

# Evaluation of the Regional Office for Arab States



JULY 2016



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UN  HABITAT

## Evaluation Report 3/2016

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AF	Adaptation Fund
AMFHUD	Arab Ministerial Forum for Housing and Urban Development
ASUD	Achieving Sustainable Urban Development Programme
ATO	Arab Towns Organization
AUDI	Arab Urban Development Institute
BOA	Board of Auditors
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CCS	Common Country Strategy
CO	Country Office
CP	Country Programme
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DOA	Delegation of Authority
ERF	Emergency Response Fund
ERM	Enterprise Risk Management
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GLTN	Global Land Tool Network
GOPP	General Organization for Physical Planning
HLP	Housing Land and Property
IDF	Internal Development Fund
IHA	In-House Agreement
KM	Knowledge Management
LAS	League of Arab States
LDC	Least Developed Country
MTSIP	Medium-Term Strategic and Institutional Plan
NUF	National Urban Forum
NUP	National Urban Policy
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
PAAS	Project Accrual and Accountability System
PCM	Project Cycle Management
PMO	Programme Management Officer
PSC	Programme Support Cost
PSUP	Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme
ROAAS	Regional Office for Africa and Arab States
ROAf	Regional Office for Africa
ROAP	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
ROAS	Regional Office for Arab States
ROLAC	Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean
RPMO	Regional Programme Management Office
RSP	Regional Strategic Plan
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SP	Strategic Plan
TOC	Theory of Change
UCLG-MEWA	United City and Local Government – Middle East and West Asia
UNAMI	United Nations Mission in Iraq
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework

UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UNON	United Nations Office at Nairobi
UNRC	United Nations Resident Coordinator
USD	United States Dollar



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### EVALUATION CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

- i. UN-Habitat decided in 2015 to proceed with an external Evaluation of the Regional Office for Arab States (ROAS), the most recent of its Regional Offices, in order to assess the merit of the strategic decision to establish a dedicated office within the Arab Region. The decentralization to the region had been recommended by member States. ROAS was officially accredited in Cairo, Egypt, in April 2011. Prior to that, the responsibility for managing the portfolio of activities in the Arab region had been with the Regional Office for Africa and Arab States (ROAAS) at UN-Habitat Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.
- ii. It was followed by a transition year for the new ROAS Office, during which it operated with an operational mandate only for Egypt and Libya; this period ended in December 2012 when ROAS was handed over responsibility for the full set of 18 countries until then managed by ROAAS.
- iii. ROAS is on a sustained path of growth. The approved project budgets (allotments) for 2016 amount to more than USD 46 million and accompanied by a promising pipeline of projects. The aggregate volume of portfolio (including future years' approved allotments) is USD 152.6 million. There are now eleven countries with active project portfolios; up from eight countries in 2013.
- iv. The purpose of the Evaluation, as stated in the Terms of Reference, is to assess what has been achieved and learned in terms of:
  - The results of the establishment of ROAS on corporate delivery to countries in the region;
  - The progress made on implementing UN-Habitat's strategies and corporate decisions to decentralize functions to the Arab States region;
  - The 'added value' of UN-Habitat ROAS in addressing urbanization issues.
- v. The intended audience for the Evaluation is UN-Habitat, key stakeholders in the Arab region, donors and other UN partners.
- vi. The evaluation was managed by the Evaluation Unit in close consultation with ROAS and carried out by a consultant, Mr. Roberto Ottolenghi, engaged for two work months during the period October 2015 to February 2016. The work was predominantly home-based. Two missions were undertaken from 9 to 17 October to Kuwait and Nairobi and 30 October to 4 November to Cairo.

### EVALUATION METHOD

- vii. The prescribed model for carrying out the Evaluation was the Theory of Change, which was used by the Evaluator to set up the framework for analysis.
- viii. Five main contextual determinants, henceforth called 'Factors', were identified in a pathway as influencing ROAS' work. Related 'Prerequisites for Success' were also identified and used in the analysis as indicators to ROAS' successful delivery of its achievements.
- ix. The five factors are:
  - Connotation of an 'inception period' for ROAS, virtually three years of operating with a full mandate, a period that coincided with a series of important transitions;
  - Adoption at the end of 2013 of the UN-Habitat strategic plan (2014-2019) promoting a strong reform message for the urban sector; the realization of which, at regional level, may however be impeded by 'structural constraints in programme development';
  - Transition to UMOJA; a new administrative and financial system for all UN Secretariat agencies and programmes;

- Introduction of a new working modality in UN-Habitat, based on synergy between normative and operational work, between global and regional/country dimensions;
  - Specific contextual reality of the Arab region.
- x. The evaluation relied on various data sources including desk review of key documents, interviews with UN-Habitat staff at UN-Habitat Headquarters, at ROAS and country office managers, and some key regional and country stakeholders.

## EVALUATION FINDINGS

- xi. The main evaluation findings are:
- ROAS was extremely successful in establishing a high-level constituency of regional partners as an indispensable cornerstone for fulfilling its mandate. This is represented by the Arab Ministerial Forum for Housing and Urban Development (AMFHUD) which held its inaugural meeting in Cairo in December 2015. In parallel, ROAS established a collaborative relation with a set of crucial regional partners, foremost among which is the League of Arab States, setting the basis for joint regional programming.
  - ROAS finalized, in late 2015, the Arab Regional strategic plan ending in 2019 to coincide with the end of UN-Habitat strategic plan 2014-19, as the result of consultation with country counterparts and other partners; this becomes the main strategic instrument to guide ROAS' activities toward the accomplishment of the strategic plan 2014-19 goals.
  - ROAS has coped well with structural constraints in programme development and registered a major growth in active project portfolio (total approved budgets), moving from a baseline in 2012 (year of handover from ROAAS to ROAS) of USD94 million to over USD152 million in 2016. Similarly, yearly Delivery (Expenditure + Programme Support Cost) has grown from USD7.6 million in 2012 to USD26 million in 2015.
  - ROAS has had to cope with a difficult, not yet concluded, transition to a new administrative system, allowing in the process for useful insights as to the optimal nature of the mechanisms and procedures which UN-Habitat may wish to adopt through consultations with UNON and UN Secretariat.
- xii. The evaluation findings lead to a positive assessment of ROAS' performance in accordance to the five UN Evaluation Criteria. The resulting ratings range from 'Satisfactory' to 'Highly Satisfactory'.
- Relevance; ROAS' strategy is fully relevant with regional priorities, while fostering alignment with the agency's corporate message (Highly satisfactory).
  - Efficiency: ROAS has managed to generate a major growth in operations, to establish a solid basis for successful implementation of its strategic plan 2014-19, in spite of insufficient resources (Highly satisfactory).
  - Effectiveness: ROAS was successful in programme development, in establishing significant political partnership and ready to address areas of work in need of strengthening (Satisfactory).
  - Impact outlook: ROAS' good record and enhanced credibility increase scope for positive impact on normative reform and in support to operational programmes (Satisfactory).

- Sustainability: ROAS has demonstrated that a high potential exists for further development of the agency's activities, though some vulnerability factors remain in need of addressing by Headquarters and ROAS jointly (Satisfactory).

## EVALUATIVE CONCLUSIONS

- xiii. The evaluative conclusions emphasize how UN-Habitat's strategic choice to open a Regional Office in the Arab region has fully paid off. ROAS constitutes now an added value for the Agency in promoting its key policy messages in the region, acquiring in the process added political legitimacy, credibility, proximity to national partners and increased efficiency.
- xiv. ROAS has coped very well with a crucial 'transition time' for the Agency, assuming its full mandate in 2013, in concomitance with the launching of the UN-Habitat strategic plan 2014-19, the parallel introduction of a new administrative system for the UN Secretariat, the launching of a new working modality, based on greater operational synergy between Regional Offices and Headquarters-based Branches and Programmes. UN-Habitat can now count on an established resource within the Arab region that has already demonstrated the potential for greatly expanding the range of UN-Habitat activities.
- xv. In many ways, it is still work in progress that requires concerted action between Headquarters and ROAS to reduce a set of structural constraints in programme development which may limit potential further outreach and development.
- xvi. ROAS has operated with insufficient human resources making the good results achieved all the more remarkable.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- xvii. Several lessons emerge from the Evaluation Findings. The Report has highlighted three.
- xviii. The majority of countries with UN-Habitat active project portfolios are under a state of direct or induced crisis; in a context that is predominantly humanitarian-oriented, in terms of national and donors' priorities, thanks to the work of ROAS

and very capable and dedicated Country Teams, UN-Habitat's presence fills a much needed niche in addressing stabilization, recovery and development concerns leading to alignment with the UN-Habitat's normative mandate.

- xix. The Egypt Country Programme appears as the one best approaching the three-pronged approach advocated by UN-Habitat. This was the result of broad synergy of effort among different thematic Branches at Headquarters, ROAS and the Country Team. Problems, mainly of coordination, were however noted (see below after Lesson 3).
- xx. Positive instances of synergy of effort in programme formulation and resource mobilization between Headquarters and ROAS led to the approval and financing of the 'Future Saudi Cities' programme in Saudi Arabia, in December 2013, and of a Project Document for the formulation of National Urban Policies in four ROAS countries in 2015, funded by the UN Development Account. These two initiatives set interesting precedents in strengthening alignment between the agency's normative agenda and field operations as well as in focused resource mobilization.
- xxi. In Saudi Arabia and Egypt, however, there were problems of coordination and priority setting. Achieving genuine synergy of effort is a learning process; in-depth analyses of the experiences (internal reviews or programme evaluations) are bound to be beneficial.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- xxii. The evaluation makes 11 recommendations concerning:
  - ROAS' action to strengthen AMFHUD and build support mechanisms for national Governments and regional activities;
  - Joint UN-Habitat/ ROAS action to strengthen mechanisms for programme and project development and reduce current constraints;
  - UN-Habitat's negotiations with UN Secretariat and UNON to seek a system of delegated authority that safeguards the operational efficiency of regional and country activities;

- UN-Habitat's action to streamline current reporting requirements from the field avoiding duplication;
- Headquarter's and ROAS' action in ensuring incremental production, as part of the streamlining of UMOJA, of certified financial Delivery Reports as a tool for improved project management;
- Joint Headquarters/ ROAS/ Country Offices' consensus on guiding principles for agreements on Headquarters's inputs to field projects;
- A more flexible cost-recovery option to be applied to field projects according to the project's context and costs charged justified by services provided under the UN-Habitat 'Cost Recovery Policy';
- UN-Habitat's need for exploring mechanisms for tangible support to the field in crisis situations and ROAS to enhance support to horizontal collaboration among respective Country Teams;
- UN-Habitat's action to bring ROAS' professional human resources to a level commensurate to its volume of activities;
- ROAS' action to step up support to Country Offices in better mainstreaming cross-cutting issues in field projects;
- ROAS' action to build within its office an adequate information and documentation basis for Knowledge Management and relevant connections with relevant Branches and Programmes at Headquarters.

