9th Development Plan (2009-2014) initiated an

ambitious strategy to balance urban development in the kingdom by promoting a shift away from the three prime urban agglomerations – Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam – to secondary cities and to new technology-driven cities. While private investment plays a critical role in financing the development of commercial activities and market-rate housing, the government will provide the bulk of the investment.

## Current National Urban Policy

### **a. Current goals and projects**

Saudi Arabia's National Spatial Strategy was launched in 2000 to better manage the country's rapid urbanization. In particular, it aimed to protect the environment, reduce urban sprawl and promote spatially balanced development. It focused on the creation of eastern, central and western development corridors and targeted investment to less-developed regions by designating small- and medium-sized cities as regional growth centres.

The objectives of the current national strategy are to:

- Promote a spatially balanced pattern of economic and population distribution within the country;
- Minimize the negative consequences of rapid population growth in major cities;
- Ensure efficient use of existing infrastructure and public services;
- Support the overall growth of small and medium cities;
- Diversify economic centres in different regions to fully use their existing and potential resources;
- Support new development projects that contribute to link rural and urban areas;
- Support the development of selected cities to function as "growth centres" to counterbalance the concentration of population in major cities;

- Improve the administrative structures of selected growth centres; and
- Support the development of cities in border areas to strengthen national security.

The National Spatial Strategy defines “national development corridors” as an essential measure to manage long-term spatial development and to ensure effective and efficient integration of different regions of the country. National development corridors link the hierarchy of cities, towns and villages, based on the concept of national, regional and local growth centres in a reflection of both the regional geography of the kingdom and the patterns of interaction that take place between the cities and towns. The National Spatial Strategy designated 26 national growth centres, notably Riyadh, Makkah, Medina, Jeddah and Dammam. These were perceived to be the nation’s significant “international” cities that serve as “gateways” to the kingdom

The recently completed 9th National Development Plan (2010-14) had five major themes:

1. Improving the quality of life, through resource conservation and environmental protection;
2. Increasing national participation rates in the labour market, especially among the young, to reduce the country’s dependence on expatriate workers;
3. Balancing development among the regions;
4. Promoting diversified economic development through greater private sector involvement and the creation of a knowledge economy in order to increase the competitiveness of the national economy in the global market.

To achieve these goals, the 9th Development Plan (2010-2014) had the ambitious aim of reaching a real GDP annual growth of 5.2 per cent with targets of 11.8 per cent for the private sector and 10.0 per cent for non-oil exports. It also aimed

to increase the non-oil sector’s share of GDP to 55 per cent by shifting economic growth to the secondary cities through “industries which utilize the national economy’s comparative advantage”, with an emphasis on petrochemicals and energy-intensive industries, tourism, export-oriented capital, high-tech, capital intensive industries such as pharmaceuticals, and high value-added agriculture. Capitalizing on its vast energy assets, it has become a major producer of aluminium (12 per cent of global output), steel (6 per cent of global output) and fertilizers (16 per cent of global production).

It is also invested in the development of new towns. The Knowledge Economic City in Medina (to be completed between 2016 and 2018) will focus on developing commercial expertise, supported by a range of commercial and cultural complexes. The King Abdullah Economic City, north of Jeddah, is intended to become a modern, world-class seaport and industrial district, with an educational zone, resorts and residential areas as well as the KAUST-centre for Science and Technology. Jizan Economic City was established with a focus on heavy industries, biotech and pharmaceuticals. Several other new cities were under construction in Ha’il, Tabuk and the eastern province.

About one-fifth of Saudi Arabia’s urban growth is expected to be in Jeddah, which has a shortage of 200,000 middle-income units and 80,000 low-income units. In anticipation of a population of 5.7 million by 2029, Jeddah’s Strategic Plan calls for the construction of 950,500 housing units, with 685,000 units affordable to lower- and middle-income groups.

### ***b. Means of Implementation***

Generally, urban development has been viewed as a component of the national development plan. Given the centralized governance system, urban interventions are decided at the ministry level and implemented through the participation of the line ministries concerned.

The implementation of the national urban strategy is therefore largely project driven with the relevant ministries providing the necessary financing for infrastructure and construction projects.

While there has been a growing participation by the provincial governments and, to a lesser extent, municipalities (except the bigger municipalities “Amanat”), their active participation in the formulation and implementation of urban policies is restricted by a lack of independent financial resources, and their role remains restricted to the application of regulatory controls. Municipalities do not and cannot set local taxes or collect them. Additionally, they have no borrowing power. The small, own-source revenue they collect from various fees (building permits) are collected by the Ministry of Finance and then returned to the cities. The special status of Riyadh, Makkah and Medinah allows these cities to manage their own separate budgets.

As part of a decentralization effort, the larger municipalities – Riyadh, Jeddah, Dammam, Ihsaa and Taif – besides some other provincial capitals, have had an increasingly active role in the planning and management of urban growth. Makkah and Madinah have a special status and have recently completed comprehensive plans.

In terms of financial resources, SAR 94.5 billion was allocated to implement urban projects during the 9th Development Plan (2010-2014). In addition, housing investments by the Real Estate Development Fund amounted to SAR10 billion.

Finally, monitoring and evaluation of interventions are the responsibility of the line ministries concerned; each line ministry proposes activities to be implemented during the current five year plan and incorporates their funding in their annual budgets. The Ministry of Economy and Planning has a lead role in the process.

## ***b. Nature and Extent of Stakeholder Investment***

Saudi Arabia has a highly centralized administrative structure. While both regional and municipal governments are involved in the elaboration of local development policies and the selection and prioritization of interventions, ultimate decisions rest with MOMRA and the line ministries concerned. In 2016 and 2017, more integration of priorities of investment has been decided by CEDA

Although local councils seem increasingly to have some consultative role as part of an evolution toward a less centralized structure, there is no formal consultative process. Several decrees were issued by MOMRA to decentralize the planning decision-making powers to the bigger municipalities (Jeddah, Madinah, Riyadh, Makkah and Medinah), however, capacity at the local level is now the major challenge.

## **Assessment**

### ***a. Evidence of Impact and Effectiveness***

Monitoring and evaluation of urban investments is on-going at both MOMRA and the Ministry of Economy and Planning. UN-Habitat’s Future Saudi Cities Programme is currently supporting MOMRA’s review of the synergies between sectoral plans, the National Spatial Strategy and the regional level strategies.

In considering how the NSS objectives lent themselves to both sectoral classification and spatial application for a successful implementation, the programme found the lack of the following six keyways in the NSS:

1. Reflecting Supra-National Perspectives: Extending the scope of spatial planning frameworks to incorporate regional/ international considerations and cooperation, to maximize development opportunities.

2. **Addressing Environmental Challenges:** Integrating land use and environmental policies to foster a sustainable environment, with an emphasis on protecting the natural environment, biodiversity and mitigating climate change risks.
3. **Leveraging Economic Opportunities:** Using spatial development policies to diversify the economic opportunities available and create interlinked economic clusters which support job development and economic growth.
4. **Delivering Equitable Access to Basic Services:** Addressing the disparities in service provision across all segments of society to provide equal opportunities.
5. **Fostering Participation and Collaborative Implementation:** Maximizing the potential of the NSF through shared responsibility and accountability and by encouraging active investment at a nationwide level.
6. **Measuring Success for Effective Implementation:** A sound and well-informed evaluation of spatial development outcomes which is suitably flexible to address the comprehensive nature of the NSF.

#### **b. Relationship to Other Policies**

As stated above, Saudi Arabia's national urban policy has a very strong spatial dimension. The vision pursued since the First Development Plan (1970-74) has been to use oil revenue to create an efficient, educated, broad-based modern economy. Given that 95 per cent of the country is desert, development had to be urban. All sectoral policies are guided by the desire to promote the well-being of the population through education, health and meeting basic needs, including housing.

As for the NSS, it was approved in 2001, and many strategies have appeared since, such as the economic cities, industry, housing environmental and economic strategies. While these more recent strategies did take the NSS into account, some sectoral aspects still conflict with it .

