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on Adequate Housing for All  
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Item 5 of the provisional agenda\*\***

**Progress made in implementing the UN-Habitat programme  
of work related to adequate housing, including addressing  
homelessness and slum upgrading**

## **Summary of the progress made in implementing the UN-Habitat programme of work related to adequate housing, including addressing homelessness and slum upgrading\*\*\***

### **Report of the Executive Director**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. The present report is prepared pursuant to resolution 2/7, on adequate housing for all,<sup>1</sup> adopted at the second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly, in June 2023. In paragraph 1 (d), the Habitat Assembly requested the Executive Director to prepare a background report “considering the progress made in implementing the UN-Habitat programme of work related to adequate housing”.
2. This report provides: a) a synthesis of Habitat’s programme of work; b) an overview of projects according to the type of intervention; and c) reflections for future programming, particularly considering the bottom 40% of the urban population.
3. This report is based on 138 housing projects in the current strategic planning period between 2019 and 2023 and on the impact evaluation of UN-Habitat’s housing approach covering the period 2008-2019. The majority of the projects has been gathered through the UN’s Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting solution (IPMR), with support from secondary sources, including the Impact Evaluation of UN-Habitat’s Housing Approach to Adequate and Affordable Housing and Poverty Reduction 2008-2019 and the Housing Section Project Inventory. Of the 560 total projects recorded in the IPMR over the 2019 -2023 period, the listed projects together represented about 24% of the UN-Habitat project portfolio.
4. The majority of these projects are emergency housing (post-crisis recovery and reconstruction) interventions, facilitating and enabling projects on housing construction and finance and aided self-help housing (slum upgrading and prevention interventions). The projects serve varied objectives, including: a) to demonstrate the feasibility of a policy or strategy; b) to support the capacity building of stakeholders; or c) to directly improve the housing conditions of slum dwellers or crisis affected

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\* Reissued for technical reasons on 13 November 2024.

\*\* HSP/OEWG-H.2024/1.

\*\*\* The present document has not been formally edited.

<sup>1</sup> HSP/HA.2/Res.7.

populations. In addition, they build on housing policy and strategy frameworks that have been adopted in many countries as a result of policy advice from UN-Habitat. The most widely used knowledge product is the Housing Sector Profile, with its core objective being to achieve improved housing reforms.

5. Limited data availability, time and resources did not permit the application of more rigorous compilation and verification, at the results framework level, of all housing and housing -related projects across the agency. The sample consists of projects identifying target 1 of sustainable development goal 11 as among their principal objectives.

## **II. Mandates and background**

6. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) supports Member States in the development of sustainable cities and human settlements through its normative and operational work at the global, regional, national, and local levels. UN-Habitat also leads and coordinates the monitoring of, and reporting on, global progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11. The mandate derives from priorities established by General Assembly resolutions and decisions, including resolution 3327 (XXIX), resolution 32/162 and resolution 56/206. The Programme's support is aimed at developing the capacity of government at all levels and other key stakeholders to formulate and implement policies, plans and concrete activities for sustainable urban development.

7. Housing is central to the work of UN-Habitat, with emphasis on the right to adequate housing for all. International conferences, particularly the Habitat I, II and III summits, have identified a need for policies and regulations that support effective housing systems, including reforms to facilitate the land development and transfer process, expand housing finance, supply side strategies that support the construction and management of new homes and demand-side incentives such as subsidies, all of which struggle to reach the extremely poor because they require livelihood stability and require effective targeting.

8. The Habitat summits, held every 20 years since 1976, have shaped the Habitat programme of work. Habitat 1, in Vancouver in 1976, addressed the challenges of rapid urbanization, most notably the widespread growth of low-income informal settlements in the global South. Habitat II, in Istanbul in 1996, addressed the need to ensure adequate shelter for all and an agenda to support sustainable communities. In 2016, Habitat III in Quito addressed the goal of advancing a "New Urban Agenda" with "housing at the centre of sustainable urban development".