## INTRODUCTION

1. UN-Habitat established a Regional Office for Arab States (ROAS) in Cairo in September 2010 (officially accredited in April 2011) after request by member States for a stand-alone office responsible for the Arab region and on the basis of a generous offer by the Government of Egypt to host it. Until then the management of UN-Habitat activities in the Arab States was under the responsibility of the Regional Office for Africa and Arab States (ROAAS) operating from the Agency's Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.
2. The newly opened ROAS in Cairo operated for a transitional period with a mandate limited to Egypt and Libya, in terms of responsibility for development and management of project portfolios. The transition period ended in December 2012 with the official handing over to ROAS of the full portfolio and management responsibility of 18 countries belonging to four sub-regions, on the basis of the categorization adopted by UN-Habitat in the 2012 State of Arab Cities Report. These are:
  - Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria in the Mashreq;
  - Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia in the Maghreb;
  - Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates in the Gulf Cooperation Council;
  - Sudan and Yemen in the Southern tier.
3. At its inception, ROAS inherited from the existing UN-Habitat institutional structure, the Sub-regional Office in Kuwait, established in 2008, with prerogatives primarily for the countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council and an Information Office in Amman, Jordan.
4. The origin of this Evaluation, as clarified to the Evaluator, is 'internal' and it does not originate from any specific request by UN bodies, donors or national partners. It responds to the need within UN-Habitat to assess the merit of the political and strategic decision to establish a dedicated Regional Office for the Arab Region and to examine the

extent to which this decision has translated into an enhanced presence and has had meaningful impact on UN-Habitat's activities. As such, the evaluation was planned for in the UN-Habitat Evaluation Plan for 2015. It may then be widely distributed to Governments in the Arab region, donors and partners as an information document.

### 1.1 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

5. The purpose of the Evaluation, as stated in the Terms of Reference, is to assess what has been achieved and learned in terms of:
  - The results of the establishment of ROAS on corporate delivery to countries in the region;
  - The progress made on implementing UN-Habitat's strategies and corporate decisions to decentralize functions to the Arab States region;
  - The 'added value' of UN-Habitat ROAS in addressing urbanization issues.
6. The specific objectives of the evaluation were to:
  - Assess the relevance of UN-Habitat's mandate in the region;
  - Assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the regional office representing UN-Habitat and channelling information, and in advocacy, technical cooperation and capacity building;
  - Assess the effectiveness of the relationships of the office with relevant partners;
  - Assess the transparency and accountability of the regional office in view of a results-based management approach;
  - Assess how the implementation of the organizational reform and decentralization have impact the regional office and delivery in the region; and

- Assess the resource mobilization efforts of the regional office.
7. The evaluation was managed by the Evaluation Unit in close consultation with ROAS. It was carried out by a consultant, Mr. Roberto Ottolenghi. The Evaluator's work was primarily home-based with two missions; the first to Kuwait (09-12 October 2015) to visit the ROAS Sub-regional Office and to Nairobi UN-Habitat Headquarters (13-17 October); the second to Cairo (30 October-04 November 2015) to consult with ROAS' Office, the host Government and Egypt's UN-Habitat Country Team.
  8. The evaluation report is composed of an overview of ROAS in chapter 2, followed by chapter 3 which outlines the evaluation approach and methodology, including the use of the Theory of Change. The main findings are contained in chapter 4 which is organized around seven main achievements of the regional office based on the analysis and assessment of the Evaluator. Chapters 5 and 6 contain conclusions and lessons learned. The recommendations have intentionally, and for the sake of clarity, been placed in the body of the text of chapter 4 immediately after the relevant findings.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF THE EVALUATED INTERVENTION

9. The evaluation assessed the achievements and performance of the regional office based on the overall assumption that ROAS operates at the centre of a system of inter-dependences in political, managerial, administrative, financial, operational terms with UN-Habitat Headquarters (Headquarters) as overarching authority and through a network of Country Offices (COs), which ROAS supervises and administers. ROAS needs to be assessed in this context. Hence, a high degree of systemic analysis has been introduced in the model adopted for the evaluation; conclusions and recommendations are often not uniquely pertinent to ROAS, but address agency-wide management issues and constraints.
10. The specific situation and historical moment in time for the Arab region were taken into consideration so as to better put in perspective the factors affecting ROAS' strategic focus in pursuing the implementation of UN-Habitat's mandate.
11. ROAS's achievements and performance up to the end of 2015 are placed in the context of the stated goals of its strategic plan 2014-19, which mirrors UN-Habitat's strategic plan 2014-19, the main corporate policy document of reference; this advocates a drastic reform process in the urban sector focussed on formulation and adoption of National Urban Policies, placing emphasis on legislation, planning and urban economy, as part of a three-pronged approach to better manage urbanization and city expansion.
12. ROAS received its full management regional mandate in December 2012. In 2011, the recorded expenditure by ROAAS plus Project Support Cost (PSC), the overhead UN-Habitat charges for execution, had been USD4.32 million; in 2012, expenditure plus PSC was USD7.63 million. At the time there were eight countries with active project portfolios.
13. By the end of 2015, ROAS' portfolio shows a significant growth: Expenditure plus PSC amounts to USD26 million; approved project budgets (allotments) for 2016 are above USD46 million (detailed figures for each year are presented in chapter 4, Evaluation Findings, Achievement 3). The current aggregated project portfolio (including approved allotments for future years) amounts to USD152.6 million. Eleven countries have now active portfolios.
14. ROAS is tasked with promoting the strategic message inherent in the corporate strategic plan 2014-19 across the region by setting up mechanisms for outreach to as many countries as possible. It has also to strive for alignment of project portfolios along UN-Habitat's strategic priorities.

## 3. EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 EVALUATION TOOLS, METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

15. The process adopted for the evaluation made use of various tools and methods.
16. The evaluation was predominantly facilitated through home-based desk work. The instruments for information and data gathering were:
  - a. A set of fact to fact structured interviews with UN-Habitat staff at Headquarters (i.e., Management and Programme Offices, Thematic Branches and Units), in ROAS and in the Kuwait Office as part of the two short missions undertaken by the Evaluator.
  - b. Direct interviews with Government officials and UN agencies, limited to Egypt and Kuwait
  - c. Numerous (and often repeated) skype interviews with all country offices in the Region based on pre-delivered questions.
  - d. Review of a large set of documents including:
    - Institutional policy and management documents, monitoring reports and evaluations;
    - UN country programming instruments for relevant countries;
    - Country Reports, Project Documents, Project Reports from all relevant countries;
    - Annual Delivery Reports;
    - Minutes and documentation from ROAS Strategic Retreats, Management Board meetings; and
    - Conducting and reading a huge volume of email correspondence to clarify and verify information.
17. In a primarily home-based assessment work and in absence of a documented perception of the context, nature, mode of operations, constraints and strategic focus of the country offices and their operations, through direct presence in the field, the Evaluator felt that the report could be missing fundamental information. To limit the constraint, the Evaluator attempted to acquire as much documentation as possible through other means like skype calls, collection of documents and exchange of emails, related to field activities.
18. There were unwanted limitations:
  - The foreseen skype interviews with Government Officials from countries not visited did not materialize. It was not expected that the Evaluator would arrange for those; ROAS tried but probably the instrument was not feasible.
  - Also the alternative option of sending questionnaires to Governments was discarded, in agreement with ROAS, as not advisable.
19. This limitation obviously implied an information gap in terms of assessing Governments' satisfaction and priorities. Regional Evaluations are not a suitable vehicle to allow for a genuine and useful interaction with country authorities; moreover, in case of Evaluations that must necessarily draw adequate information from the field, the formula of predominantly home-based work is not the most suitable. The allocation of more time at the ROAS office and in a small sample of country offices would have facilitated the progress of work and allowed for a more in depth assessment of achievements and problems encountered at the level of field operations.
20. An Inception Report was produced and cleared in October 2015. It was originally meant to be written following the visits to Nairobi, Cairo and Kuwait, but these had to be postponed for reasons beyond the Evaluator's and UN-Habitat's control. The Inception Report's assumptions and outline were largely superseded by the results of the consultations. The first Draft Evaluation was submitted in mid-January 2016 to the Evaluation Unit for its comments, followed by a second Draft for ROAS' comments in late February and a third one for a broad section of UN-Habitat staff members in mid-April. Further



comments and feed-back from staff followed until early July. This report takes into account their contributions and acknowledges them with thanks.

### 3.2 THEORY OF CHANGE

21. Theory of Change, as requested in the Terms of Reference, was developed by the evaluator and used as the basis for the evaluation.
22. The Theory of Change (Theory of change) is a tool for developing long-term solutions to detected problems and is normally applied at the stage of project design and along its implementation for monitoring of progress. It requires, as a first step, the identification of long-term goals followed then by steps to identify the factors influencing performance and prerequisites necessary to achieve these goals, identify the interventions required to achieve results and finally identify the indicators for each condition to assess performance.
23. In the case of an evaluation (in this case, not a terminal evaluation, but an in-progress evaluation) the theory of change can also be usefully employed as a tool to measure progress achieved so far towards the pre-ordained goals (in this case these are UN-Habitat's established strategic goals relevant to the Arab Region and part of the strategic plan 2014-19). It implies, to some extent, treating the establishment of ROAS and its performance to date as 'work-in-progress'.

### 3.3 FIVE FACTORS

24. Five determinants were identified through the Theory of change as shaping, influencing and conditioning ROAS' engagement in the Arab Region; these determinants, henceforth called Factors, affect ROAS' performance and success.

#### **Factor 1: ROAS' Inception Period (2013-2015) at a time of multiple transitions**

25. The first factor has to do with the chronology of ROAS' establishment (as above in the Introduction). In December 2012, the Office receives the full management mandate for 18 countries in the region. This is a sufficient period, though relatively short, to apply a post-facto backward-looking assessment of ROAS' accomplishments so far (i.e., December 2015); the same accomplishments are also prerequisites for successful achievement and implementation of the reform oriented UN-Habitat strategic plan 2014-19 by 2019. The pathways from output/ accomplishment to outcome and envisioned impact, which had been identified by

the evaluator, were applied as a highly meaningful basis for a forward-looking analysis. The merit of this approach is all the more pertinent considering that the period in question (2013-2015), with prior years of ROAS' existence as historical background, coincides with other far-reaching transitional elements, as explained below, bound to make ROAS' adaptation to a newly acquired regional mandate and context even more complex. Due to transitional elements in strategic, programmatic and administrative terms, this period may be defined as ROAS' inception period with multiple transitions. The building of ROAS into a fully-fledged regional office impacts on other factors, too.

#### **Factor 2: Structural constraints in programme development**

26. In 2013, the year ROAS assumed the full coverage of its regional mandate was also a critical reform year for the UN-Habitat. A major policy shift was made through the formulation and approval of the strategic plan 2014-19 that replaced the Medium-Term Strategic and Institutional Plan (MTSIP) 2008-2013 as the main corporate policy document of UN-Habitat. The focus of the strategic plan 2014-19 is to address the need for strategic spearheading and supporting urban sector reform processes, envisaging the formulation of National Urban Policies, advocating a rationally planned approach to arrest a decades-long process of haphazard city growth, unmanaged urbanization, and imbalanced territorial development. It places much due emphasis on planning and legal reform as well as on the urban economy as the pillars (often referred to as the three-pronged approach) of the overall urban agenda reform process. From 2014 and onwards, ROAS has to take on the task of attempting to integrate into national policy making and programming the sense of priority for the application of the fundamental elements of UN-Habitat's reform oriented agenda; to this effect it has to contend with structural constraints. UN-Habitat, unlike other agencies of the UN system<sup>1</sup>, has never availed of (virtually) any core resources to translate its programmatic approach into field projects designed to be in line with its specific corporate goals; the absence of this 'seed capital' prevents the immediate establishment of coherent Country Programmes and their normative alignment with its programmatic priorities. It

<sup>1</sup> Within the UN Secretariat, UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women, etc., avail of 'core funds' to establish a programmatic framework along their stated priorities; this forms the basis for seeking cost-sharing contributions coherent with the stated goals.

also seriously weakens the possibility to further mobilize cost-sharing contributions from donors to advance its agenda. The dynamics of programme development in the field are therefore to a very large extent determined by Governments' established priorities and by donors' agendas elaborated on the basis of contextual considerations. The supply of external funds tends to take over the programme development function in place of a corporate, policy-driven planning process. The lack of an established system of country offices is a further disadvantage, as it drastically limits UN-Habitat's advocacy in countries without active project portfolios.