#### **c. Integration of the Cross-cutting Variables of Compactness, Integration, Connection, Social Inclusion and Resilience**

The National Spatial Strategy, for instance, integrates a human development approach of equity, sustainability, production and empowerment within the parameters of cultural acceptability (Yasin, 2010). Climate resiliency has not been given much attention in the past. It is included in the 10th Development Plan (2015-2019). Consideration of climate change in the 10th Development Plan has focused on mitigation of global warming through energy efficiency in the Kingdom. The "Sustainable Urban Planning Guidelines for Urban Growth" produced in 2013 by the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs outlines key issues in urban structure, transport, public space, infrastructure and building design and technology through which Saudi urban design can work to decrease its energy consumption (Saudi Arabia Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and UN-Habitat).

### **3.4.3 Reflection and Analysis**

Saudi Arabia's national urban policy has been an integral part of the government's efforts to redistribute the country's oil wealth. Since the adoption of the First National Development Plan (1970-75), the development of urban physical and social infrastructure and the construction of affordable housing have been key components of a national policy that, in more recent years, has been broadened to include a diversification of the economic base beyond its traditional petroleum reliance, partially in order to provide employment opportunities to a young and educated population that was entering the work force, and the protection of natural resources. If anything, this shift has emphasized the urban orientation of the national development policy by making the construction of new towns an integral part of the National Spatial Strategy. While the first new cities of Jubail and Yanbuh were based on oil, the economic base of the new cities currently under development is technology-oriented as part of the effort to diversify the economy.

The highly centralized administrative structure of the kingdom permeates its urban policy. While local governments provide services and, at least in the case of the major cities, participate in the preparation of their development plans, funding for capital works is provided by the line ministries concerned. As a result, national priorities guide the process and may not always address local circumstances in a timely manner. In rapidly growing cities there has been a proliferation of informal settlements as a result of an inadequate supply of affordable housing and loosely enforced development regulations. Jeddah, for example, the country's main economic hub where roughly half the population are expatriates, had around one-third of Saudi Arabia's 3.4 million slum residents in 2005. Some lived in the neglected Old City but the majority lived in more than 50 peripheral informal settlements spread across 4,800 hectares (about 16 per cent of the city's built-up area) that lacked sanitation, and were often located in areas subject to periodic flooding (Jeddah Municipality, 2009).

In spite of considerable progress in delegating more powers to the municipalities, the combination of inadequate local sources of revenue and the need to obtain central government approval for local initiatives has hampered the development of an effective national urban policy that provides the context for the complementary interventions of public agencies and the private sector, and municipalities have found it difficult to manage development and provide affordable housing.

The government's role as a financier of urban development is essential. The Real Estate Development Fund was the primary financier of housing for Saudi nationals, for whom the kingdom housing stock is expected to increase by 2.4 million units over the next 10 years and will reach 7.08 million units by 2020. The pressure of price and housing costs is concentrated on middle-income families who increasingly rent smaller dwellings as affordable and acceptable housing solutions. In order to strengthen national capacity in the housing sector, in 2011 the government established the Ministry of Housing. The Ministry of Housing currently focuses on key initiatives, including

developing legal frameworks for enhancement mechanisms to facilitate the operation of the housing stock, create housing market responsiveness to housing demand, increase the supply of affordable housing, and strengthen public-private partnership approaches for affordable housing provision. The role of the ministry is also central in urban renewal as well through the new decree issued for "white land" use (undeveloped urban land), which has opened the door to an important role in cooperation with other ministries and local players to unlock this white land and bring it to development rather than speculation.

### 3.4.4 Conclusions

The challenges presented by rapid urbanization are certainly alleviated in wealthy countries such as Saudi Arabia, but they are still very much in evidence. While the sectoral policies developed in successive national development plans since 1970 have been remarkably effective, particularly in education, health and the diversification of the economy, at the local level they have often had negative impacts as the ability to effectively manage urban growth has varied among municipal governments.

As stated earlier, Saudi Arabia has developed a clearly articulated urban development strategy as part of its national economic planning. While the quality of the urban environment has improved dramatically over the past 40 years, there has been an unexpected growth in substandard housing resulting from a shortage of affordable housing for Saudi nationals, in spite of the government's generous allocation of free land and zero-interest mortgages. Concurrently, the increase in expatriate workers has exacerbated the housing shortage.

The recent effort to increase the involvement of local governments in the definition and implementation of Saudi Arabia's national spatial strategy is part of an evolution from a highly centralized structure to a more decentralized one. The successful participation of local governments will depend in part on their ability to participate in the implementation of urban projects.

Moreover, the upcoming implementation roadmap for the NSS could lead to enhanced and complementary directions for urban policy. The NSS could, for instance, be used to guide the process of regional budget allocation to ensure that financed projects effectively support transformative and integrated development. The objectives of the NSS should be more clearly disaggregated by sectors and reflected spatially to facilitate implementation. The NSS should be used as a vehicle for regional and global cooperation by defining the role its major cities should play in the region and at the international level, and should particularly acknowledge the crucial role of the five Saudi metropolises (Riyadh, Jeddah, Mecca, Medina and Dammam) in national development.

Substantially, the NSS should promote resilience while considering potential risks to national development and security. It should also have a larger environmental dimension and cover issues related to biodiversity, natural resource management, disaster risk reduction and climate change, especially considering the increasing scarcity of water and arable land. Finally, it should include a monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure the progress of its implementation.

## 3.5 Sudan

### 3.5.1 Introduction

Sudan is the largest country in the Southern Tier sub-region and the third largest country in Africa. It is situated in the north-east of the continent between the Red Sea, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Central Africa, Chad and the new state of South Sudan. Sudan is home to nearly 38 million people, only one-third of whom live in urban areas (World Bank, 2013). Urban areas account for only 0.4 per cent of Sudan's total land coverage (FAO, 2012). Khartoum State, in which the capital is situated, is the smallest state with a total area of a little over 2 million hectares, but it is also the most populous, accommodating 17.1 per cent of Sudan's total population - over half of the country's urban population. Urbanization in Sudan is driven predominantly by push factors, including the mechanization of agriculture,

drought and population displacements caused by civil strife. Rural migrants in search of economic opportunities in the primary cities of Khartoum and Port Sudan are contributing to relatively high rates of urban growth. Urban-based industrial and service sectors contributed approximately 73 per cent of Sudan's 2013 GDP. According to statistics going back to 2007, Nyala had surpassed Port Sudan as the second largest city in Sudan.

Sudan has a federal system of government composed of 18 states with selected governors and elected assemblies. Like other countries in the Southern Tier region (which includes Yemen, Somalia, Djibouti and Comoros), Sudan does not have a comprehensive national urban strategy to manage growth. National-level planning and urban management is generally concentrated in efforts to develop the capital city and villages in the Khartoum governorate. Some states and other urban areas outside of Khartoum have also prepared their own regional or structure plans.

Despite the 2005 peace agreement, the interaction with South Sudan is politically sensitive and the consequences of the protracted armed conflict in Darfur cause instability for those displaced.

### 3.5.2 Presentation of the National Urban Policy

The National Council for Physical Development oversees and promotes general physical planning policies that apply to urban and rural territories. Established in 1996 through the Quarter Century Strategy, the council is housed within the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Physical Development now charged with spatial planning. Like many federal governments, Sudan does not have an explicit national urban policy. It has a legal spatial framework relating to land tenure and an institutional framework for state and local governance.

Various states have development strategies, though not necessarily addressing urban issues. The National Quarter-Century Strategy (2007-2031) addresses urban policy concerns to a certain extent by promoting decent and affordable housing, balancing urban growth



between regions, and reviewing the legislative framework that governs human settlements. Its primary focuses however are poverty reduction, sustainability, increasing rural productivity and fostering good governance (Osman, 2012).

The lack of an explicit national urban spatial policy has resulted in a fragmented vision of urban and rural development and land use throughout each state. The primacy of Khartoum has resulted in several strategic and policy efforts addressing urban development in the capital, most notably the Khartoum Structure Plan (2008-2033).