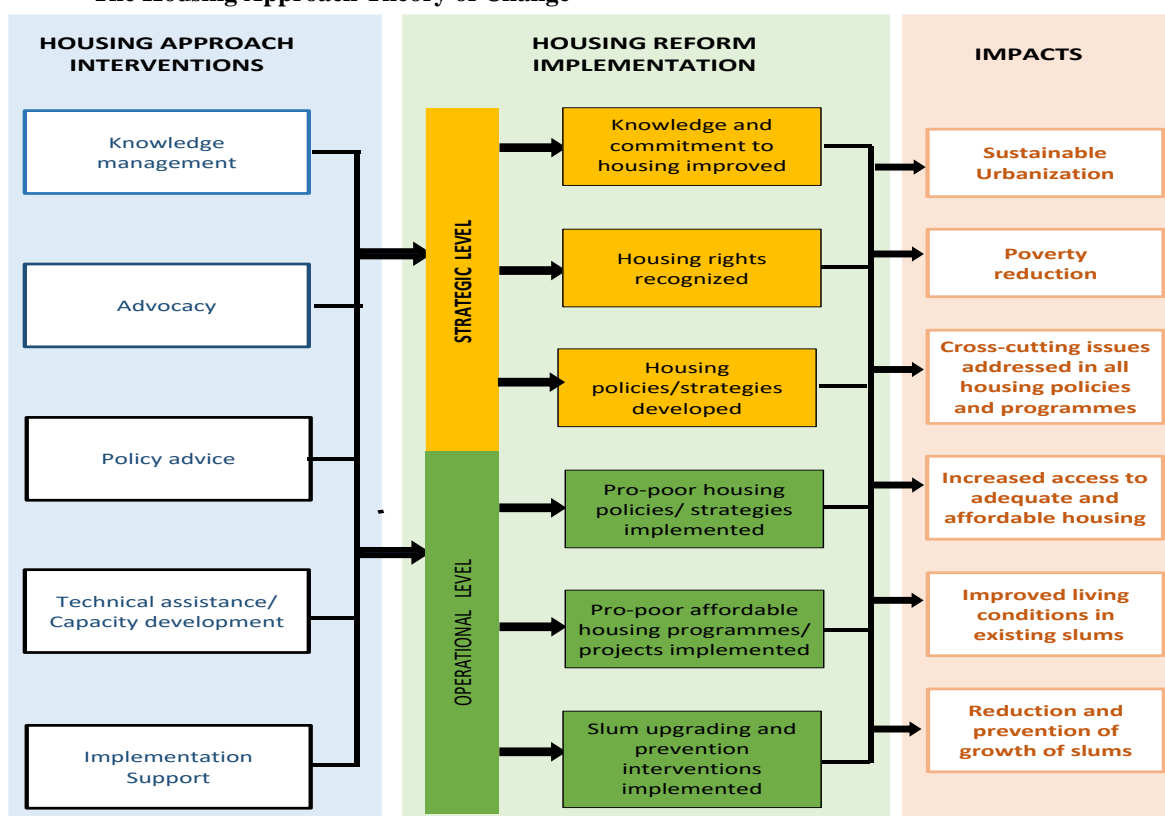
9. The UN-Habitat strategic plan, 2020 – 25, includes an objective to increase secure access to adequate and affordable housing. In 2019, UN-Habitat estimates showed 22.5 million people as the total population with access to adequate housing in a selection of project partner cities, with a targeted incremental growth to 30 million people by 2023. In contrast, the proportion of the urban population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing in the same partner cities was estimated at 23.3%, with a targeted reduction to 22.5% as at 2023.

10. To fulfil this mandate, UN-Habitat's housing approach is understood as an integrated package of advocacy, knowledge, policy advice, technical assistance and capacity building and implementation. Its focus is on the seven criteria of adequate housing, as defined by the Committee on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights: (1) Security of tenure; (2) Availability of services, facilities, and infrastructure; (3) Affordability; (4) Habitability; (5) Accessibility; (6) Location; and (7) Cultural adequacy.

11. The primary goal of the housing approach is to increase access to adequate housing through policy reform, operationalisation of housing strategies and the implementation of housing programmes and projects. It is an implementation model of housing reform based on (1) the recognition and promotion of adequate housing rights, (2) the revision of housing-related laws, policy and regulatory frameworks, (3) the adoption of improved housing policy and strategic frameworks, and (4) the implementation of improved housing and slum-related programmes and projects. The Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (PSUP), is an example of the housing approach, that has been working towards the progressive realization of human rights for slum dwellers, particularly women and youth, through slum upgrading, and advocating and taking action for improving the slum dwellers' standard of living through incremental, climate responsive, human rights-based, city-wide and participatory slum upgrading and prevention through the provision affordable housing options at scale.