**Factor 3: Transitional uncertainty in programme administration and management**

27. The transitional dimension of this Evaluation is reinforced by the introduction in 2015 of a UN Secretariat-wide new administrative system, 'UMOJA'. Once fully established and functioning, UMOJA promises to have the potential to drastically enhance the pace of delivery, monitoring and control in project execution; the system is moreover built to allow for the mechanism of consistent Delegation of Authority (DOA) all the way to COs. In the interim, though, existing DOAs have been recalled (from May 2015), with inevitably unwanted consequences for efficiency in project delivery and, potentially, for credibility with national governments and donors alike. The ongoing process of UMOJA's implementation allows the Evaluation to draw lessons from this interim period and make recommendations toward the desired configuration and modalities of UMOJA within the continuing process of negotiations among the UN Secretariat, UNON and UN-Habitat.

**Factor 4: Delivery built on synergy between Headquarters and Regional/Country Offices**

28. UN-Habitat, as part of its reform process, has parted ways with the institutional dichotomy, which had existed since UN-Habitat inception, between its normative and operational functions and between its global and regional/ local levels. The organizational reform in 2011 meant substituting its two Divisions, Global and Regional Technical Cooperation, responsible respectively for normative

and operational, with seven Thematic Branches<sup>2</sup> with a single mandate; this sent a powerful signal (in the Evaluator's opinion, highly positive and long overdue) toward greater integration between the level of field operational projects and Headquarters-led normative research. The Agency-wide operating mechanism to this effect becomes that of Flex Teams (also launched in 2013) meant to articulate and blend Headquarters' inputs with those of Regional Offices toward greater integration between the level of field operational projects and Headquarters-led normative research. The Agency-wide operating mechanism to this effect becomes that of Flex Teams (also launched in 2013) meant to articulate and blend Headquarters' inputs with those of Regional and Country Offices around common work. This synergy in operational projects has been already applied in a number of cases in ROAS' portfolio which allows for an initial assessment to help highlight successes and critical issues in implementation.

**Factor 5: Risk of disconnect between the corporate agenda and ROAS' Country Programmes in crisis situations**

29. The last factor strongly influencing ROAS' programming is the widespread planread crisis situation in the Arab region. Of the eleven countries with established UN-Habitat programme portfolios, eight are affected by direct or induced crisis. The region, accounting for between 5 and 6 per cent of world population (depending on the variable definition of regional boundaries adopted by different institutions) currently generates around 50 per cent of the worlds' refugees.<sup>3</sup> The rational approach to planned management of urbanization and city expansion guided by prior legal and planning reform is markedly at odds with its intractable opposite, a reality of massive and unpredictable distress migration and displacement the main impact of which is the city. Yet, today's displacement is bound to be the uncontrolled urban sprawl of tomorrow and to generate imbalanced territorial development weighing heavily against

2 Urban Legislation, Land and Governance branch, Urban Planning and Design Branch, Urban Economy Branch, Urban Basic Services Branch, Housing and Slum Upgrading Branch, Risk Reduction and Rehabilitation Branch, and Research and Capacity Building Branch.

3 UNHCR Global Trends Report (June 2015): World at War reports the highest peak ever in refugees (13.9 million newly displaced) in 2014; of these 'roughly 50 per cent originate from the MENA (Middle East & North Africa) region'.

viable economic growth, causing the consolidation of cities based on segregation, inequitable land administration and tenure systems—with protracted negative impact on human rights. UN-Habitat's current approach to crisis management focuses on risk reduction and on enhancing city resilience under the impact of crises. But there may be more proactive, recovery and development-oriented strategic opportunities at stake for UN-Habitat in crisis management in parallel and beyond enhancing city resilience, particularly when recovery becomes politically viable.

30. The focus of the analysis in this respect is to assess the extent of a possible disconnect between the agency's corporate planning and development goals at the level of UN-Habitat's field projects in crisis situations and, in parallel, highlight any instance of a process of incremental alignment.

### 3.4 PREREQUISITES FOR SUCCESS

31. To conclude the chapter on evaluation approach and methodology, the identified Prerequisites for Success are paired, as relevant, with each of the previously defined factors:

#### **Factor 1: ROAS' inception period (2013-2015) at a time of multiple transitions**

- The establishment of a high-level inter-governmental body as foremost partner in promoting UN-Habitat's policy priorities in the region.
- The establishment of a network of regional partners to sustain ROAS' work and to jointly promote regional activities.

#### **Factor 2: Structural constraints in programme development**

- A multi-pronged strategy for establishing Country Programmes.

#### **Factor 3: Transitional uncertainty in programme administration and management**

- A decentralized system for delegated authority that effectively responds to demonstrated needs of Regional and Country Offices.
- A well-functioning system for reporting and monitoring project activities and results.

#### **Factor 4: Delivery built on synergy between Headquarters and Regional/Country Offices.**

- Clear coordination mechanisms and rules of engagement.

#### **Factor 5: Risk of disconnect between the corporate agenda and ROAS' Country Programmes in crisis situations.**

- Mechanisms to promote alignment with the fundamental elements of UN-Habitat's strategic agenda while fully responding to the needs of the affected countries and communities.

32. The final Prerequisite for Success relates to all above Factors:

- Formulation of a sound Regional strategy for the accomplishment of strategic plan 2014-2019 and for further outreach of ROAS' activities beyond 2015.

33. These are used in the next Chapter to assess ROAS' achievements in the period 2013-2015 (the Inception period) as the basis for further development toward accomplishing the Strategic plan 2014-2019 goals.

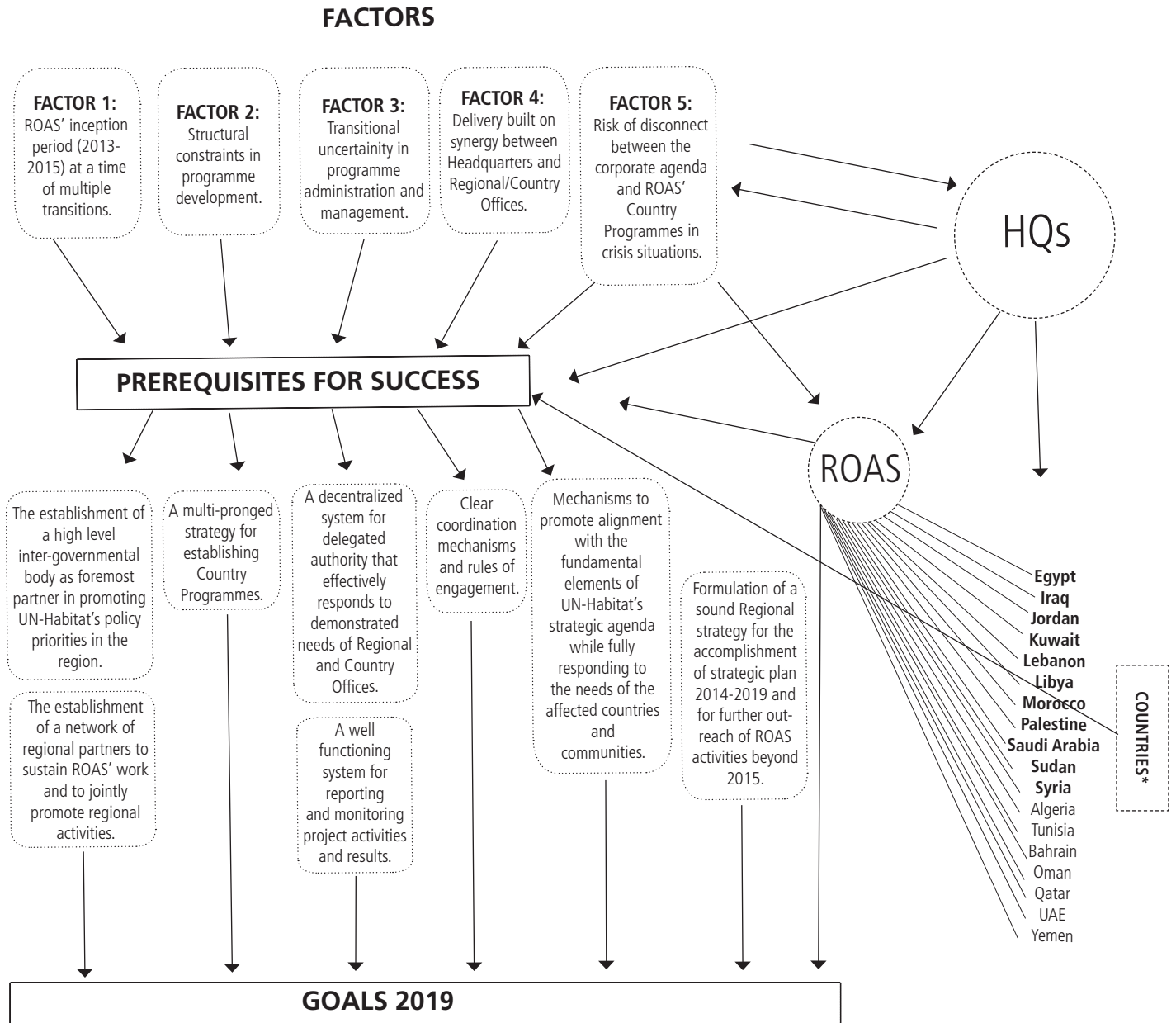
34. This is done recalling the three-pronged purpose of the evaluation, assessing what has been achieved in terms of:

- The results of the establishment of ROAS on corporate delivery to countries in the region;
- The progress made on implementing UN-Habitat's strategies and corporate decisions to decentralize functions to the Arab States region;
- The 'added value' of UN-Habitat ROAS in addressing urbanization issues.

35. Figure 1 illustrates the adopted Theory of change model.

36. The five factors outlined in chapter 3.3 provide the analytical model to formulate the evaluation findings and to describe ROAS' achievements. The model adopted is one of contextual analysis whereby achievements are assessed in the framework of the specific constraints and opportunities inherent in the described factors.

Figure 1: The adopted Theory of Change model



\* In bold, 11 countries out of 18 countries with an active UN-Habitat project portfolio.

## 4. EVALUATION FINDINGS

37. The Theory of Change model is applied in this chapter with a forward-looking analysis geared toward the identification of measures to reduce constraints on ROAS' work and increase its potential impact. Seven specific achievements are identified and described in relation to the respective factors.

### ***Findings Related to Factor 1: ROAS Inception period (2013-2015) at a time of multiple transitions***

#### **4.1 ACHIEVEMENT 1**

38. Achievement 1 is the establishment of a high-level inter-governmental body as foremost partner in promoting UN-Habitat's policy priorities in the region.

39. ROAS has been extremely successful in setting up what could be termed as the foremost regional instrument for policy reform advocacy and advancement of the agency's corporate agenda, by establishing a high level (inter-Ministerial) sectoral forum, the Arab Ministerial Forum for Housing and Urban Development (AMFHUD). AMFHUD held its inaugural meeting from 20 to 22 December 2015 in Cairo, Egypt, at the time this report was being drafted. The forum lends a high degree of legitimacy and credibility to UN-Habitat's presence in the region and helps formalizing its role as effective lead international actor in the urban sector in the Arab world.