## Context

### **a. History of Urban Policies**

The Comprehensive National Strategy (1992-2002) was the first comprehensive strategic document in Sudan. It included an urban planning and housing component that stressed the necessity of providing decent, healthy and suitable housing for all citizens.

The National Council for Strategic Planning developed a National Strategic Five Year Plan for 2007-2011 as a framework for the peace and development efforts of the “post-conflict” state (National Council for Strategic Planning 2007).

A sites-and-services approach to housing provision through single-family housing plots pervaded Sudanese urban development until 2002, when it was abandoned in Khartoum due to its contribution to sprawl and the high cost of the infrastructure requirements. Today, multi-story, multi-family housing is promoted. However, the site-and-service approach is still a dominant practice in other parts of the country.

### **b. Other Relevant Policies and Agencies**

Khartoum State and Greater Khartoum was the site of the first planning efforts in the country. The current structure plan prepared in 2007 for Greater Khartoum is the capital region’s fifth plan in a series which began in 1910. The 1910 plan

was under the directive of the Governor-General of the Sudan, Lord Kitchener, and was prepared by a British municipal engineer, W.H. McLean. The 1958 plan was prepared after independence by the Greek Doxiadis Associates and promoted unidirectional, southward growth. The 1975 plan was regional in scope and prepared by MEFIT Ltd. though it was never implemented due to lack of funding, capacity and political will. The 1991 plan was prepared by Doxiadis and Abdelmoneim Mustafa Associates and the 2007 plan by MEFIT Ltd. (Hamid & Bahreidin, 2014).

### **c. Evolution of the Policy over Time**

The Structural Plan for Khartoum was prepared in 2007. A national urban strategy, framework, or policy has yet to be elaborated.

The Gedaref State structure plan, originally prepared for the 1995-2015 period, was modified to cover 2000-2020.

## Current National Urban Policy

### **a. Current Goals and Projects**

Current policies aim to balance development and population distribution among the country’s regions and between urban and rural areas. It promotes the preparation of urban master plans and approaches to housing that foster affordability. Spatial strategies, particularly in the capital, focus on integrating new formal and informal settlements into the existing urban fabric.

The goals of the National Council for Physical Development have been notably pursued through four interlinked programmes:

1. The preparation of regional development plans;
2. The preparation of a national sustainable urban development strategy;
3. The establishment of urban observatories at the national and regional levels; and

4. The preparation of structure plans for state capitals.

One of the goals of the Khartoum Structure Plan (2008-2033) is to lessen the population pressure on the capital city to achieve more regionally balanced development. This global objective includes addressing the proliferation of informal settlements, increasing the attractiveness and quality of life of rural areas to stem rural-urban migration, and creating new planned settlements to absorb rapid population growth in peri-urban and outlying areas around the main cities.

### ***b. Means of Implementation***

The only component initiated to date is the preparation of structure plans in state capitals; the other three have stalled because of a lack of funding. The following states have prepared either structure plans for their state or capital city, or regional development plans: Khartoum, Gedaref, South Darfur, Northern, Blue Nile, River Nile and Kassala. Khartoum's most recent plan has an implementation plan divided into five phases, spanning five years each.

Projects, programmes and policies prepared in collaboration with international organizations often include explicit implementation plans which are followed to varying degrees.

Indeed, implementation of several of the urban structural plans prepared by cities and states has been stalled due to insufficient budgets or an inability to identify funding sources for the projects and investments outlined in the plans. In Khartoum for instance, implementation of the most recent structure plan has been slow, primarily due to a lack of political will and consequent budget constraints (Hamid & Bahreldin, 2014). For example, Khartoum's traffic management plan is stalled because of a lack of funding for its estimated USD 2 billion implementation budget. A few projects contained in Khartoum's structural plan have moved forward, such as the establishment of its urban observatory.

Nevertheless, structure plans are the primary instrument used to guide urban development at the state and local levels. These plans, traditionally used in the United Kingdom, were introduced in Sudan during British rule. This older planning system has since been replaced by Regional Spatial Strategies (Government of the United Kingdom, 2004).

It is difficult to determine a global figure for the financial resources that have been dedicated to the implementation of the various state and city structural plans across the country. The budget information available is at the state level. The current Khartoum structure plan's implementation plan has an estimated total cost of USD 9 billion. Costs for the first phase (2008-2013) amounted to USD 630 million, or 25 per cent of the total costs for planned investments for this period. World Bank lending commitments since 2013 total over USD 100 million, though these commitments extend beyond the objectives of urban policies. The total value of UN-Habitat investments in Sudan from 2008-2013 is nearly USD 10 million (UN-Habitat, 2015).

State structure plans, regional development plans, and city structure plans are currently being prepared at the state level for approval by the National Council for Physical Planning and the Council of Ministers. With the support of UN-Habitat, a Regional Spatial Planning Strategy was developed in 2015.

The regional and urban planning efforts being carried out in the states and cities to prepare structure plans have built-in mechanisms for updating and revising these plans, which entail setting up a monitoring and evaluation system. The Khartoum Structure Plan is subject to evaluation and revision every five years.

### **c. Nature and Extent of Stakeholder Investment**

In terms of policy formation, the Ministry of Physical Planning and Public Utilities was formerly the central government body responsible for spatial planning and infrastructure development (UN-Habitat, 2012). A ministerial reorganization transferred this responsibility to the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources, and Physical Development. There is also a National Council for Physical Development and a National Habitat Committee. Academics from the University of Khartoum also work with the ministry as consultants.

The National Fund for Housing and Reconstruction is a key player in the implementation of Sudan's housing policies. The fund was established in 2008 to build affordable housing units for low-income households.

Many of Sudan's urban policy reports are prepared in cooperation with international organizations and include consultations with a wide range of stakeholders. This is the case, for instance, in the country's report to Habitat III. Groups consulted for this report include, but are not limited to: national government agencies, local authorities, civil society organizations, trade unions and professionals, researchers and academics, the private sector, indigenous peoples, women and youth.

Stakeholder engagement is a challenge in comprehensive planning in Sudan. States and cities involved in preparing structural plans have difficulty including communities and wider stakeholder participation without affecting the pace or cost of the planning process due to the cost of transport and the time required for people to reach destinations. Participation in the most recent structure plan for Khartoum, for instance, is mainly limited to information sharing.

In implementing projects for local development, the legacy of "self-help" initiatives, encouraged by the government in the 1970s, has established

several platforms for community participation. Red Sea State has several communal committees that deal with wide-ranging local development issues, such as school renovation and maintenance, green space, management of mosques, and care for youth and the elderly. The committees also contribute to co-financing for local infrastructure and services, including water lines and road paving. Concern about urban security is also a priority in the post-conflict, transitional setting of Sudan, and for which community and religious leaders are engaged in raising awareness.

## **Assessment**

### **a. Evidence of Impact and Effectiveness**

Many states and state capitals have prepared structural master plans. Structural and regional plans are in various states of preparation in Gedaref State, Nyala City (South Darfur State), Dongola City (Blue Nile State), Gedaref (Gedaref State) and Blue Nile State.

Plans for Khartoum State, Gedaref State and Kassala City (Kassala State) have been completed and approved by the National Council of Physical Planning but information on their implementation is limited.

Sudan's implicit national urban policy is aligned with the objectives of the Habitat Agenda and has made progress towards many of the goals set. This progress is, however, highly concentrated in Greater Khartoum, which, in 2008, accounted for over half of the urban population (World Bank, 2013). For instance, the number of slum dwellers in the capital has been decreasing steadily since 1990.

Sudan has developed several urban indicators meant to monitor home ownership rates, population growth rates, poverty rates, access to basic services, gender issues, the reach of social services and CO2 emissions for the purpose of reporting to the Habitat III conference.

### **b. Relationship to Other Policies**

The National Youth Strategy is an important sectoral consideration given the youth of Sudan's population and its consequences on the growth of cities. This strategy encourages youth participation in urban and municipal affairs.