12. The housing approach strategic objectives on adequate housing include:
- (a) Increase access to adequate housing to all
  - (b) Increase access to adequate housing to low-income households
  - (c) Support diversification of adequate housing solutions
  - (d) Support diversification of government interventions in providing adequate housing
  - (e) Support advocacy groups
  - (f) Support self-organising housing initiatives (by NGO or INGO)
  - (g) Provide adequate housing to crisis affected populations (conflict, disaster, migration, etc.)
  - (h) Improve living conditions in existing slums and informal settlements.

Figure 1  
The Housing Approach Theory of Change



13. In this respect, at the operational level, UN-Habitat's project approach to housing addresses a range of housing intervention types, including housing policy; facilitation or enabling projects (either of the construction industry or of housing finance); public works and public-private partnership projects to produce or sell market-rate or affordable houses; aided self-help (e.g. site and service, cooperatives, technical assistance, construction subsidies – in kind or in cash – etc.), rehabilitation and slum upgrading; public or social housing; and emergency housing and reconstruction for the homeless, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. The projects build the capacity of local institutions, taking a comprehensive approach to improve and localise government systems to strengthen housing sector delivery, including policy, planning and regulation; capacity building; strengthening construction practices; and improving resilience systems, sites and services, taking into account the needs of disaggregated groups of the communities in which they are situated, such as women, children, older persons, disabled people, IDPs, returning migrants and all represented ethnic groups. An Impact Evaluation of UN-Habitat's Housing Approach to Adequate and Affordable Housing and Poverty Reduction 2008-2019 shows that the agency's contributions to the housing sector through its housing approach at the global, regional and country level are widely acknowledged among housing stakeholders. It is seen as a leader in knowledge creation and dissemination on housing issues; a consistent advocate for the right to adequate housing; and a promoter of transforming the lives of slum dwellers. The evaluation found significant inter- and intra-regional differences and inter-country variations on how the housing approach is operationalized and housing strategies are approached. The

evaluation identified a number of challenges that have impacted UN-Habitat's work in housing. Of critical significance is the agency's limited capacity to ensure governments follow-through on commitments made at global level events, and signed declarations and agreements, its limited support to national housing programmes owing to capacity limitations; and limited capacity to support and implement large-scale housing programmes. UN-Habitat is considered to have reduced its earlier role as a forceful promoter of housing rights. Some stakeholders are of the belief that UN-Habitat's earlier links to civil society have weakened.

15. UN-Habitat's housing approach achievements over the evaluation period (2008-2019) include:

- (a) **Knowledge Management:** Over 100 thematic reports at global, regional and country level; 52 publications on housing rights; 30 national housing profiles.
- (b) **Advocacy:** World Urban Forums have drawn thousands of participants; 167 countries have adopted the New Urban Agenda (NUA); the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (PSUP) has benefitted 10.45 million people living in 39 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries and 190 cities.
- (c) **Policy advice:** 34 national housing policies; 21 national slum upgrading and prevention policies and strategies; 32 citywide slum upgrading and prevention strategies.
- (d) **Technical Assistance and Capacity Building:** League of Arab States (LAS) to develop the Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2030; 200 ministry, local government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs) and private sector actors trained on the PSUP approach.
- (e) **Implementation:** One million housing units constructed in the VII Impact Evaluation of UN-Habitat's Housing Approach to Adequate and Affordable Housing and Poverty Reduction 2008-2019 Asia Pacific countries through the 'People's Process; Secure tenure for over 800,000 slum dwellers and improved living conditions for over 500,000 slum dwellers through the PSUP.

### III. Distribution of housing project interventions in the current strategic planning cycle

16. Of a total of 138 listed projects, the Arab States (ROAS) and Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) have the largest number of housing projects. Most ROAS interventions have been in emergency and refugee contexts addressing conflict and climate induced displacements, with a relatively large-scale outreach on temporary housing solutions which have a different dynamic and only directly impact the mainstream housing system in a limited manner. On the other hand, many of the ROLAC interventions are on a relatively small scale, supporting housing policies addressing maintenance, internal growth and equity, often only reaching a few thousand households with some level of infrastructure upgrading. Overall, the project documents infer the housing interventions are determined by the unique characteristic of each region or country housing context in response to the unique characteristics and the political, economic and cultural approaches to housing development and informal settlements.