40. This is a major result for ROAS, deserving high credit, shared with the prior Regional Office for Africa and Arab States (ROAAS), which had initiated the political negotiations: in 2009, at the 21st Session of the Governing Council (GC), ROAAS made a presentation based on UN-Habitat ongoing experience with Inter-Ministerial regional fora in Africa and in Latin America and the Caribbean. At GC 23, in 2013, a joint presentation Headquarters-ROAS introduced a concept paper prepared by ROAS, highlighting scope and mode of operation of the intended regional forum. The Government of Egypt as ROAS' host country played a key role in establishing the housing and urban development forum, together with the League of Arab States

(LAS), which is now effectively the main regional counterpart for ROAS.

41. In a work agenda geared toward reform processes such as UN-Habitat, accomplishments need to be assessed for their potential as instruments in effectively spearheading the desired strategic action. The ideal pathway from output/accomplishment (AMFHUD's establishment) to outcome measured in terms of impact can be outlined. ROAS, by supporting AMFHUD, as its Technical Secretariat, may help to set a work agenda geared towards:

- a. Raising the priority level of urban reform in national strategies as well, as a result, in the programming instruments of the international community in each country,
- b. Leading an inter-governmental sectoral policy debate spearheading horizontal cooperation at all levels,
- c. Being instrumental in promoting at the national level the establishment of National Urban Fora (for the time being existing in Egypt, Palestine and Saudi Arabia) as effective instruments for policy and programme reform,
- d. Lending its political weight in facilitating ROAS' identification and formulation of Regional and sub-Regional programmes,
- e. Setting thematic working groups among countries with exchange of information and best practices, and overall knowledge management,
- f. Helping identifying priority capacity development needs and facilitating relevant programme formulation and networking among national institutions,
- g. Sustaining ROAS' outreach in the region, by facilitating its inroad to countries until now without Habitat activities.

42. The official report of the meeting has not been issued at the time of completing this evaluation;

however, the 'verbal feed-back' received by the Evaluator, together with prior discussions with ROAS on the possible future role to be performed by AMFHUD allows the Evaluator to formulate the following recommendation:

#### **Recommendation 1:**

ROAS should, as a priority, lend assistance toward building a strong working relationship with AMFHUD's Secretariat, by agreeing on ROAS' support functions and define a Work Agenda reflecting need for promoting urban reform in national strategies, inter-governmental sectoral policy debate, establishment of National Urban Fora, formulation of regional and sub-regional programmes, exchange of information and best practices, capacity development and outreach.

## **4.2 ACHIEVEMENT 2**

43. Achievement 2 is the establishment of a network of regional partners to sustain ROAS' work and to jointly promote regional activities.
44. ROAS has managed to establish important working partnership with a number of regional bodies and institutions:
45. Within the UN system:
  - The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (UNESCWA), which has a UN counterpart mandate to Inter-Governmental bodies and with which consultations are advanced to jointly identify and strategic plans or regional programmes; it is advised that ROAS' contacts with the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) should also be strengthened, in collaboration with UN-Habitat Regional Office for Africa (ROAf), with a view to ensure appropriate coverage of the countries of the Maghreb in all potential regional programmes.
  - The meetings of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), which ROAS regularly attends to promote better understanding of the urban agenda and, consequently, a possibly more appropriate reflection of its priority within multilateral Programming Instruments, as well as to explore opportunities for joint programme activities.

46. With regional institutions:

- The Arab Towns Organization (ATO), with which negotiations for a Memorandum of Understanding and future collaboration are ongoing. ATO is the crucially important partner for opening up for ROAS the whole regional constituency of Local Authorities, hence the key for mainstreaming to the city level UN-Habitat normative message and operational tools. ATO is based in Kuwait where a UN-Habitat Sub-regional Office has been in existence since 2008,
- The Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI), with which negotiations are already ongoing,
- The United City and Local Government – Middle East and West Asia (UCLG MEWA), also with negotiations ongoing.

### ***Findings Related to Factor 2: Structural constraints in programme development***

## **4.3 ACHIEVEMENT 3**

47. Achievement 3 is the development and expansion of Country Programmes.
48. Despite structural constraints in programme development, ROAS was successful in registering a significant growth in terms of delivery (expenditure + PSC) in the years 2013 (first year of ROAS full mandate with 18 countries) to 2015, as compared to the years 2011 and 2012; likewise, a similar pattern of growth was registered in overall volume of active project portfolios (approved multi-year project budgets). Table 1 shows the active portfolios of approved budgets (current and subsequent years); column 3 gives the current year expenditure on activities, column 4 the earned PSC and column 5 the sum of the two.
49. The evolution of the portfolio shows an overall notable growth in allotment and expenditures, especially from 2013 to 2014, then a weakening in 2015.
50. However, this is fully compensated by a major projected growth for 2016 on the basis of the approved allotments for the year (over USD46 million) and of a healthy pipeline of which a reported figure of above USD17 million is expected to come on stream in the first six months of 2016 (reporting by ROAS during the first quarter of

Table 1: Delivery 2011 - 2015

Year	Total Portfolio	Expenditure	PSC	Total Delivery
2011	79,041,601.00	3,953,031.00	374,762.38	4,327,793.38
2012	94,742,003.00	7,028,637.00	608,038.31	7,636,675.31
2013	93,041,601.00	14,540,996.00	1,053,440.37	15,594,436.37
2014	139,218,866.00	33,487,569.02	2,219,143.07	35,706,712.09
2015	122,510,156.00	23,961,402.71	2,080,708.12	26,042,110.83

Source: 2011-2014: IMIS/PAAS; 2015: IMIS, UMOJA, PAAS

2016 indicates that much of it has been already secured; moreover, the aggregate volume of active portfolios, including approved allotments for future years, reportedly stands at USD152.6 million by May 2016).

51. From eight countries with active portfolios in 2012, there are now a total of 11 active countries (out of a total 18 countries under ROAS' management). The three additions are Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria.
52. The fluctuation between 2014 and 2015 is explained as the result of the major effort at project development undertaken by ROAS and Country Offices in 2013 (continued in 2014), straining delivery capacity.
53. In spite of the very good ROAS' performance to date, the structural constraints, inherent primarily in the absence of core funds to initiate projects as well as of available seed resources to invest in project identification and formulation, act as a limiting factor to ROAS' ability to advance the key elements of the UN-Habitat urban agenda and extend its outreach.
54. This chapter analyses limiting factors as well as mechanisms adopted (or that may be adopted) for developing country projects and programmes, the

sum of which may then be equated to an indirect 'programme development facility' to partly reduce structural constraints. Box 1 recounts a relevant success story of programme development.

55. Another formula of 'project development facility' was used to start a programme in Syria, in 2013-14, until then with no active UN-Habitat portfolio. Available funds in UN-Habitat, within the Emergency Response Fund (ERF), a mechanism designed to support programme formulation, were used to post in Syria a UN-Habitat staff-member at the initiative of the Risk and Rehabilitation Branch in early 2013. An additional consultant was then hired and, by early 2014, a project was approved with a budget of USD 831,578. This provided the proverbial 'foot-in-the-door' and the initial activity on which further programme development could be built. The Syria programme has since then grown into a major one. By the time of approval of the first project, however, the cost of the formulation phase had grown to around USD500,000 and by then the initiative had been handed over to ROAS. The ERF worked as a lending facility and ROAS therefore found itself under obligation to replenish the Fund. There was no agreed mechanism for replenishing the ERF, however PSC generated by new projects could not be used for repayment. Thus ROAS could only repay by using new income agreements. This has

### Box 1: Formulation of a National Urban Policy in four countries in the Arab region

In the course of 2015, a joint initiative by the Urban Planning & Design Branch at HQ and ROAS led to the formulation of a project proposal for the formulation of a National Urban Policy (NUP) in three countries, submitted to the UN Secretariat-based Development Account for funding. The project was approved in October 2015 and, as a result, UN-Habitat will be able to launch NUP formulation activities in Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Sudan with a budget of around USD100,000 per country. This is a perfect example of a normative-operational synergy leading to the translation of the agency's fundamental policy thrust to the country level. Those involved in the initiative, at Headquarters, ROAS and respective Country Offices, should be commended.

The four new NUPs will add to an ongoing similar exercise in Egypt and the planned development of a NUP in Saudi Arabia (see ahead in this Chapter under Achievement 5). Four countries with an already established UN-Habitat programme and staff presence were selected and this will ensure that the NUP process can avail of the support of national counter-parts familiar with UN-Habitat's work and of experienced UN-Habitat country teams. This lessens the margins of uncertainty in an initiative that may prove crucial for further advocacy, dissemination and outreach especially to countries as yet without a UN-Habitat presence.

proven difficult as donors seem to be uninterested in funding seed-capital interventions. ROAS is still in the process of repaying.

56. Obviously, there could be no incentive to further try the modality; at any rate, the ERF was then discontinued by UN-Habitat. Despite the 'success' of the Syria initiative in terms of generating 'seed capital', the margins of uncertainty over the chance of foreseeable resource mobilization argue against the formula of a lending modality for project formulation, a key function to ensure UN-Habitat's progress and sustainability.
57. Another similar instrument, the Internal Development Fund (IDF), also later discontinued, was used to design the Project 'Future Saudi Cities' in Saudi Arabia; in this case, the Government, which fully funded the initiative, accepted to absorb the cost of the formulation phase as part of the budget of the project, once approved. This formula whereby the provider of projects funds (whether the national Government or an external donor) accepts to cover the cost of the formulation phase would clearly be the most desirable. In practice though, Saudi Arabia remains a notable exception (together, partly with Egypt); the national Government was also the provider of funds, prior negotiations with high level Habitat Headquarters's involvement took place to secure Government concurrence to take over formulation costs. At country level, generally, local offices of bilateral donors do not have the authority to commit seed funds for formulation, nor take over post-facto any cost which was incurred prior to project approval. ROAS and Country Offices should step up advocacy for this formula, supported by parallel action by Headquarters directed at the donors' head offices.
58. A mix of formulas, presented below may be fine-tuned and applied to promote project formulation and development:

***Formulation of global/ regional programmes with provisions for national modules.***

59. The first may be inspired by the model initiative resulting in securing funds for NUPs in four countries, in the form of a Headquarters-driven design of global programmes which include specific regional modules (design of which may be handed over to

Regional Offices) and fund provision for country-level application. NUPs should now grow in that direction, but more may and should be conceived and developed by the Branches as outlets for the application of their normative products at the country level and as a tool for resource mobilization for both Headquarters and regional/country projects. Only one among the ongoing global programmes in UN-Habitat can be defined as fairly new, 'Achieving Sustainable Urban Development' Programme (ASUD), which started in 2013. ASUD was specifically designed to apply at the country level the strategic and integrated UN-Habitat approach to urban development. Egypt is one of the four participating countries. Through ASUD and other coherent initiatives, Egypt is possibly, among the countries in ROAS portfolio, the nearest to achieving a satisfactory programme alignment with UN-Habitat's normative agenda (see under Achievement 5 in this Chapter). The seed capital provided by ASUD has moreover allowed a joint ROAS—Government resource mobilization that has brought bilateral funding into the ROAS Egypt Country Programme and much needed resources to address other priorities technically supported by UN-Habitat Egypt.