### **c. Integration of the Cross-cutting Variables of Compactness, Integration, Connection, Social Inclusion and Resilience**

Climate resiliency for cities in Sudan is concentrated on the impacts of periodic floods and the desertification of the Sahel strip. Droughts spur rural-urban migration. Addressing climate change issues in Sudan is the mandate of the Higher Council for Environment and Natural Resources at the national level. Khartoum State has also established its own Council for Environment. Following severe flooding in 2013, Khartoum State took several actions, such as reinforcing river banks, repairing retaining walls, relocating squatters in flood-prone areas, and encouraging durable building materials in new home construction. In 2015 the Government has mandated the National Council for Civil Defence to act as a national focal point for Risk and Disaster Management in the country.

The Government of Sudan has emphasized the importance of connectedness through road (highway) infrastructure investments to create efficient linkages between urban and rural areas. In Greater Khartoum, mass transit by bus and long-distance tram is being pursued. Compactness is advocated in a shift from single-family plots and services building sites to the construction of multi-family, multi-story blocks, as well as the adoption of smaller plot sizes to increase densities and decrease the cost of land and infrastructure.

The socio-economic needs of women, youth and the elderly are acknowledged in different sectoral plans, however, a lack of resources hinders planned support. Nonetheless, certain programmes in urban areas have targeted marginalized groups,

such as internally displaced people, the poor, the disabled, the homeless and orphans to promote their integration in development schemes.

### **3.5.3 Reflection and Analysis**

Sudan is growing rapidly at a rate of 2.63 per cent, a high rate given the size of the country. This is partially due to sustained, high fertility rates and decreasing death rates. Sudan is home to a very youthful population, with young people under 25 years old representing 61.5 per cent of the total population. This has significant implications for planning as this demographic begins to enter the labour force and looks for housing options. Another important demographic consideration in national urban policy formulation is the phenomenon of out-migration, predominantly by males who seek employment abroad and send remittances back to Sudan (which accounted for less than 1 per cent of the country's 2013 GDP) (World Bank, 2015). With an unemployment rate of approximately 17 per cent among 22-59 year olds, generating employment opportunities to decrease out-migration and provide livelihoods will be critical to the economic sustainability of Sudan's urban areas.

Investments in Sudan as a result of a long period of booming oil revenues were purposefully invested in Khartoum to modernize the city and enhance its competitiveness and attractiveness to investors in an effort to make the capital into a major African city. Much of the investments driven by the oil boom went into construction, leading to a dramatic increase in population and urban area over the past 20 years. Urban development and its most recent gains are disproportionately concentrated in the capital, Khartoum. According to the 2008 census, while 82 per cent of the population of Khartoum State had access to safe drinking water and 90.6 per cent to proper sanitation, the national averages were only 55 per cent and 54.3 per cent, respectively. Khartoum still faces several challenges associated with rapid urban development.

Currently, urban growth in Khartoum is increasing at a rate of 6.8 per cent and is often equated with slum formation (UN-Habitat, 2010; Osman 2012). To combat this trend, Sudan has also proposed managing urban expansion with planned, connected housing developments equipped with necessary infrastructures on the periphery of existing urban areas. The Khartoum Structure Plan also proposes the establishment of nine new satellite cities around Khartoum to sustainably accommodate urban growth.

In the case of Nyala, urban development has been catalysed by civil turmoil and a centralization of humanitarian headquarters in the city. The population has more than doubled since 1993 to nearly half a million inhabitants. Furthermore, camps near Nyala host approximately 105,000 IDPs. Persisting instability in Darfur, lengthy processes of plan preparation and approval, and incomplete fiscal decentralization to sub-national authorities have been major impediments to developing urban policy in many of Sudan's urban areas.

Despite a high national urban growth rate of 4.29 per cent according to the 2008 Census, many areas are experiencing declining urban populations. Easing of drought conditions has allowed many rural and nomadic populations to return. Furthermore, the peace agreements and secession of South Sudan was followed by a return of close to two million people to South Sudan (Osman, 2012).

While poverty in Sudan is predominantly concentrated in rural areas (where over half of the population live on less than USD 1 a day), the urban poor pose formidable challenges to local authorities that have been unable to keep up with the growth of their urban populations. The Urban Sector Study of Khartoum, led by UN-Habitat in 2009, identified three categories of urban poor: those in traditional poverty marked by little or no education and employment in the informal sector (15.5 per cent of the poor); those in emergency poverty due to displacement who are living in informal settlements and slum conditions (19 per cent of the poor); and those in new poverty, dwelling in older slum areas,

new planned but under-serviced subdivisions or renting in the informal and uncontrolled market (65.5 per cent of the poor).

Rapid population growth in the 1980s caused by civil war, drought, desertification and the floods of 1989 caused a sharp increase in the population of Greater Khartoum that outstripped the local authorities' capacity to manage growth and basic service provision, including housing. This led to the proliferation of a ring of informal settlements around Khartoum. In the 1990s, a series of policy concepts were applied to deal with these settlements, including relocation of settlements to neighbourhoods with smaller plot sizes, increasing residential density, sites and services approaches, and the incorporation of peripheral villages into the urban fabric. Sites and services schemes that assumed that the population would build their own dwellings and necessary services resulted in leapfrog development that segregated the poor in areas with limited development possibilities and unaffordable services. Dar Al Salam, a concept that evolved from the sites and services approach but resettled the urban poor to areas with certain strategic basic and social services, was seen as a more positive policy concept with more successful results in terms of increasing access to a decent home and services. (UN-Habitat, 2009a).

More recent policy considerations for village incorporation envisage integrating 538 outlying villages in Khartoum province and dividing them into clusters with planned housing extensions and economic activities connected to the city (Osman, 2012). The possibilities of public private partnerships to provide popular housing, as opposed to exclusively providing upper-income housing, has yet to be fully explored as a sustainable and durable shelter solution for those currently living in informal settlements and slums. More flexible building and subdivision standards, as shown through the Dar Al Salam approach, can enhance the urban poor's integration into the urban fabric physically, economically and socially with permanent dwellings that offer land rights and access to basic services.

These policies have had several positive impacts, though much work remains to be done as absolute urban poverty continues to grow. For instance, informal housing built of non-permanent materials declined from 60 per cent of all dwellings in 1989 to 17 per cent of dwellings in 2005. This has increased low-income households' disposable income for other basic needs, since they no longer need to fund rebuilding their homes. The urban poor still struggle to access and afford many basic services. The high cost of electricity, and water system losses around 25 per cent of production due to deteriorating infrastructure and a lack of filtration plants and distribution networks for potable water in 30 cities as of 2009, illustrate some of the key challenges of service provision and access in urban Sudan.

### 3.5.4 Conclusions

The governance system in Sudan, particularly since the 2005 Peace Agreement that produced the Transitional Constitution, has devolved several powers and responsibilities to sub-national authorities. The current federal system of Sudan

is seen as an appropriate governance structure for such a vast territory that is home to several hundred tribes. This system, and the devolution of urban planning and policy responsibilities to states and cities, has resulted in a lack of comprehensive vision for urban development nationally, and a lack of coordination among territories and between national, state and local entities. Furthermore, outdated and unreliable central statistics provide uncertain baselines upon which to base urban plans and policy at all levels.

These circumstances have serious implications for sustainable land use, natural resource use, human security and social inclusion. To meet this challenge, UN-Habitat is collaborating with the Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Physical Development and local stakeholders to develop a Strategy of Sustainable Urban Development that will focus on promoting human settlements that improve the quality of life of their citizens (Gamie, 2015).



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# 4

## EVALUATION OF THE STATE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF NUP IN THE REGION

## 4.1 Key lessons from the case studies

Countries analysed in the case studies share some of the major challenges facing the rapidly urbanizing Arab region, such as a particular vulnerability to climate change, large youth populations which the labour market cannot fully integrate and, most crucially, the proliferation of informal settlements and a shortage of affordable housing, often the entry point to the elaboration of national urban policies.

The countries still diverge on key socio-economic and political factors, as they represent a wide range of levels of wealth and resources, levels of urbanization, distance or proximity to conflict, and internal political stability or unrest, which impacts both the capacity and the ambitions of their national urban policies.