Figure 2  
Housing projects

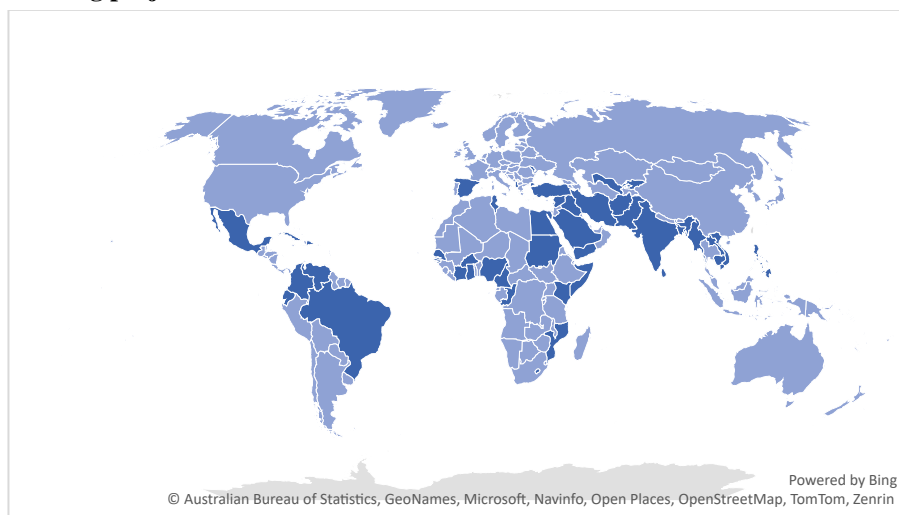