60. The other global programmes have been under implementation for a number of years. The Participatory Slum Upgrading Facility (PSUP) and Safer Cities (both having achieved over the years very good country coverage) also serve as models since both were introduced at programme design level with adequate resources to initiate country activities. Also the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) avails of seed funds to support country activities relevant to its research mandate and has supported in some successful instances ROAS country activities.
61. The alignment of UN-Habitat mandate for Sustainable Development Goal 11 could form the basis for targeted global programmes by each Branch. SDG 11 provides an internationally recognized crucial mandate for UN-Habitat which the agency could use also for the purpose of achieving desired impact at the country level. For all Global Programmes, Regional Offices could develop regional modules and country projects.



### **Formulation of Habitat Country Programme Documents.**

62. The Habitat Country Programme Document (HCPD)<sup>4</sup> has been in existence for some years and applied as an in-country mechanism to carry out rapid needs assessments, identify the urban sector's priorities and indicate relevant key projects to address them. Once prepared in close consultation with national partners, this is intended to become a 'statement of purpose' for proposed initiatives as a means to engage Government and approach donors. Currently, in the Arab region, there are active HCPDs in Iraq and Sudan. ROAS has already planned to extend the modality to at least five more countries in 2016 (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria). The foot-note recalls the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) 2015 recommendation that ROAS should complete 10 HCPDs by end 2015; this is obviously fully unrealistic considering that neither ROAS nor COs have access to discretionary resources to engage in the demanding formulation process. ROAS' target of five by end 2016, while still ambitious, is much more realistic.

### **Reflect urban sector priorities in multilateral Programming Instruments.**

63. Urban issues become increasingly relevant in countries experiencing trends of rapid and large-scale urbanization, yet this centrality is very often inadequately (if at all) reflected in multilateral programming instruments such as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), the Common Country Strategy (CCS), Common Country Assessment (CCA). The same instruments, formulated in consultation with Government and donors, serve then as the basis for multilateral resource allocation and for additional third party cost-sharing. UN-Habitat's structural disadvantage of not having a system of established country representations is much to blame for the urban agenda being ignored, fragmented or subsumed within Programming Instruments. In countries with a UN-Habitat presence, engagement by the Country Teams in the lengthy and demanding process of formulation has shown progress.

- In Lebanon, the Country Team is engaged in the formulation of UNDAF (completion scheduled end 2016). Weekly meetings are held within the UN Country Team (UNCT); UN-Habitat promotes an integrated recognition of the urban issue.
- In Sudan, UNDAF is to be completed in 2017; UN-Habitat chairs the Programme Management Team which coordinates the review of current UNDAF and preparation of the next UNDAF (2018-22). It also chairs the Darfur Reconstruction and Development Strategy
- In Morocco, the Common Country Assessment (CCA) is completed and UNDAF is in the making (2017-2021). Achieving centrality of the urban issue is a slow process.
- In Palestine, currently CCA is ongoing as basis for next UNDAF; there is a Chapter on Urbanization, the goals of which are co-chaired by UN-Habitat and United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). There is a new Chapter on SDG 11. UN-Habitat is the lead agency for the UN Gaza Transformation Plan.
- In Kuwait, the CCS is completed and 'Promoting sustainable urban development' is one of the 7 Intervention Areas.

64. The route of the programming instruments is not an easy and direct one to ensure opportunities for programme development. ROAS has already supported Country Offices' engagement in this area and may consider giving specific guidance and technical support collectively to all Country Offices. Engagement in countries without UN-Habitat's presence does not appear feasible for the time being.

### **Approving low-budget projects**

65. A drawback to programme development is represented by a norm, in force in UN-Habitat, to the effect that the minimum project budget admissible for project approval is USD300,000 (though special exceptions for lower budget projects are in principle admitted – case in point is a USD200,000 Cities Alliance funded project in Lebanon). This provision (based obviously on a cost and benefit analysis, expected PSC revenue versus overall administrative management costs),

4 OIOS (2015), *Evaluation of the United Nations Human Settlement Programme, Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, E/AC.51/2015/2, recommendation 3* "UN-Habitat should complete Regional Strategic Plans (RSPs) in all ROs and resume the development of Habitat Country Programme Documents (HCPDs) in priority country programmes..." UN-Habitat's action for implementing the recommendations of the OIOS evaluation specifies that four RSPs will be developed and at least 10 HCPDs will be developed by end of 2015.



King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz Housing project in Hebron, Palestine © UN-Habitat

appears self-defeating and regressive for more than one reason. This provision has been cited as a constraining factor by some ROAS country offices where supply of external funds is limited and Governments have limited cost-sharing ability (case in point Morocco). The value of 'entry point', the seed capital investment in a new Country Programme, or in a new thematic area in an active country, is denied and defeated by this provision; moreover, often, the most significant projects from the point of view of normative reform (e.g., draft a new law, formulate a policy) require low budgets. While it is imperative that UN-Habitat does not lose money in project implementation (hence maintain the budget threshold below which PSC resources are insufficient to cover implementation-related costs) flexibility should be maintained in allowing for exceptions based on the criteria outlined above.

### ***Extending to ROAS discretionary yearly access to resources for project development***

66. The use of overhead revenue for project development is not allowed under the rules governing PSC (only indirect costs may be charged, hence, for instance, no hiring of consultants). An exception may perhaps be made in the case of a country with demonstrated PSC earnings, wishing to use a fraction of it to allow further programme development (like formulating a successive phase of an ongoing project) based on agreement with Government and the donor(s) who made the initial investment; in one country, such a request

was turned down by Headquarters in spite of the considerable PSC earnings that the programme had generated and in spite of the urgent need to move ahead with the formulation of four projects under urgent pressure. Engaging in project identification and formulation in countries with no UN-Habitat presence and portfolio is even more intractable. ROAS has planned to open up four new countries (Algeria, Bahrain, Tunisia and Yemen) in 2016 (see Achievement 8 in this Chapter). For this to become a reality ROAS has no obvious resources, except its overstretched staff time, to invest in project identification and formulation. UN-Habitat must confront this contradiction: it is not in keeping with the spirit of the Programme Support principle that out of overhead earnings accruing to Headquarters from the field not even a minimal fraction may be reinvested for further supporting programme development. ROAS receives a modest yearly amount from Headquarters for general expenses, under the attribution of 'core'; none of the budget lines included in this allocation, however, allows for the fielding of inputs required to develop new programmes, i.e. hiring of consultants (a 'direct cost' hence not permissible if financed by PSC). But PSC forms only a part of UN-Habitat's 'core budget' which includes other funds like, primarily, donors' voluntary contributions to the Habitat Foundation for the implementation of its work programme; using these funds to cover direct costs is permissible. It would be strategically advisable as well as equitable, when the level of funds other than PSC allow for that, to grant ROAS/Country

Offices a yearly allocation to be used discretionally to fund the required inputs (primarily consultants) for programme development in new countries as well as extension of existing country programmes. This would go a long way in making stated goals more easily achievable as well as in generating additional PSC revenue for the agency.

67. The following Recommendation takes the above points into consideration to ease this crucial constraint and advocates the adoption/streamlining of a set of mechanisms as above.

#### Recommendation 2:

It is recommended that UN-Habitat, while stepping up the formulation of global/regional programmes geared to its normative message and including modules for related regional/country projects, strives to provide better accessible instruments for programme development, and to reduce constraints currently experienced by ROAS and COs.

### **Findings Related to Factor 3: Transitional uncertainty in programme administration and management**

#### **4.4 ACHIEVEMENT 4**

68. Achievement 4 is managing transitional uncertainty in programme administration and management.
69. The main guiding principle, of special relevance to Regional and Country Offices, inherent in the UMOJA system is a further extension of the system of DOA all the way to Country Offices.
70. Extending DOAs for financial authorizations as well as legal authority for Agreements of Cooperation has worked well in the case of UN-Habitat since 1996-97 when these were granted to its first Regional Offices, the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (ROLAC) and the

Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP)<sup>5</sup>.

71. It would mean granting the certifying and approving authority for an activity to the country office where the responsibility for setting it up and implementing it is also placed. That is also the level closest to the ultimate clients and beneficiaries. Like in the case of the principle of subsidiarity, which UN-Habitat so warmly endorses in the case of devolution to Local Authorities in the realm of urban management, entrusting country offices with that authority is likely to obtain the same result: enhance accountability.
72. Therefore, the principle is warmly supported by the Evaluator in this Report.
73. There is no doubt whatsoever that UN-Habitat, as a Programme of the UN Secretariat, ought to be placed on a level of speed and efficiency in delivery as close as possible to that of non-UN Secretariat agencies and programmes.
74. In the interim, during the trial period of UMOJA, the existing DOAs within Regional Offices were recalled (or reduced) as an interim measure; that happened in May 2015. This brought back to the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) the approving authority for field action; delays, as compared to the previous regime, were experienced and, in some cases, strained the relationship with country clients/beneficiaries. The most serious problems have been experienced by countries with the need for large procurements under time pressure, like Iraq, which saw the DOA approval amount limit reduced from USD150,000 to USD40,000. As a result, the previously functioning Bank account in Amman was closed and contracts for national personnel expired without renewal in spite of months' old

<sup>5</sup> See to this effect: OIOS Audit of the UNCHS Rio de Janeiro Office (May 1999): 'The Audit established that the Rio Office is operating within the terms of its delegated authority and in accordance with UN rules and regulations'. The OIOS Report 2015/084 on ROLAC, in the relevant section 'Regulatory Framework' observes cases in which the prescribed maximum length of consultants' contracts was in some cases not respected (the only Audit observation related to DOA). The UN Board of Auditors' Management Letter on the Audit of ROAP (09/2011) notes: 'No significant errors, omissions or misstatements on the financial records' and, further, 'design and operation of the controls that are in place were adequate'. The 2015 OIOS Audit on ROAS notes in Section C 'Regulatory Framework' that 'Procurement actions were performed in accordance with applicable procedures', 'based on the compliance with the UN principles guiding procurement functions'.

- extension requests. With a total budget of USD38 million to administer and with projects entailing the provision of services for hundreds of thousands of people in camps, a DOA of USD40,000 becomes little more than a petty cash. By contrast, the UN Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) avails of a DOA of USD1 million.
75. The expected drop in delivery rates due to the necessity to fall back to Nairobi-based approval procedures did not occur in the case of ROAS' portfolio; knowing of the imminent recall of DOAs, ROAS had instructed Country Offices to 'obligate' all amounts in projects' budget lines expected to be expended from then to year-end. This allowed 2015 delivery to remain at a good level, over 70 per cent. In fact, there was an increase in delivery over the period 2013 and 2014.
76. However, significant evidence from the field shows that activities in the second part of the year, which could not be forecasted before May 2015 were seriously delayed, in many cases re-phased to 2016; these include contracting of consultants and national officers (in one country forcing the postponement of scheduled project evaluations), travel (for which UNON in Nairobi required three weeks' notice), and forcing in some cases cancellation of missions.
77. Some of ROAS' country offices applies the formula of utilizing 'third-party providers of services'. UNDP is one example; it charges for services in their Universal Price List are modest, but serious delays may occur. The UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) also charges for services. It has provided efficient services to UN-Habitat projects (case in point is the Syria programme) but applies a high overhead—around 8%, which is to be added to the overhead charged by UN-Habitat. UN Missions in countries in crisis are another example.
78. Pressure from projects' clients (Governments and donors) to keep up speed in administrative procedures and disbursement has grown (the Government counterpart in Egypt complained, in a meeting attended by the Evaluator, that the time required for contracts' approval had increased and become very close to the time span required under Government procedures) so that some country offices may be tempted to move to expensive third party providers during 2016, the second critical transition year to UMOJA.
79. The increase in overall UN-Habitat execution costs may test the limits of acceptability among donors or Governments; already additional charges to projects' budget lines (mandated by the 2012 UN-Habitat Cost Allocation & Recovery Policy) have reduced the net amount of project budgets available for field activities.
80. In the view of the Evaluator, it is imperative that UN-Habitat is put in a position to perform effectively if the sustainability of its regional and country operations is to be maintained.
81. There is much more at stake in the operationalization of UMOJA than just the issue of DOAs. In the course of this Evaluation, as feed-back from UN-Habitat Headquarters and field offices came in, reasons for concern emerged as to the very suitability of a system uniformly devised for all Secretariat entities and to problems inherent in tailoring its features to the specific UN-Habitat needs in terms of managing field level operations. Work is in constant progress at Headquarters, through engagement with UNON and the UN Secretariat, to tailor UMOJA to the agency's needs.
82. In this respect, the following observations on delegation of authority in Box 2 made by the Evaluator and supported by interviews with UN-Habitat staff at Headquarters, ROAS and Country offices' level, could be considered.
83. Meanwhile, very serious difficulties have emerged in processing financial authorizations, expediting payments, recording expenditures. This has further complicated the already critical area of financial reporting. This issue is commented upon in this Chapter, section 'Expenditure monitoring and reporting'.