The Saudi National Spatial Plan, for instance, primarily achieves the ambitious economic goals of diversification and transition to a knowledge and technology-driven economy. To a lesser extent, Morocco also attaches national urban policy to the objectives of economic diversification and balanced territorial development, while also strongly emphasizing the provision of adequate housing. Countries in the Mashreq affected by turmoil - the Egyptian revolution and the waves of refugees in Jordan - focus on alleviating urbanization pressures from their capital cities and scarce agricultural land. Finally, Sudan, strongly destabilized by conflict and with high rates of poverty, is still primarily concerned by the provision of basic services and housing.

The evaluation of their national urban policies, however, reveals that these structural circumstances do not fully determine outcomes. This is illustrated, for example, in Saudi Arabia, where wealth and stability permitted successful investments in service provision and economic diversification, yet did not curb the proliferation of substandard housing. In contrast, Morocco has been very effective in slum reduction and provision of affordable housing. Even Sudan, while still faced with considerable challenges,

reduced its population of slum dwellers. In the Mashreq, attempts to redirect urbanization have still not alleviated pressures in the main Jordanian cities or prevented further urban encroachment of agricultural land in Egypt.

Positive management of urbanization, therefore, relies on complementary factors that are within the reach of national governments, such as efficient governance, comprehensive urban policies and the political commitment to achieve them. The experiences in the case studies in directing urbanization illustrate a range of different challenges, ambitions, objectives and relative successes and setbacks, which are more generally representative of the wider region and can lead to lessons and insights for the elaboration of successful national urban policies.

## 4.2 Recurring themes and issues, lessons and prospects

NUPs are characterized both by their processes and their content: in the way they address social, economic and environmental challenges posed by urbanization; and as a political process, that ideally involves the participation of multiple governmental, private and civil stakeholders. This section reviews national urban policies in the Arab region through the themes of climate-change adaptation and resilience, basic services and adequate housing, and economic opportunities; and through factors affecting their processes, such as governance mechanisms and political instability and conflicts.

### 4.2.1 Climate change adaptation and resilience

The Arab region is particularly vulnerable to climate change; most countries will have future challenges with water and food security, and the risk of conflicts over resources associated with it, and they are still very reliant on fossil fuel, although the region has the highest potential for renewable energy in the world (UN-Habitat, 2012).



Climate-change adaptation and resilience policies are still rarely integrated into urban policies, but are rather dealt with through sectoral strategies of specialized central bodies or are considered in specific development programmes. Egypt, for example, formulated individual national strategies to address adaptation to climate change, disaster risk reduction, crisis and disaster management, and environmental management of vulnerable areas, such as coastal zones. Initiatives by international foundations and development agencies have made urban resiliency a priority in Beirut and Byblos in Lebanon. Climate and environment concerns in urban policies of the GCC are heavily focused on creating more green space in urban areas, increasing energy efficiency, and decreasing CO2 emissions.



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## 4.2.2 The economic potential of urbanization

The recent generation of national urban policies in Arab countries illustrates a progressive shift in the management of urbanization, no longer seen simply as a potentially disruptive phenomenon with negative externalities that need to be remedied, but as an opportunity to positively direct and foster economic development and diversification.

Given its particularly high rate of urbanization, Saudi Arabia is the first country to have integrated an urban policy into its broader national development strategy, with a strong spatial dimension. The first development plan aimed at distributing oil revenues to strengthen the economy. Today, as with other GCC countries, the objective is to diversify

sources of revenue by focusing on knowledge and technology intensive activities, particularly ICT and finance, for instance through the strategic planning of specialized new towns.

In the other countries of the region, the need to deal with a “crisis” has been the impetus that has prompted the region’s governments to conceptualize a national urban policy. In most cases, it was the need to eradicate sub-standard housing and curb the proliferation of informal settlements. More recently though, national urban policies have been more proactively associated with economic development strategies.

In Morocco for instance, the first objective of the Politique de la Ville policy is to strengthen the role of cities as development poles and wealth and employment generators (Royaume du Maroc, 2012b). More generally, in the Maghreb countries, the need to diversify the economy to take advantage of the opportunities offered by access to the Eurozone was a strong motivation to develop a national urban policy. Tunisia promotes the creation of competitive technopoles in secondary cities (UN-Habitat, 2012). In Lebanon, national planning was an integral part of the post-civil war reconstruction.

In Mashreq countries, the priority is to balance urban development away from primary cities. Jordan for instance aims to territorially redistribute development gains through financial incentives such as duty free zones. In Egypt, the need to protect scarce agricultural land and broaden the country’s economic base to create employment for its large and increasingly better-educated youth by creating an increasingly urban economy has driven urban policy decisions.

Finally, in the Southern Tier region, conflicts and natural disasters have kept the countries underdeveloped and with high poverty and unemployment rates, making economic development a priority to be able to face future urbanization challenges. Sudan’s development gains remain disproportionately concentrated in Khartoum.



Kuwait © UN-Habitat

### 4.2.3 Basic services and adequate housing

The social challenge of providing adequate housing and basic services for citizens is the major priority for the whole Arab region in managing rapid urbanization and the proliferation of informal settlements.

The achievements and effectiveness of several Maghreb countries stand out in this regard. Urban policies in Morocco, Tunisia and, to a lesser extent, Algeria have been marked by a strong political commitment to eliminate substandard and informal housing that had proliferated with the accelerating urbanization following independence.

Tunisia was the first country to acknowledge the importance of housing, adopting a National Housing Strategy in 1988, and renewing its commitment today by preparing a new version. The policy organized the restoration of historic areas, the regularization of land tenures, the provision of basic services to the urban poor and essentially eliminated slums (UN-Habitat, 2012). More recently, Morocco has also made significant progress in slum elimination, through its 2004 Villes Sans Bidonvilles policy, highlighted by UN-Habitat as a positive example of a new generation of national urban policies. It significantly reduced its number of slums, lowering its 1990 levels by 65 per cent in 2010, and increasing the number of “cities without slums” to 38 (UN-

Habitat, 2012). Through this policy, Morocco also upgraded 250 neighbourhoods in 23 cities, and created 724 000 new housing units from 2004 to 2009, rehousing 143,000 families living in slums, and reaching a rate of 100,000 units per year in 2011. These priorities have been reinforced and integrated into an even more comprehensive national urban policy with the establishment of *Politique de la Ville*. Finally, Algeria also invested in the provision of decent housing and constructed 2 million units between 2008 and 2013.

These achievements make the policies of Tunisia and Morocco best practices in tackling a challenge faced by the whole region. Their success was due to a range of determined commitments and actions, and legislative, financial and institutional instruments that were effectively integrated and coordinated through specialized national agencies.

In Tunisia, the housing programme was managed by the public agency *Agence de Réhabilitation et de Rénovation Urbaine (ARRU)*, which is responsible for renovation, tenure regularization, and basic service production. In Morocco, the national public holding company *Al Omrane* was established in 2004 for social housing construction through cross-subsidization, resettlement of slum dwellers, regularization of land tenure and the construction of new towns, functions that were previously attached to three different government agencies.



Lahraouiye, Morocco © UN-Habitat

These agencies also effectively collaborate with other relevant stakeholders, by coordinating local authorities and funding projects that mobilize private sector participation. ARRU for instance coordinates and assists in the actions of local authorities in a context of increased decentralization in urban policy. Moreover, the Tunisian national solidarity fund credits financial resources to local municipalities to support their projects of local infrastructure and community facilities. The *Politique de la Ville* in Morocco is articulated around contracts between the government and relevant local and private actors for each territorial project undertaken.

As for countries in other sub-regions, Egypt has also made significant efforts to curb the proliferation of informal settlements around Cairo and Alexandria, and to improve their living conditions, although it is still a major challenge. Initially focused on the provision of basic services, Egypt's policy has recently shifted towards broader integrated and coordinated socio-economic interventions. The first Informal Settlement Development programme provided basic services in informal areas from 1994 to 2004. The Informal Settlements Development Facility (ISDF) was then established to provide necessary credits to local authorities for their improvement and upgrading projects, thus compensating for the lack of locally generated revenues and building local capacity to implement the policy. The facility makes an effort to build partnerships with local stakeholders and encourages the participation of housing developers in the construction of affordable housing through

land-based financing by making serviced public lands available at discounted prices for mixed-income projects. Egypt's policy for adequate housing and basic services therefore evolved to be similar to the best practices described in the Maghreb countries. The civil unrest starting in 2011, however, negatively impacted the implementation and outcomes.