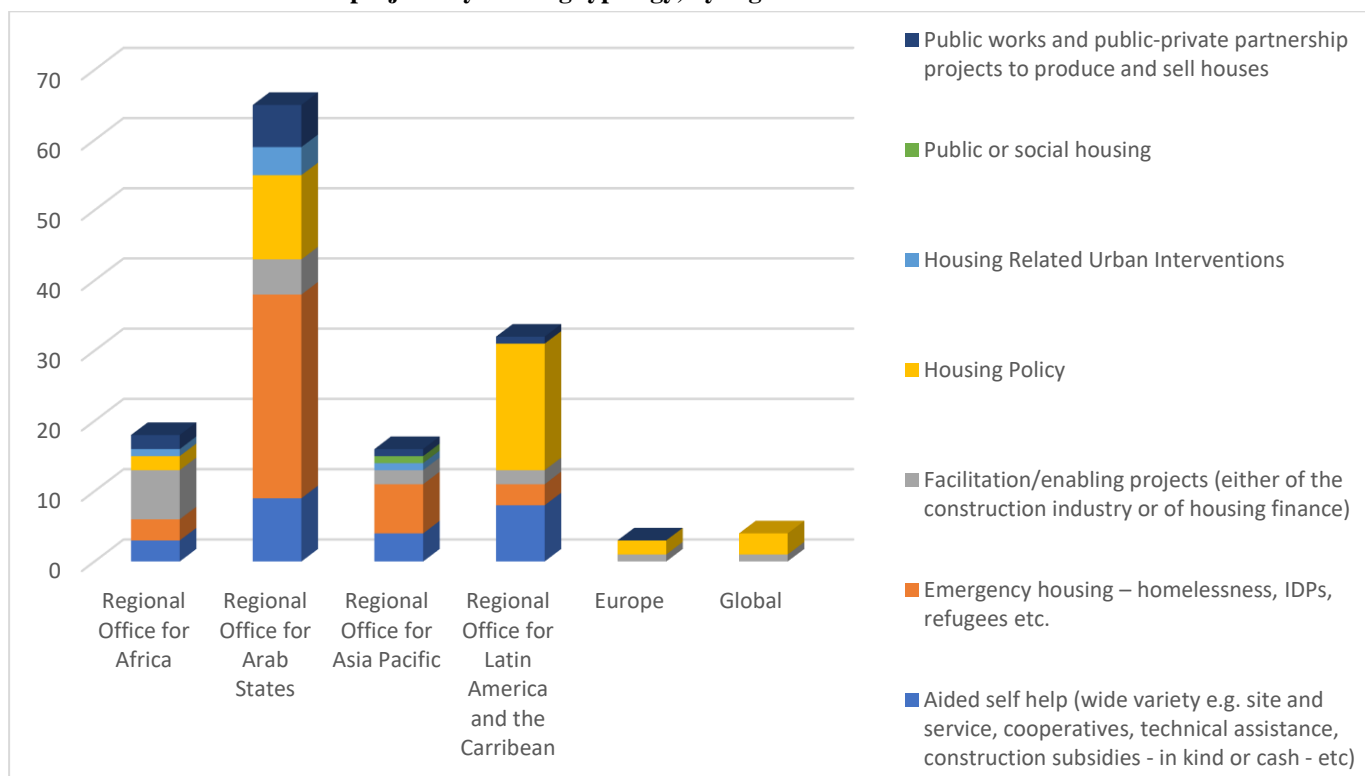
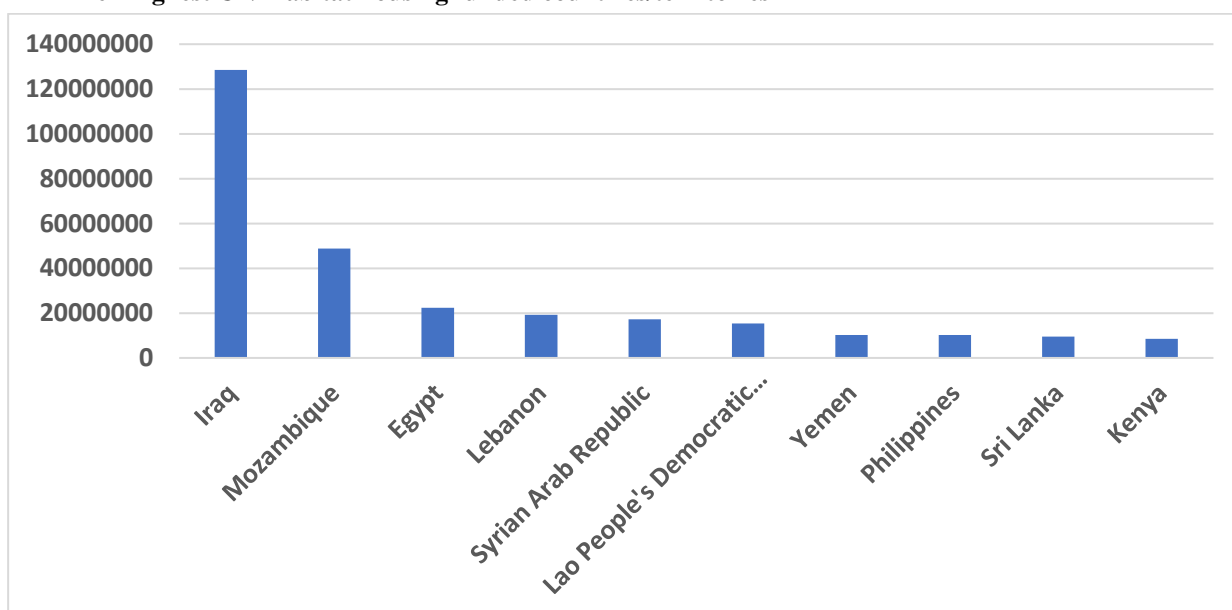