### Recommendation 3:

UN-Habitat, as part of the ongoing negotiation process with the Secretariat and UNON, should strive for a system of delegated authority that remains within the Agency and that safeguards the operational efficiency of its field programmes and review the UMOJA procedures striving for maximum permissible adaptation to the requirements of speed and efficiency.

### Box 2: Toward viable delegations of authority

The principle of DOAs is that these represent a person to person attribution of authority based on trust; a condition that is ensured if the power of delegation (and withdrawal of, when due) remains within the Agency (at its highest level).

Areas of coverage of DOA: the body of financial rules in the UN system is cast in iron with no margins for flexibility. Flexibility exists instead in areas of procurement, for instance, related to hiring of consultants and sub-contractors. For example, under which circumstances would it be legitimate to waive full bidding procedures? There is scope, taking the opportunity of UMOJA's inception, to review a whole set of procedures aiming for greater speed and efficiency without exceeding the boundaries of established rules.

Training by UN-Habitat for Programme Management Officers (PMO) with the function of Certifying Officer and for Approving Officers (Project Managers or Country Directors) may need to be arranged by UN-Habitat; the Regional PMO in Cairo would ensure that compliance with required standards is maintained in a uniform way across Country Offices.

Financial levels of delegation should be flexible and defined on the basis of demonstrated procurement needs of each field project/programme; currently there are ROAS countries where the majority of requests for procurement exceed USD75,000; large scale procurement close to or exceeding USD150,000 also occur. The principle of 'flexible levels of DoA' in accordance with demonstrated procurement needs and size of budget should be argued for.

### Reporting and monitoring of project activities

84. In the course of this Evaluation, a critical constraint emerged, related to the function of reporting and monitoring delivery of project activities and results.
85. The Project Accrual and Accountability System (PAAS) is developed and managed by the Division of Management and Operations and is designed to monitor all steps in Project Cycle Management, from project design and project approval, monitoring of project implementation up to closure of the project and knowledge management.
86. Opinions of interviewees both at ROAS and Country offices level are highly critical of the system. No interviews with the staff in charge of PAAS were organized for the Evaluator at Headquarters. At any rate, the Division of Management and Operations, through a document to be discussed further below, mainly attributes the problem to widespread non-reporting by country offices. These, in turn, do not deny their very partial compliance with the reporting requirements but gave reasons (with which ROAS agrees) for it:
- The PAAS system being not at all user-friendly and difficult to load information, especially in locations where Internet may be erratic as is the case in many countries with UN-Habitat field activities;
  - Reporting duplications inherent in the system set up by Headquarters;
  - Country offices are often saddled with innumerable reporting obligations in the field,
- depending on the requirements and rules of their Government counterparts and/ or donors.
87. This last point was verified by the Evaluator based on a review of monitoring reports. Often monthly (at times weekly) reporting on progress of activities and on expenditures are demanded by the Government and/ or donors; these reporting mechanisms follow different formats and are seen as the foremost priority by country offices because of the immediate accountability pressure exerted on them by project partners in the field. So far, these reports cannot be uploaded into PAAS as the software is not designed for this.
88. As per the internal reporting in UN-Habitat, interviews and review of project documents show that all the initial steps in the project cycle management process leading to project approval are duly complied with. This is not surprising, as failure to do so would imply delay in project approval or no approval at all. But, beyond that, problems start.
89. The Evaluator has reviewed material shared at the Strategic Planning Retreat—Project Cycle Management, held in Nairobi, 23 - 27 November 2015.<sup>6</sup>
90. The Strategic Retreat had a workshop on programme and project life cycle. In the workshop a matrix was used to outline 'Strengthening UN-Habitat 14

<sup>6</sup> The consolidated retreat report was not available at the time of the evaluation in January 2016.

steps Project Cycle Management (PCM).<sup>7</sup> It is an extremely useful overview, because, it identifies what works and what does not, incidentally, matching the Evaluator's view based on interviews.

91. After the first seven steps leading to project approval, the column in the matrix describing 'current practices' carries, from step 8 (implementation monitoring), a list of 'not regularly done' actions. It means Country offices, at best, do not regularly input the requested information regarding 'implementation monitoring' (8a) and 'substantive monitoring' (8b), classified as 'not done at all'.
92. This is the stage where duplication of reporting sets in.
93. The templates for reporting on annual implementation of the strategic plan 2014-19, are filled individually by all country offices, and forwarded to ROAS for compilation of the Regional Reporting template. The template-based annual reporting is set up (in a user-friendly way) to include a free-flowing substantive narrative broken down by the specific goals indicated by the ROAS Regional Strategic Plan, hence a more pertinently focused way of reporting since PAAS still carries upfront the MTSIP goals rather than those of the strategic plan 2014-19. All country offices have fully complied with the reporting on the strategic plan 2014-19 templates.
94. A basic principle may be expressed here by the Evaluator: an excess of ambition in the range of information required through reporting, especially when this entails duplication of efforts, tends to impede, rather than facilitate, the capturing and internalization of the essential information without which proper management of the project cycle becomes impossible.
95. For country offices, it is fairly fast and simple to report on delivery of activities against expected results since that information will, in most cases, be readily available thanks to their standard field reporting to Government/ donors.
96. However, strategic plan 2014-19 reporting takes place at the end of the year; this fact, coupled with insufficient reporting by country offices on PAAS sections related to project implementation means that there is no regular flow of essential information; as a result, the possibility (at ROAS and Headquarters' level) to have a comprehensive and updated picture on projects' progress and delivery, crucial to allow for remedial measures to be taken when due, is lost.
97. The problem is compounded by the fact that Project Documents as well as Project Monitoring Frameworks follow different formats in keeping with specific donors' requirements. Not all Monitoring Frameworks are set up to measure delivery of activities against results.

#### **Recommendation 4:**

It is recommended that the requirement of Substantive Activity Reporting ceases to be a PAAS' requirement and is left exclusively to the templates for reporting on the implementation of the strategic plan 2014-19 to avoid duplication. It is also recommended that the Division of Management and Operations endeavours to simplify the programming of PAAS so as to make it more user-friendly.

#### **Expenditure monitoring and reporting**

98. Monitoring and reporting financial delivery for each project, country portfolio and overall regional portfolios is a fundamental need for Regional Offices and Headquarters to derive the necessary management information in a timely manner. In the years under scrutiny this did not occur as would be desirable and this seems to be caused by a systemic gap in reporting of certified expenditures.
99. It has been difficult in the course of the work to produce uncontroversial expenditure reports for 2015 as well as for prior years. Expenditure and PSC data reported in this Evaluation (Table 1, page 12) were arrived at only prior to this (semi) final draft of 5th June 2016.
100. Country offices, have been instructed to report expenditures through PAAS; 'expenditures' however become official only when duly certified on the basis of the required supporting documents (like payment vouchers) and when the payment is actually made for all expenditures whether made at Headquarters or in the field; this function is the prerogative of UNON Finance Section, the custodian of the financial control systems (IMIS

<sup>7</sup> The workshop was delivered by the Programme Division, which is also host to the PAG secretariat.

up to 31st May 2015, UMOJA from then on). All 'evidence' of expenditures is regularly sent from country offices, Regional Offices and Headquarters units to UNON.

101. With an eye to the future and in light of the imperative of making UMOJA fully and efficiently operational, the Evaluator notes that the UNON's practice (once mandatory) of issuing official Monthly and Quarterly Reports (by project, by country and region-wide) based on the certified figures was not followed during the years under scrutiny. Year-end Expenditure Reports (named Crystal reports) were however issued and uploaded into PAAS; country offices, as already mentioned, complained at having to report expenditures to PAAS in parallel to the reporting to UNON. It may be therefore that two sets of reported expenditure figures appear in PAAS (country offices' reports to PAAS, UNON certified expenditures). PAAS, a monitoring instrument, cannot be expected to assume a fundamental function like certifying, registering and reporting expenditures for which it was not set up and for which it would not have the supporting evidence.
102. Whether this double set of reporting was the reason for the controversial and uncertain Yearly Delivery Reports which were forwarded to the Evaluator at various steps during his work, the Evaluator cannot state with certainty. It is for UN-Habitat to explain. But discrepancies between the two sets of reporting are very likely to occur: payments on expenditures reported in the last months of a calendar year may be actually made and therefore registered by UNON in the successive year; only when UNON reconciles actual payment vouchers against the amounts of registered obligations will it become known if the full amount was actually spent and so on.
103. This problem, in the Evaluator's opinion, creates a serious gap that weakens the ability of all concerned (Headquarters, Regional and Country Offices) to establish and maintain an efficient track record of the progress of field projects, spot weaknesses and delays in delivery or eventual cost overruns, take timely remedial measures and report with credibility to donors/national Governments whenever this may be required.
104. The Evaluator, aware that the process of streamlining UMOJA to the desired level of efficiency is complex and time taking, formulates the following interim Recommendation:

#### **Recommendation 5:**

It is recommended that, incrementally, as part of the process of adaptation and streamlining of UMOJA, the practice of UNON's production of certified delivery reports (expenditure + PSC) on a monthly, quarterly and yearly basis becomes mandatory so as to provide a fundamental tool for proper project management; it is recommended that UN-Habitat negotiates with UNON accordingly. In the interim, it is recommended that ROAS instructs (and assists) Country Offices in producing as accurate as possible 'shadow' delivery reports, based on their own track record of expenditure within registered financial obligations. Headquarters should ensure that appropriate training of PMOs in handling UMOJA takes place as a priority.