In Jordan, the implementation of its National Housing Strategy in 1996 led to the establishment of the Jordan Mortgage Refinance Company, and the Housing and Development Corporation. The strategy aimed to increase private sector participation in housing development and open access to land and housing to lower-income groups through financial instruments and zoning regulations. The Housing and Development Corporation also constructed 185 social housing projects. However, the extreme pressure today from successive waves of refugees makes it difficult to keep up with housing demand and curb the development of slums.

In Sudan, given the context of conflict and natural disaster, social challenges of access to basic services and the proliferation of informal settlements around Khartoum occupied by squatters and IDPs are particularly crucial. Because of the federal administration of the country and the fact that 80 per cent of its urban population are in the capital, major housing policies were implemented at the level of Khartoum State. After unfruitful attempts at slum eradication displacing dwellers and land and rent price controls that disrupted the housing markets, in 1991 Khartoum adopted a sites and services approach to slum upgrading, providing land plots with basic services for a very low price, title deeds and deregulated building standards. This resulted in the relocation of 273,711 squatters and IDP households by 2005, bringing the proportion of squatter settlements from over 60 per cent of total settlements in the late 1980s to less than 20 per cent (UN-Habitat, 2009). Despite its significant achievement, the policy still had negative effects, prompting migration to the capital and contributing to the extreme sprawl of the Khartoum periphery, and

incurring very high infrastructure costs. Today, the state promotes denser forms of housing, but has yet to mobilize private sector participation in low-income housing provision.

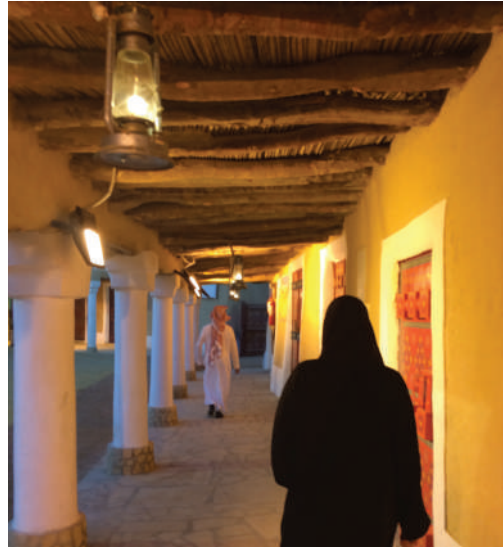
In contrast, for Saudi Arabia, despite large investments and ambitious urban development strategies, a shortage of affordable housing still led to the proliferation of informal settlements. This is due less to external obstacles such as conflicts or disasters, but rather to the lack of capacity in local authorities to enforce regulations and adapt national priorities to local contexts.

#### 4.2.4 Coordinated and participatory governance

As illustrated by the various examples of housing policy, institutional arrangements and governance systems are as crucial to the success of a NUP as its substantive content and objectives. NUPs are indeed also a process, which needs to be comprehensive, integrated and participatory, from formulation to implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

The complex and multidimensional nature of urbanization challenges calls for the coordination and integration of various sectoral programmes within the NUP. Morocco's *Politique de la Ville* is a good example of a comprehensive and integrated policy. In contrast, Jordan's approach to urban challenges is more sectoral, addressing issues such as planning, environment, economy, housing or basic services separately, making the management of the demographic pressure of refugees on its cities even more difficult.

Moreover, general orientations of the NUP need to be complemented and adapted into a spatial vision. Once again, Morocco's *Politique de la Ville* constitutes a good example as its projects are inherently spatial, from the upgrading of derelict areas to new towns. In this regard, Jordan also applied its urban vision spatially, with the National Land-Use Master Plan. To successfully implement urban policies territorially, an efficient articulation of the respective responsibilities between the national government and subnational authorities is essential.



Burida, Saudi Arabia © UN-Habitat

The Arab region has a wide variety of administrative organizations, as the case studies illustrate. For instance, Saudi Arabia has the most centralized approach to the planning and management of urban growth. This centralization is representative of other GCC countries, in which ministries develop national, regional and local policies. Although some major cities such as Medina and Mecca do have a relative autonomy in urban planning, in general GCC municipalities are only responsible for the implementation of local plans.

At the other end of the spectrum, Sudanese administration is very decentralized, with the post-conflict adoption of a federal system. Such strong decentralization in the region is often adopted as a way of appeasing internal tensions in ethnically and tribally diverse countries, as is the case in Iraq. It can also come about as the result of political and administrative fragmentation: the most decentralized policy formation regarding urban development in the region is found in Area A in the West Bank of Palestine, where elected local councils are responsible for planning and provision of basic services, such as water and electricity, and can raise their own revenue. In such administrative circumstances, national urban policies are often replaced by state structure plans. Urban policies guidelines that do exist at the national level in Sudan and

Iraq for instance, often give significant attention to the spatial development of their capital cities. However, this withdrawal of the national government in policy can lead, as in Sudan, to a lack of comprehensive vision for national urban development and a lack of coordination among territories and administrative levels.

Full decentralization still remains an exception in the Arab region, as historically, post-independence nation-building tended towards a strong concentration of powers in the central government. In the Maghreb and Mashreq sub-regions, the central government still exerts a strong control over subnational authorities as, in most cases, it still appoints senior level executives, provincial governors or even mayors, and is responsible for the territorial implementation of national urban policies. Recent reforms in countries like Egypt, Jordan and Morocco have led to a partial devolution of urban management responsibilities to the local level.

Decentralization efforts, however, often remain incomplete as local authorities still lack the capacity to carry them out. Indeed, devolution of responsibility is rarely accompanied by a commensurate fiscal decentralization or the ability for local authorities to raise their own sources of revenue through taxations, making them dependent on central transfers to finance their action. Moreover, even the small proportion of local revenue they are entitled to is often difficult for them to collect, due not only to inadequate data and human resources, but also to the very dynamics of urbanization, including the largely unregistered property transactions in informal settlements located on the urban fringe, often outside municipal boundaries.

This discrepancy between functional devolution and fiscal centralization can be found both in Mashreq and Maghreb countries, where local authorities cannot create their own local taxes or borrow funds. In the GCC sub-region, municipalities are completely dependent on oil revenue transfers from the central government, which cover all their expenses, from capital investments to operating costs. In Saudi Arabia,

the necessity to obtain central government approval for local initiatives, in addition to these fiscal constraints, further hampers the possibility of a flexible and consistent implementation of national objectives in the local context. This is a reason for the Saudi municipalities' difficulty in managing urban expansion and meeting the demand for affordable housing.

Efforts to build the material and financial capacity of local authorities are therefore crucial for the effective implementation of NUPs. In this regard, Egypt's partnership system for its housing policy is a good example. The national agency Informal Settlement Development Facility indeed collaborates closely with local government, and extends to them the credit needed to undertake improvement projects in informal areas, providing an essential resource given their lack of locally generated revenue.

Beyond the enhanced inclusion of local governments in the national policy making process, relevant stakeholders such as the private sector and civil society are also increasingly invited to participate in the formulation and implementation of national urban policies. The most advanced example of an inclusive and participatory process is Morocco's *Politique de la Ville*, with a formulation phase that was accompanied by national debates, and an implementation that relies on project contracts between the national government, local authorities and stakeholders. Given their common colonial past, this approach could also be applicable to Tunisia and Algeria.

Most countries have also attempted to undertake projects in collaboration with the private sector, such as in Egypt, Jordan and Morocco, for affordable housing provision. Tunisia's urban policy has also been marked by increased engagement with the private sector, in a context of economic liberalization and withdrawal of the state and its public agencies from the provision of infrastructure, services and housing. Countries of the GCC also tend to assign the elaboration and implementation of spatial plans to private consultants and development firms.