Figure 3  
Distribution of projects by housing typology, by region



17. In terms of funding, ROAS and Africa (ROAf) top the list with the top 10 countries for housing funding including Iraq, Mozambique, Egypt, Lebanon, Lao PDR, Ghana, Syria, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Kenya. Iraq tops the list with an allocation of USD 126, 298,144 and Mozambique at USD 48, 004,920. In ROAf, most of the funding focus is directed towards strengthened housing policies, which would address some of the challenges connected to rapid urbanisation, in particular, on capacity building, data availability and overall governance frameworks. In ROAS, the funding focus is on the humanitarian-development nexus, addressing emergency housing or reconstruction.

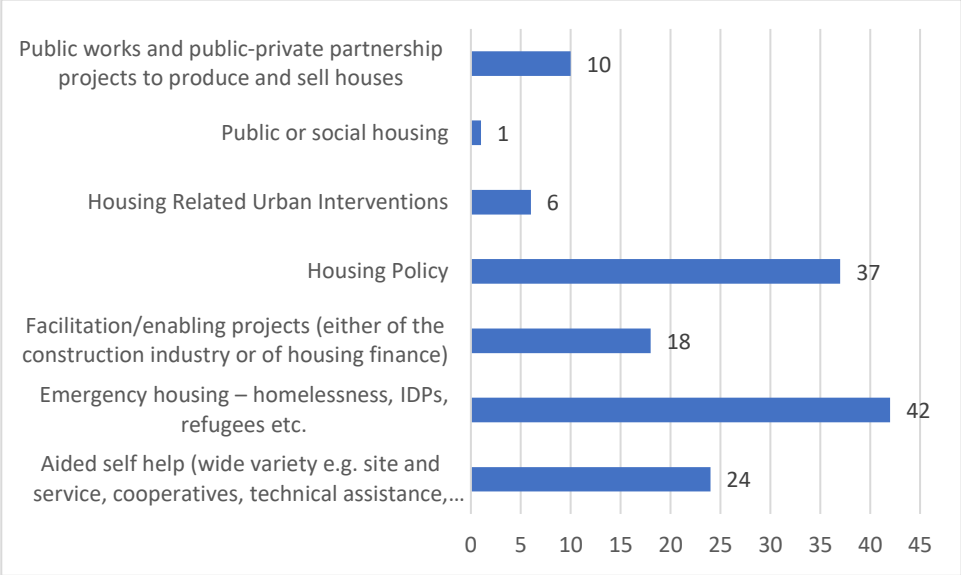
Figure 4  
Ten highest UN-Habitat housing funded countries/territories



### III. Distribution of types of housing intervention in the current strategic planning cycle

18. Of a total of 138 listed projects, emergency housing (42), housing policies (37) and aided self-help housing (24) top the list of types of housing intervention.

Figure 5  
**Distribution of projects by type of intervention**



19. On a global scale, ROAS leads in emergency housing interventions, while ROLAC leads in housing policies. ROAF’s housing portfolio is largely made up of facilitation and enabling projects; the ROAS and Asia Pacific (ROAP) portfolios of emergency housing; and Europe and ROLAC with housing policy interventions. Global and multi-regional projects are largely shaped by housing policy and aided self-help interventions.

20. In terms of funding allocation by intervention type, emergency housing tops the list with USD 129,907,778, facilitation projects receive USD96,944,788, public private partnerships projects USD33,346,066, housing policy USD32,733,266; and aided self-help projects USD29,547,936.