#### **Findings Related to Factor 4: Delivery built on synergy between Headquarters and Regional/Country Offices**

### **4.5 ACHIEVEMENT 5**

105. Achievement 5 is building a new delivery mechanism based on synergy between Headquarters and the Regional Office/ Country Offices.
106. The Flex Teams are an instrument to secure a coordinated Headquarters' engagement with Regional and Country Offices around a synergy of purpose across thematic areas. The Flex Teams were launched in 2013 coinciding with the first year of ROAS' operations with a full mandate for 18 countries in the Arab Region. The coordinating role was entrusted to the Programme Division. Introducing the new modality of work systematically and smoothly, to a large extent, is still a work in progress. But, at Headquarters, the Evaluator found a virtually unanimous appreciation for the collaborative attitude ROAS and Country Teams manifested in the initial experience. An equal positive response and assessment came from ROAS and from the project level; in the majority of cases the inputs were seen as important and valuable.
107. By 2013, the UN-Habitat Cost Allocation and Recovery Policy (June 2012) was already in force. This policy functions as an instrument for recovery of all Headquarters' costs allocated to projects which will be charged accordingly to their budget lines. The policy is not unique to UN-Habitat, but follows the joint effort of four Programmes and Funds (UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women and UN Population Fund) harmonizing a cost classification methodology and cost-recovery rates. General Assembly Resolution 67/226, 'Quadrennial

Comprehensive Policy Review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system' of 21<sup>st</sup> December 2012, later endorsed the principle and urged all Secretariat entities to follow suit adapting it to their different business models and funding structures.

108. The UN-Habitat specific policy stipulates that, in case of Headquarters-based staff inputs to projects, the full cost of the related staff time is to be charged to the project (calculated on the basis of: salary plus entitlements, rent, utilities, other common services).
109. The alternative of showing Headquarters staff cost as in-kind contribution to a project is contemplated in the policy in case the project is unable to pay for the full cost of services.
110. In the case of Headquarter's staff inputs, a formal In-House Agreement (IHA) is required between the providing Branch/ Programme and the recipient project. At the time of the evaluation, the modality of IHA has been (and is being) introduced in Egypt, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia.
111. In Egypt, it involved separate inputs for punctual production of outputs by the Urban Services Branch (an urban mobility study), the Urban Planning and Design Branch (under the ASUD project, on planned extensions in the new city of El Alamein), the Regional and Metropolitan Planning Unit of UPDB with advisory services on NUP formulation, the Urban Legislation, Land and Governance Branch with legal advice on Land Registration Law. Those inputs played an important part in steering the Egypt Country Programme toward the UN-Habitat three-pronged approach.
112. In Saudi Arabia, following the interest on the part of the Saudi delegation to the World Urban Forum 2012 for UN-Habitat technical support on planning for sustainable urbanization, an overall concept for 'Future Saudi Cities' for agreed upon; a Project Document was then jointly drafted by the Sub-regional Office in Kuwait, the Urban Planning and Design Branch, the Urban Legislation, Land and Governance Branch, the Research and Capacity Building Branch, under coordination by the Programme Division. The project budget of USD 25 million is financed by the Government. Collaboration started on a 'cost-sharing' modality by the Research and Capacity Development Branch (for the formulation of a capacity development programme), staff time as in-kind input, travel/per diem costs were charged to the project. Under IHA, the Urban Planning and Design Branch's inputs to the Future Saudi Cities for harmonization of sectoral and spatial practices and for harmonization of planning practices and one with the Urban Basic Services Branch for a report on street connectivity should be about to start. More elaborate IHAs are reportedly in the making.
113. An IHA between the Resilient Cities programme and Lebanon for City Profiles (aimed at humanitarian agencies) and technical support to Municipalities for a total period of three months was also entered.
114. Several additional examples of Headquarters and country office synergies through punctual technical inputs, not covered by IHAs, were recorded, overall with a very positive track-record. These are mentioned, country by country, under Achievement 6.

### ***Decision making and coordination issues***

115. The important coordinating role of the Programme Division is recognized; however, problems of coordination and decision-making authority have at times emerged, more among Headquarters' Branches than between individual Branches, on one side, and ROAS/ Country offices on the other, in cases involving multiple inputs to be articulated by different Branches (that is primarily in Saudi Arabia and Egypt). 'Turf attitudes' and 'silos mentality' within Headquarters Branches were indicated as persisting, making coordination efforts more complex. In at least one case, mediation efforts were required and an inter-Branch task force was set up.
116. All agree that clear rules of engagement need to be defined, but, at the same time, some rightly maintain that the variety of project situations and country realities argues against a rigid 'procedural manual' to be uniformly applied. Building a culture of 'working as one' around a common purpose can be regulated only up to a limited extent, beyond that a margin of flexibility is desirable to tailor the implementation modalities to specific project requirements. Different formulas may be adopted, from the case by case definition of a lead-branch in accordance with the predominant thematic area of the project to an individual staff member acting as 'task manager' agreed upon by all intervening Headquarters units, to a small task-force; this would then be in charge of coordination with ROAS and the Country Office in question.



117. But the issue of authority for final decision making on the preferred formula and on all aspects of the collaborative process (type and quality of input, coordination of inputs, scope of activities, timing and so on) will still need to be addressed. Here too the variety of project situations argues for maximum flexibility so that all arrangements for leadership should be permissible and justifiable. However, guiding principles should be observed: the first concerns UN-Habitat Programme Division which has the mandate to guide coordination and synergy at all levels (among Branches/Programmes, between Headquarters and Regional/Country Offices) in project execution and the role of which ought to be maintained as overall overseer also in charge of clearing whichever formula for internal project coordination may be proposed; the second principle is strongly ingrained in the UN system and recognizes that, in all instances of project execution, the ultimate authority for decision rests with the National Project Counterpart. All formulas for managing projects and deciding on inputs would be permissible as long as approved and cleared by national counterparts.
118. Country offices and ROAS are, in the view of the Evaluator, better suited, because of knowledge of and proximity to the local context, to define the most appropriate response to project requirements and should therefore preferably exercise leadership within the UN-Habitat team. In the Evaluator's interviews at Headquarters, these principles were largely confirmed and shared. Here too, exceptions may be advisable and different formulas applied, specifically in projects directly resulting from Headquarters's normative inputs or in multi-country projects with normative reform emphasis (case in point the already mentioned NUP formulation in four Arab countries) where direction and ensuring inter-country coherence from the relevant Headquarters unit may be crucial. Once again, no rigid procedural manual can be conceived to address all situations; case by case operational agreements would have to be arrived at among Headquarters, ROAS and country offices while keeping in mind that concurrence by the National government would have to be secured.
119. Finally, an in-depth and detailed analysis of what worked and what did not in complex programmes like those of Saudi Arabia and Egypt would not be credible if attempted within the scope of a regional evaluation deprived of direct in-country

observation. To advance the learning process of the dynamics of the synergy-based mode of operation introduced by UN-Habitat, Internal Reviews (one for Saudi Arabia is scheduled in 2016) or Country Programmes Evaluations (as the ones carried out in Iraq and Sudan) are advisable.

#### **Recommendation 6:**

All agreements between Headquarters and field projects (and counterpart authorities) for HQs inputs to project activities should emerge incrementally from engagement and dialogue. The authority for ultimate decision making in case of disagreement should, unless otherwise desired by national counterparts, stay at the level of ROAS and of the country concerned (Government and Country Office), because of closer proximity to and familiarity with the relevant needs and so as to safeguard the principle of national ownership of UN executed projects.

120. On the full cost-recovery modality an additional consideration needs to be made. That relates to its cost and therefore its feasible applicability. The cost calculation, comprehensive of entitlements and agency's costs, results in salary scales that, even for a relatively junior staff, would make the applicable daily fee exceed considerably the maximum permissible daily fee used by UN-Habitat for external senior-most consultants.
121. This poses two specific problems. One, the resulting increase in the total cost of UN-Habitat's execution and technical assistance services may work as a disincentive for fund providers (bilateral donors and national Governments in the Arab region). The 'over the limit' personnel cost charged to projects under the cost-recovery modality would add to the overheads and to the special charges applied 'for indirect costs'. The response bilateral donors may give is yet to be tested; in case of projects financed by national Governments of the region, the modality would be acceptable only to few countries with high ability to pay for services. In ROAS region there certainly are countries in this category, but if a considerable and increasing percentage of Headquarters' staff time was to be devoted to those, it would be important for UN-Habitat to maintain on an equal footing the modality of in-kind contribution for staff inputs to ensure due assistance to the less wealthy ones. This would ensure that UN-Habitat portfolio of operations and distribution of Headquarters' staff time does not become dubiously imbalanced.

122. The issue of staff cost under the IHA modality has already shown its limits of applicability in the region. Two instances were reported to the Evaluator by Country Teams in which proposals sent by Branches were turned down on the ground of their cost, after consultations with counterparts.
123. The two formulas for extending Headquarters' staff services to field projects represent two extremes; one (the 'full cost-recovery' option) over-expensive and only marginally applicable, the other (the 'in kind' option) equitable and certainly welcome by recipient countries, but financially not sustainable beyond few selected instances. Most of the synergy-based mode of operation advocated by UN-Habitat depends on the extent these formulas manage to actually bring Headquarters' normative knowledge to the country level. The results may not be as desired unless a quantum of flexibility is introduced in the Full Cost-Recovery Policy between these two rigid extremes.

#### Recommendation 7:

The full cost recovery and in-kind contribution modalities for Headquarters' services to field project should be applied in parallel and be targeted to recipient Governments in accordance to their income levels and social needs. To enhance the scope for Headquarter staff involvement in field projects, it is recommended that a cost-recovery option based on the prevailing rates UN-Habitat applies to international consultants may be introduced when needed. When cost-recovery is applied, UN-Habitat should ensure that charges are justified by services provided.

#### **Findings Related to Factor 5: Risk of disconnect between the corporate agenda and ROAS' Country Programmes in crisis situations**

### 4.6 ACHIEVEMENT 6

124. Achievement 6 is aligning ROAS' portfolios in crisis situations with UN-Habitat's corporate agenda.
125. As already indicated, ROAS operates in a regional context widely affected by severe conflict; in the portfolio of 11 'active' countries (out of the total of 18 under ROAS' responsibility):
- Iraq and Syria are all classified at L-3, the highest level of humanitarian emergency;
  - Jordan and Lebanon, are both severely affected by the impact of the crisis in neighbouring countries; Sudan is under the impact of renewed crisis in neighbouring South Sudan as well as under a situation of internal protracted conflict;
  - Palestine is in a situation of 'enduring conflict' with regular flare-ups of violence;
  - Libya is fully 'in-conflict'.
126. It means that seven out of eleven ROAS active countries are affected in different forms and degrees by a state of crisis, which is bound to determine national priorities and donors' assistance.
127. ROAS' Regional Strategic Plan is rightly built on the principle of striving for maximum alignment with the agency's corporate strategy and its stated priorities. This is applied in practice by involving Country Offices in the strategic attempt.
128. There is evidence of explicit ROAS' guidance to country offices, through Strategic Retreats and Management Board discussions with all Country Teams on developing the 'three pronged approach' in a variety of ways also in national contexts where continuing conflict may theoretically make this approach unlikely.
129. The methodology adopted for this Evaluation states the need to place sufficient emphasis on a country-based analysis of ongoing project initiatives so as to determine to what extent the anomalous situation of the Arab Region impacts on UN-Habitat's promotion of its strategic focus and to what extent the results may show a disconnect between corporate agenda and contextual reality.
130. Overall, what emerges from the review of the country projects, in the Evaluator's opinion is that:
- There is no evidence of attempts to twist national priorities in the effort to guide operations in crisis situations toward a model for sustainable recovery and development. UN-Habitat projects to this effect emerge naturally, albeit slowly, in almost all cases, as a response to genuine needs and priorities felt by national authorities in place as well as by donors in spite of the facts that their normally considerable resources in crisis situation are primarily earmarked for humanitarian/ livelihood support action.