Finally, the participation of civil society is gradually being encouraged as well. The elaboration of the *Politique de la Ville* in Morocco was indeed accompanied by a national debate inviting citizens among other stakeholders. Similarly, the Qatar 2030 Vision was formulated through a consultative process with representatives of the public, private and civil society sectors, including women and youth. Finally, Jordan's Poverty Reduction Strategy also acknowledges the necessity of the meaningful involvement of civil society into policy making, and throughout its national Land-Use Master Plan project, the government encouraged participation and dialogue between municipalities, the private sector and residents through workshop and capacity building activities.

#### 4.2.5 Political instability

The wave of civil unrest experienced in the Arab region illustrated the importance of an inclusive and efficient governance system for political stability. The need for better governance and social justice was therefore at the centre of demands by urban youth frustrated by the lack of jobs and affordable housing, as social inequity was perceived to be the result of corrupt and inefficient political systems. Environmentally also, the risk of future food and water insecurity due to climate change might cause new tensions and conflicts over increasingly scarce resources.

A comprehensive NUP - addressing the previously discussed themes of climate change resilience and adaptation, economic development and social equity, and with a participatory and inclusive process – therefore constitutes part of the answer to the causes of urban discontent and turmoil. Civil unrest in Morocco was, for instance, limited to small-scale protests and never progressed into a real political destabilization. This was most likely due, at least partially, to the government's strong commitment to the provision of affordable housing, and its efforts to conduct urban policies through a participatory and inclusive dialogue between multiple stakeholders, including civil society.

Although NUP has the potential to avert urban turmoil, it reaches its limits when faced with the direct and indirect consequences of fully-fledged conflict and war, when humanitarian emergencies and security consideration take precedence over urban planning priorities. In some countries, the process of policy formulation and implementation has been affected by regional wars, the post-2011 turmoil and recurring civil conflict; longer-term stability is an underpinning factor in the development of a vision of the future. The long-standing civil war in Yemen for instance prevented the elaboration of urban policies, while unrest in Libya for prevented their implementation. The deepening Syrian crisis also brought to a halt some exemplary progress in the development of an integrated planning approach facilitating national, regional and urban policies through its Municipal Administration Modernization programme financed by the European Union (2006 – 12) and the support given by UN-Habitat to the Regional Planning Commission (2009 – 11). Jordan suffers the indirect consequences of the Syrian conflict, as the pressure from Syrian refugees starts to jeopardize the capacity of Jordan's municipalities to carry out their responsibilities.

Once the emergency is past, NUP is once again useful in a context of stabilization and recovery, providing the framework and mechanisms to rebuild dialogue, communities and a shared vision of urban development.



Homs, Syria © UN-Habitat



# 5

## CONCLUSIONS

## 5.1 Specific considerations for National Urban Policies in the Arab Region

Since the 1950s, the Arab region has witnessed mounting political pressure generated by large youth populations, high rates of household formation, restive populations frustrated by the high cost of living and the pervasive shortage of affordable housing, which have led to intertwined land, housing and urban regulatory policies. These links are reinforced by the high cost and rapid appreciation of urban land and puts urban planning and management at the core of measures to expand access, broaden affordability and foster social inclusion.

At this time, a NUP framework for the Arab region must take into consideration seven major issues:

1. The ongoing conflicts in Iraq, Palestine, Syria, Libya and, to a lesser extent, Yemen, which are changing the conditions in affected cities and the broader impact on urban growth patterns.
2. The prospective post-conflict measures regarding return, resettlement and housing for IDPs and refugees and the anticipated challenges to be faced in terms of fostering social inclusion and providing access to land and urban services.
3. The numbers of IDPs and refugees displaced by wars and conflicts has reached crisis point. Host cities and countries - namely Jordan and Lebanon - are the most affected, although the way they are being accommodated and provided with basic needs differs markedly between the two countries but equally impacts urban policies.
4. The economic and social effect of the general instability in the region on countries less affected by turmoil, like Morocco and Algeria.

5. The new economic and social policies and urban priorities of countries recovering from revolution and turmoil, namely Tunisia and Egypt.
6. The special situation of GCC countries, including the anticipated increase of expatriate worker and the policies regarding accommodation in the existing cities and planned new towns.
7. The necessity of integrating a high level of environmental awareness and consciousness in urban policies to reflect climate-change forecasts for the region and their anticipated impacts on urban spatial plans and patterns in the different countries. Already, some countries have to cope with water shortages and insufficient energy sources that affect most informal settlements and areas on the urban fringes.

## 5.2 Key lessons, insights, and recommendations

While the Arab region exhibits some of the most extreme variations between countries in terms of resources, urbanization levels or administrative organization, they still share urbanization trends that are crucial for their management and planning of urban development, such as increasing urbanization rates, particularly in Morocco, Algeria and Saudi Arabia, and populations that are predominantly under the age of 25, demanding jobs and affordable housing.

Rapid urbanization started in the 1960s, with large population movements caused by rural migration in search of employment and successive waves of displacements due to conflicts. These increased demographic pressures on cities led to urban sprawl and the proliferation of informal settlements, and threatened the states' ability to provide equitable and sustainable infrastructure, basic services and housing.



As is detailed below, this report has highlighted a number of thematic issues that are cross cutting in the region, such as the challenge of addressing housing and basic services, and political instability and conflict. Other themes have been identified as perhaps needing more thorough consideration in national urban policies in the Arab states, such as climate change and the need for governance structures that are supportive of the capacity needs of local governments to implement policies.

Addressing the challenge of affordable housing and basic services was generally the main impetus for the development of policies managing urban growth. Today, all countries in the Middle East North Africa region, regardless of their wealth, administrative structure or political stability, have formulated and implemented various policies related to urban development. Increasingly, national urban policies shifted from only managing social problems and deprivation to being integrated within broader national economic development strategies. Urban environmental issues, however, remain very sectoral.

In terms of affordable housing, the commitment of the Maghreb region and the achievements of Morocco and Tunisia are noteworthy. They have made considerable progress in slum reduction thanks to specialized national agencies collaborating with local authorities and the private sector. Egypt also followed this example, although its progress was stalled during the 2011 turmoil.

The political instability and conflict in the region has had a major influence on the process of policy formulation and implementation in many countries, particularly in the Mashreq and Southern Tier sub-regions. Internal turmoil often originated from urban discontent over centralized governance and social justice demands, which to some extent could be appeased through effective and collaborative national urban policy elaboration. However, the direct humanitarian and political impacts of fully-fledged conflict, as well as the pressure of refugee flows on

neighbouring countries, seriously hampered or put a stop to national urban policy progress. In countries affected by conflict, the new generation of national urban policies will also have to face additional challenges of reconstruction and social reconciliation, and will also need to consider social priorities of equitable access to basic services, food, energy, affordable housing and employment.

On the basis of this analysis, urban policies will have to take greater steps to recognize the challenges presented by climate change, ranging from increased water needs to severe climatic events. Then, ambitions of economic modernization and diversification should not eclipse the necessary provision of basic services and affordable housing, which are best delivered with the collaboration of local authorities and the private sector.

Finally, implementation of national urban policies has primarily been the responsibility of line ministries. The reasons for this are only partially coming from the tradition of a strong central government that, in most cases, appoints senior level executives, provincial governors and even mayors. Of equal importance has been the continuing dependency of municipal governments on money transfers from the central government, due to their limited ability to efficiently collect the property tax, the primary source of locally generated revenue. This inability has been due not only to inadequate data and human resources but also to the very dynamics of urbanization, including the largely unregistered property transactions in informal settlements located on the urban fringe, often outside municipal boundaries.

### **5.3 The Significance of National Urban Policy Development for the Arab region**

The development a NUP as recommended by UN-Habitat constitutes a long-term investment in sustainable urbanization. Progressing through the phases of feasibility, diagnosis, formulation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation,

with an emphasis on capacity building and multi-stakeholder collaboration (UN Habitat, 2014a), provides an appropriate framework through which the main challenges and opportunities of urbanization in the Arab region can be further addressed.