Figure 6  
**Distribution of funding by type of intervention**

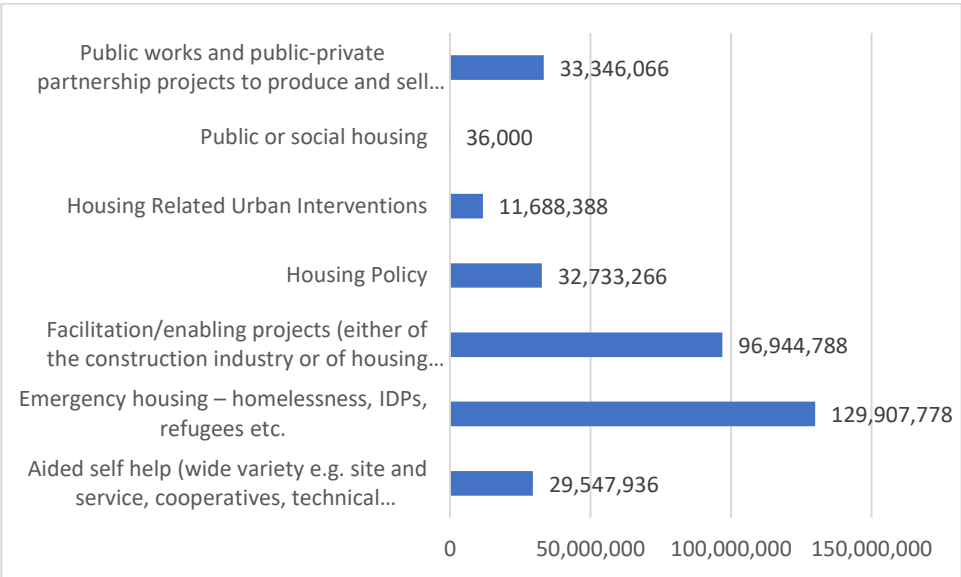
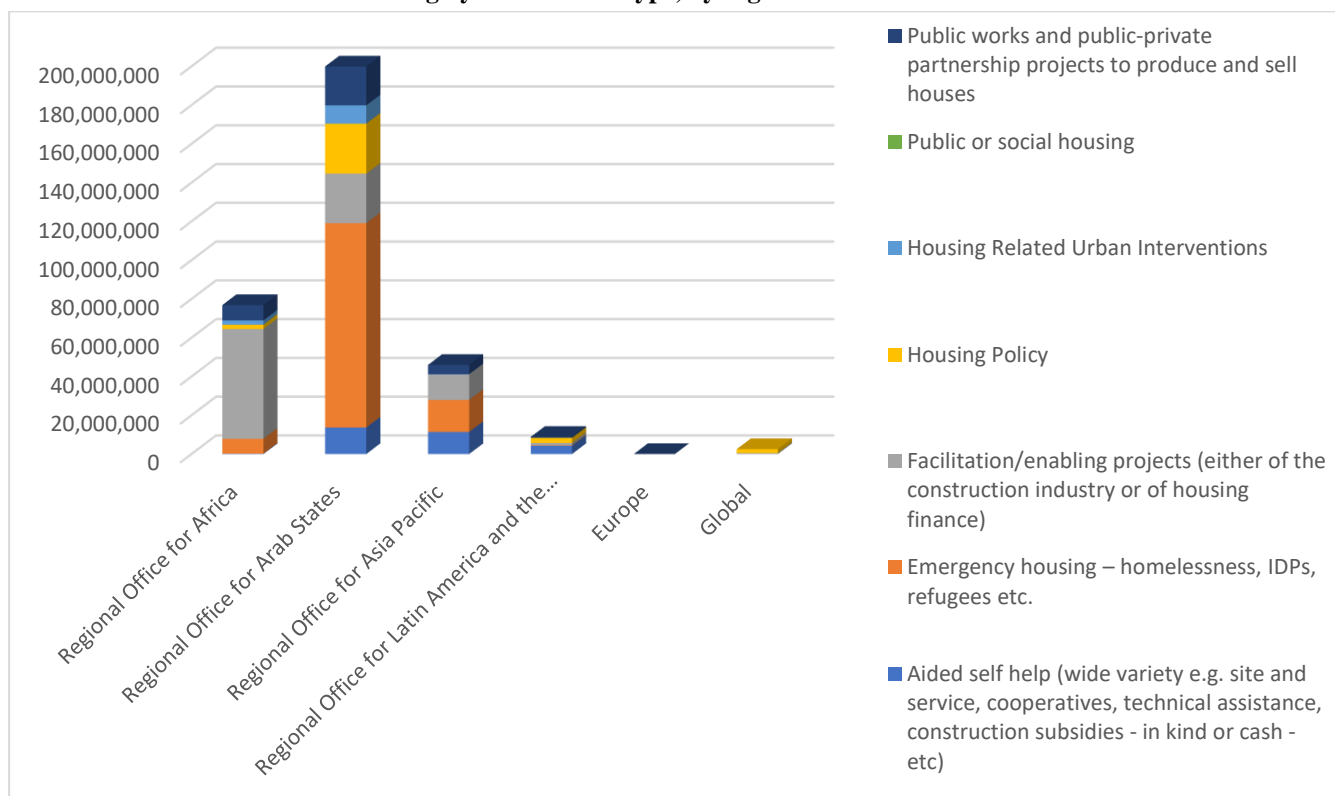


Figure 7  
Distribution of funding by intervention type, by region



21. UN-Habitat's global housing portfolio largely consists of emergency housing, facilitation and enabling and aided self-help housing. It would be important to analyse not only its impacts and achievements in improving access to adequate housing, but also to better understand the implications of the highest number of projects and funding being dedicated towards emergency housing interventions mainly in ROAS in conflict and climate induced displacement contexts, while almost no funding goes to public or social housing interventions. In light of the different strategies deployed in each region, it is important to analyse the geographical imbalance of housing projects and which approach is more effective to provide adequate housing for all according to significantly different contexts and housing market dynamics, in particular, for the most vulnerable households.

22. Project examples in these types of housing intervention are as follows:

- (a) **Mexico – Housing Policy:** The UN-Habitat housing programme in Mexico has evolved over time largely responding to government requests. In recent years, it focused on flagship programmes such as "Infonavit leading the 2030 Agenda in Mexico," leading to the publication "Vivienda y ODS" (Housing and the SDGs).
- (i) UN-Habitat's value addition was in its technical expertise on housing policy, in particular provided at the macro level and in data analysis and facilitation of dialogue at the local level. This resulted in high-quality data and analysis provided to the government and stakeholders, influencing the National Housing Policy. At the local level, progressive public policies in Mexico City were influenced by UN-Habitat.
  - (ii) The UN-Habitat Mexico Office is now advancing to support the development of a comprehensive housing policy and programme framework, advocate for pro-poor policies, and prioritizing knowledge management in the housing sector in Mexico.
- (b) **Somalia – Public Rental Housing:** The present Rental Housing Scheme Pilot Project in Somalia serves as an example of partnership between UN-Habitat, the European Union and the Banaadir Regional Authority. The project endeavours to provide 300 IDP households with durable housing solutions.
- (c) **Kenya – Affordable Housing/Public -Private Sector Partnership:** UN-Habitat has supported the Government of Kenya in developing a Housing Strategy for the implementation of the National Affordable Housing Initiative.
- (d) **Iraq – Emergency Housing/ Social Housing:** The Japan Village Project in Mosul will provide housing for around 50 households with approximately 350 beneficiaries, focusing on the most vulnerable returnees, particularly female-led households and people with disabilities. Additionally, the

project will build capacity on the construction skills and work experience of 100 unemployed youths, including more than 40 females, and enhance the capacity of up to 1,000 individuals to address climate-related challenges.

- (i) UN-Habitat has provided low-cost housing to more than 3,300 IDP families since 2014. This project is funded by the Government of Japan and its partners including TOYOTA Iraq, Sumitomo Corporation, Al Sardar Group (TOTO and KOMATSU), MEENAR (Nippon Paint), and Peace Winds Japan as part of the early recovery of Mosul and Ninewa.
- (ii) The Ninewa Governorate will support this initiative by facilitating access to essential infrastructure services such as electricity, water, sewage, irrigation, green areas, roads, and parking lots, thereby improving living conditions for the entire Rajm Hadeed neighborhood. This project builds on the Bab Sinjar Housing Complex, a previous collaboration funded by the Government of Japan and executed by UN-Habitat.

## IV. Conclusions

23. The programme of work shows much focus on emergency housing and facilitating projects. There is a need to diversify the portfolio across types of intervention to be able to address the enormous variety of housing challenges found throughout the regions and with a greater focus on the lower income bracket of urban inhabitants, who typically benefit most from aided self-help and public housing programmes. This will require improved data availability to take into account the needs of particular housing users in certain locations; a strategy that is successful and appropriate in one locale could fail and be completely inappropriate in another. Information is crucial to maintaining the relevance of the project responses for the housing sector: accurate, up-to-date, and nuanced housing deficit measurements and to inform the types of housing intervention to be implemented.

24. Most country project portfolios cover the revision and improvement of housing policy or slum upgrading and prevention frameworks; only a few relate to supporting the implementation of national housing programmes, where much of the funding resources are allocated.

25. While several UN-Habitat project documents are embracing the SDG target on achieving safe and affordable housing construction (SDG 11.1), many do not present a direct impact on housing per se. This includes projects with a primary focus on urban planning.

26. The geographical spread of projects is not balanced, with a concentration of projects in ROAS focusing on emergency housing and a clear need for greater attention to medium to long term development issues arising from rapid urbanisation in ROAf and parts of ROAP. Notwithstanding the need to strengthen the focus on improving the living standards of poor and vulnerable groups and on poverty reduction at all levels.

27. There is a clear opportunity for UN-Habitat to expand upon its niche in the role of housing in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

28. There is a clear need to expand upon UN-Habitat's work on housing and climate change, in both the areas of mitigation and adaptation.

29. There is potential for UN-Habitat to develop partnerships and collaboration with international financial institutions as well as with other development partners, international NGOs and philanthropies, to maximize contributions and geographical outreach as a group, including by convergence around core standards on adequate housing for all, and with agreement on a joint strategy to tackle the challenges of the 40% lower income bracket of the population.

30. While UN-Habitat has extensive and recognized experience in most areas of housing strategies, policies and programmes, its relatively limited resources means that while many of its interventions have been technically successful, they tend to be on a relatively small scale, often only reaching a few thousand households. The majority of interventions have been in emergency and refugee contexts which have a different dynamic and only directly impact the mainstream housing system in a limited manner.