In terms of environmental policies for instance, the fragmented and sectoral nature of current approaches can be remedied by taking advantage of the instrumental potential of NUP in the implementation of SDGs at the urban level. It would consist, for instance, in defining direct urban objectives of climate-change adaptation and mitigation, resource- and energy-efficiency and reduction of spatial sprawl; and implementing them with collaboration between levels of government, the private sector and civil society.

The economic potential of urbanization has been acknowledged by most Arab countries, as their national urban policies often contain objectives of economic development and diversification. Since there is no direct correlation between urbanization and prosperity, NUPs are an essential tool to facilitate the creation of an enabling environment, ensuring the necessary legal, institutional and infrastructural conditions to enable exchange and learning between economic agents, and increased innovation and economic competitiveness in urban areas.

Beyond these material considerations, the equitable provision of social services is just as essential as a long-term and sustainable investment in national development, providing prosperity and opportunities for all through access to housing, basic services, skills and education. For most countries where this is not yet guaranteed, the NUP process can help to fortify government commitment to social justice objectives, and to mobilize the essential participation of local governments and the private sector in their implementation.

Even more crucially, complex and interwoven social problems that can eventually foment turmoil in urban areas require a broader approach

to urban policy, with more efficient and inclusive governance structures. In this regard, the very process of NUP development brings advantages, through the diagnosis and identification of urban problems, the clear setting of goals and allocation of responsibilities, and the mobilization and capacity building of relevant stakeholders outside the central government. For instance, increased decentralization of responsibilities accompanied by the appropriate devolution of financial power, and capacity building of local governments can better ensure that policies are appropriately adapted to the local context and places. Moreover, with the active engagement of other stakeholders, from the private sector and civil society for example, within the NUP process, governments can lead the definition of shared goals and a nationwide urban development vision that ensures that urbanization processes are inclusive and empowering even for the most vulnerable sections of society.

Finally, this process of establishing spaces and mechanisms for dialogue between multiple stakeholders, including civil society, and the elaboration of a common urban vision for the future also builds more public trust in its institutions. The different aspects of the NUP - promoting economic opportunities and quality of life, social inclusion, sustainable resources, and a participatory and inclusive process - therefore also constitute preventive measures to deal with the risk of conflict and political instability, which still constitutes one of the main challenges of the Arab region. Beyond prevention, the process of NUP development can also prove useful in post-conflict recovery contexts, providing the structure to reopen dialogue and rebuild trust between different sections of the population and the government, thereby reintroducing trust in the new political institutions and promoting social reconciliation. It can also help to articulate the transition from short-term humanitarian priorities to longer-term development strategies during reconstruction.

Lastly, this report has demonstrated that an effective NUP depends on an explicit and well-defined interaction between clearly

articulated national objectives, whose priorities are implemented through the programmes defined by the line ministries, and an effective management of urban spatial growth by the municipal governments. To manage spatial growth, local governments must be able to ensure an adequate supply of serviced land for future growth and prevent inappropriate development, including informal settlements. While national policies are the propellers of urban development, particularly when they are well funded, developing a coherent spatial vision for individual municipalities and implementing it is a local responsibility. A successful NUP is therefore one that is able to balance the role of national and local levels of government, assign each of

them a clear role and ensure that the latter have the necessary human and financial resources. Clearly defined national objectives and priorities and their spatial configuration provide a guiding reference document for all stakeholders. While their frameworks are national in scope, they must take into consideration the economic, social and political concerns of local authorities where revenue-generating potential and budgets are very often constrained by imbalances in the allocation of powers, responsibilities and resources. Ensuring the productivity of public and private investments and the contribution of the NGO sector is of the utmost importance to enhance city competitiveness and promote economic development.

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# ANNEX: CROSS-CUTTING VARIABLES FOR CASE STUDY COUNTRIES

	<b>Compact Cities</b>	<b>Socially Inclusive Cities</b>	<b>Integrated and Connected Cities</b>	<b>Cities Resilient to Climate Change</b>
<b>Egypt</b>	Since the 1960s, Egypt's national urban policy has sought to contain the growth of the Cairo metropolis and prevent the urbanization of agricultural land.	The Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities considers issues of social inclusion in upgrading and regeneration projects.	Several development area plans illustrate the nationally promoted policy of attracting investment to connected growth nodes located on desert fringes along the Nile Valley and Delta.	It is unclear how climate resiliency is being integrated at the governorate level.
<b>Jordan</b>	In-fill development using vacant land for urban condensation is seen as the primary policy to be pursued by cities to achieve more compact urban form.	Jordan promotes social inclusion by taking into account the critical needs of the youth in the formulation of plans and programmes in urban areas as well as those of the elderly through the national initiative Seniors without Borders.	Urban connectedness and integration have been advocated for in Jordan's national urban policy as these principles apply to transport and urban planning, particularly through the promotion of multi-modal transport.	The National Land-Use Plan of 2006 is currently being updated to take into account the impacts of climate change in the country.
<b>Morocco</b>	Compactness is conceptualized through the PdV as a means to counter socio-spatial fragmentation, reduce infrastructure needs and enhance mobility.	The overall goal of Morocco's national urban policy is to fight against forms of vulnerability and social exclusion in sensitive urban areas that are facing multiple deficits at various levels.	The Politique de la Ville adopts an integrated approach working across sectors (horizontally) and across levels of government (vertically) to ensure a convergence of interventions. Interconnectedness of urban transport is also promoted.	Morocco has documented models for various climatic events and taken an inventory of the built environment to promote resilient cities.

	<b>Compact Cities</b>	<b>Socially Inclusive Cities</b>	<b>Integrated and Connected Cities</b>	<b>Cities Resilient to Climate Change</b>
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	The country's National Spatial Strategy aims to protect the environment, reduce urban sprawl and promote spatially balanced development.	Policy has advocated for social inclusion as far as Saudi male nationals are concerned.	Redeveloping old neighbourhoods and slums for integration into the urban fabric and encouraging the use of integrated public transport in major cities are among the key goals of Saudi Arabia's National Urban Strategy.	Climate resiliency is included in the 10 <sup>th</sup> Development Plan (2015-2019).
<b>Sudan</b>	Spatial strategies, particularly in the capital, focus on integrating new formal and informal settlements into the existing urban fabric and reducing sprawl in Khartoum.	The socio-economic needs of women, youth, and the elderly are acknowledged in different sectoral plans.	The Government of Sudan has emphasized the importance of connectedness through road (highway) infrastructure investments to create efficient linkages between urban and rural areas.	Climate resiliency for cities in Sudan is concentrated on the impacts of periodic floods and the desertification of the Sahel strip.





Cities of the Arab region are some of the oldest continuously inhabited human settlements in the world; and today, the region remains a particularly interesting case for the analysis of the development of National Urban Policies. Beyond a common history, culture and language and despite exhibiting extreme socio-economic variations; the Arab states still share common circumstances that greatly raise the stakes of the rapid urbanization they are experiencing. These circumstances are for instance: a tradition of political centralization, large youth populations demanding equal social, political and economic opportunities, an extreme vulnerability to climate change through food and water insecurity, and the destabilizing effects of political turmoil and conflicts.

The report therefore reviews, in the Arab region, the state of national urban policies defined in the Arab defined by UN-Habitat as "a coherent set of decisions derived through a deliberate government-led process of coordinating and rallying various actors for a common vision and goal that will promote

more transformative, productive, inclusive and resilient urban development for the long term". It identifies the legal and governmental articulation of the national urban policies, the main actors involved, how their objectives and priorities address the challenges of urbanization, and what achievements have been accomplished in this regard. It also considers aspects of the policy cycle, looking at the means of formulation, implementation and evaluation of national urban policies put in place. Finally, it tries to identify the factors affecting longer-term trends in national urban policies in the countries reviewed.

This study is particularly timely, first of all because it follows Habitat III and Agenda 2030, and accompanies the Second International Conference on National Policy in Paris in May 2016. Secondly, the Arab Region finds itself now at a particularly turbulent but also pivotal time, and choices its countries take today to manage their rapid urbanization will determine the future of their cities and, to a certain extent, their national development path.



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