- UN-Habitat's presence among primarily humanitarian-oriented international actors fills a crucial niche (based on its long relevant experience all over the world) in addressing longer-term concerns in a way that may have a far-reaching impact on future national sustainability; and those concerns are primarily urban because cities are the primary point of impact of crisis-induced displacement.
- Even within the intrinsic limitations of an analytical desk-work without direct contact with the field, as this Evaluation is, interesting aspects of adaptation of the corporate UN-Habitat strategy to a crisis context emerge with important lessons; it is more difficult to state with certainty, due to the above limitations, to what extent these may, barring some notable exceptions, fall off the radar screen at Headquarters.

131. A synthesis of the main areas of focus of project portfolios in the six countries affected by direct or induced crisis situations<sup>8</sup> follows below.

### Iraq

132. In Iraq, UN-Habitat's programme has experienced major growth; as part of a large scale project 'Rehabilitation and Regularization of Informal

Settlements and IDP Camps', several broader policy elements emerge also considering that IDPs absorption is carried out along upgrading and regularization activities for the host communities by integrating such communities into the urban fabric through city planning processes. A new paradigm for IDP camps is also developed wherein camps are built as city extensions or infills following as far as possible UN-Habitat sustainable neighbourhood planning guidelines. This prevents future slums and strengthens livelihoods opportunities and social cohesion of displaced and host communities. On land, a Road Map for Land Policy Reform has been formulated and endorsed by the Cabinet in 2015; this is seen as paving the way for the related planning reform. Also on land, UN-Habitat has incorporated into its urban recovery programmes a mechanism to protect Housing, Land and Property (HLP) rights of people affected by the crisis through introduction and operationalization of GIS-based Social Tenure Domain Model that will help map property claims, promotes community-based dispute resolution and expedites land tenure verification procedures; a legal consultation is being prepared on the HLP issue. HLP issues have been applied in the special case of the discriminated minority Yazidi community with support from GLTN.

133. A project 'Strengthening Urban and Regional Planning in the Kurdistan Region' is leading to the formulation of the Spatial Plan for the same region (the Urban Planning and Design Branch has

<sup>8</sup> In the seventh country in crisis, with an approved allotment, Libya, all UN activities had to be suspended because of the level of continuing hostilities.



Darkar Ajam IDP shelter site in Iraq, ©UN-Habitat

held consultations with the Project Team toward a possible collaboration).

134. UN-Habitat supports all 18 governorates of Iraq as well as the federal Ministry of Planning to develop urban strategies; these will feed into the National Urban Strategy to be presented to Habitat III in October 2016. This initiative is part of the larger multi-agency programme to strengthen good governance in Iraq by enhancing public policies and service delivery, implemented in conjunction with technical support to enhance other dimensions of urban planning, such as conservation of cultural heritage, improvement of budget execution system, and controlled urban expansion.
135. The Local Area Development Programme focuses on strategies for inclusive economic growth and municipal finance. The 'Iraqi public sector modernization programme' includes one focus area on policy for equitable access to urban basic services. The Safer Cities programme in Suleimaniyah focuses on preventing violence against women and girls with collaboration with UN Women.

### Jordan

136. Jordan, the most recently established Country Programme in ROAS' portfolio, is a country under 'induced crisis'; UN-Habitat initiated a technical programme in 2013 with initial inputs from ROAS and through the work of a National Professional. The initial engagement was in response to the Government's request for assistance to the Project 'Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Tourism Development'. New programme opportunities were quickly developed justifying the full time recruitment of the same National Professional. The rapid influx of about 1.5 million refugees (primarily from Syria and to a much lesser extent from Iraq), 85 per cent living in hosting communities in urban areas, was the foremost concern in need of attention. Here, too, the Country Programme has incrementally achieved greater coherence with UN-Habitat thematic areas. Related to the Syria-induced crisis, programmes were rapidly identified to assist refugees as part of support to host Municipalities and communities, related to affordable housing, municipal finance (assisted in a very well received way by a pilot project introduced by the Urban Economy Branch focusing on credit rating for municipalities) and city profiling. The pipeline further strengthens the trend toward alignment mainly through the National

Spatial Strategy, the Local Emergency and Risk Management Plan adding to the National Urban Policy due to start.

### Lebanon

137. UN-Habitat in Lebanon has pioneered the formula of establishing Regional Technical Offices at the Municipal level as hubs to build capacities, initially to absorb refugees, later on extending the assistance toward an integrated approach to planning for urban growth, service delivery and shelter provision. Assistance to refugees is the entry point (also in terms of funding) for community-wide development as in the case of service provision in especially deprived neighbourhoods as a first step toward broader coverage. Currently, support is extended to Unions of Municipalities (resulting from consolidation among different local authorities) to better integrate recovery efforts in inter-municipal territories as the basis for longer term planning. Important programmes on water and sanitation (mostly UNICEF financed) follow the same approach. Funding is mainly from UNICEF, UNHCR and UNDP with the Swiss Government expected to come aboard too.

138. A recently approved Cities Alliance project will produce City and Neighbourhood Profiles for the four largest cities of the country (Beirut, Tripoli, Saida, Tyre). On the strength of acquired credibility, pipeline proposals expand the range of intervention of current projects and, in addition, address the formulation of a National Urban Policy (NUP project funded by the UN Development Account), as well as a Strategy for enhancing urban crisis response (proposed to the EU). There is therefore a visible trend from initial emergency response to structural development-oriented proposals increasingly aligning with UN-Habitat's normative priorities. A first experience of organized thematic collaboration among UN-Habitat's Country offices in countries in crisis has been the seminar on City Profiling and the role of Regional Technical Offices.

### Palestine

139. The UN-Habitat programme in Palestine has gained ground in fostering a more strategy-oriented approach within the Palestinian Authority and donors. UN-Habitat was the first agency to propose UN engagement in Area C of the West

Bank in 2009<sup>9</sup>. At the time, such engagement was unthinkable due to fear of Israeli objections and veto. For the last three years, a multi-agency programme in Area C has been progressing, with UN-Habitat playing a major role in planning to ease constraints for local communities by delivering infrastructure and increasing the land area accessible to Palestinians. This activity also implies an important element of forward planning for the time Area C may be fully integrated with the rest of the West Bank, as part of a negotiated agreement.

140. A Housing Policy document was prepared by UN-Habitat with technical support from ROAS; this is not yet ratified but is recognized as an important element for reference in current housing programmes. UN-Habitat was the lead agency in the UN effort to produce the Plan for Gaza Transformation. Collaboration, not formalized, occurs with GLTN and the Planning Branch. The country office feels that Headquarters' support in transferring technical thematic modules to Palestine could be useful.

## Sudan

141. Sudan, one of the two Least Developed Countries (LDC) in ROAS portfolio (the other being Yemen), is still largely affected by the humanitarian crisis in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile States, the impact of the resulting displacement is felt in all major cities. The emphasis of UN-Habitat's growing portfolio is therefore primarily geared to managing rapid urbanization, IDPs absorption, land legislation and management, services upgrading, shelter and conflict resolution, all priority thematic areas for donors. There is agreement between the country office and the Government on the need for a national urbanization policy, but donors have so far not come along. Because of the Government interest, selecting Sudan as one of four recipients of the fund for NUP formulation was a good choice; this may promote further initiatives toward alignment with development priorities; the country's status as LDC is an added value for long-term involvement.

## Syria

142. The experience in building City Profiles to guide action by humanitarian agencies toward better

planned and sustainable delivery has led to a broader coverage of cities. The products are highly valued by the international community. Currently, the European Union and the Swiss Government are financing the profiles, seen as the basis to guide further investment. This is leading to an increasingly comprehensive mapping of issues like damage, displacement, shelter, infrastructure and livelihood as the basis for a Post Conflict Multi-sectoral Needs Assessment already underway. It serves therefore a much needed preparedness function, undertaken during the in-conflict period.

143. The review of the country projects confirms predominance of countries affected by some form of crisis; these are also countries where funds' supply by the international community is at its peak and where needs for assistance are the highest. Does this allow for alignment of the main component of ROAS' field activities with the main thematic goals and focus of UN-Habitat's strategic plan 2014-19? The answer this Report wishes to give is positive. There is definitely a contextual anomaly dictated by the widespread conflict situation; but UN-Habitat's historical substantive role in crisis situations is strongly geared to bringing in concerns and goals that set it apart from those of humanitarian agencies while assisting Governments in setting up preparedness mechanisms (often including policy frameworks, legal and planning instruments for recovery and development). Since the main point of impact of the emergencies is urban, city conditions in the affected countries in the years to come will depend to a significant extent on the effectiveness of strategies adopted during and immediately after the 'in-crisis' period.

144. Project portfolios, also where ROAS' presence is relatively recent, naturally evolve toward the incremental build-up of the three-pronged approach that is the corner-stone of UN-Habitat strategic plan 2014-19, though much remains to be done, mainly through advocacy within the donor community. ROAS played a role in promoting this growing alignment; the potential for further evolution in this direction is high as becomes evident by looking at the classification of projects in UN-Habitat's thematic areas; portfolios which until recently were heavily concentrated on the Area of Risk Reduction and Rehabilitation tend, as time goes by, also to move toward the more development oriented areas, as the brief country reviews above show.

<sup>9</sup> Area C is the portion of the West Bank still fully under Israeli control, equivalent to 62% of the total

145. This Chapter has tried, through short and essential information, regarding six in-crisis countries, to give evidence to this effect. UN-Habitat should more actively recognize the role and impact of crises on urban growth and sustainability, better internalize it in its overall strategic and normative agenda, further support its own project initiatives in crisis situations.

#### Recommendation 8:

It is recommended that Headquarters internalizes and supports, in parallel to the already active ROAS' role, the evolving project portfolios in countries in crisis. ROAS should support horizontal collaboration and exchange among Country Programmes while UN-Habitat should encourage Headquarters Branches to explore practical mechanisms for tangible support.

146. In three countries, the nature and thematic focus of UN-Habitat project portfolios are not affected by crisis: Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Morocco. In Egypt and Saudi Arabia, both with a high degree of alignment with UN-Habitat priorities, information on ongoing activities has been provided in the analysis of the new delivery mechanisms between Headquarters, Regional Office and Country Offices related to Achievement 6.

147. Brief information on Morocco, a country financially unable to make cost-sharing contributions and yet not a major recipient of donor funding—is in a limbo situation in terms of feasible programme development.

### Morocco

148. In Morocco, a low middle-income country, UN-Habitat project portfolio is limited to one project expected to support the Ministry of Housing and Urban Policy in accompanying three urban projects with the aim to improve public policies at city level. The project is financed by a private holding. The Country Director is a Habitat Programme Manager (HPM) fully paid by the Project; he has received regular support from ROAS and from the UN-Habitat Inter-Regional Advisor based in Geneva. The Government is unable to make significant cost-sharing contributions. Morocco is one of the four countries where the UN-Habitat financed (through the UN Development Account) National Urban Policy project is due to start and it is legitimate to hope that this may raise interest by donors. The Country Team has reported that the USD 300,000 minimum budget for project approval set by UN-Habitat is a negative factor which adds to the Government's cost-sharing limitations.

149. Lastly, follows the analysis of accomplishment for the overarching Prerequisite for Success defined as the formulation of a sound Regional Strategy.

## 4.7 ACHIEVEMENT 7

150. Achievement 7 is the formulation of a sound Regional Strategic Plan concluded in 2015 for the accomplishment of the UN-Habitat's strategic plan 2014-19

151. The formulation of an 'Arab Regional Strategic Plan (RSP)' was mandated by Governing Council Resolution 25/15 of 19th April 2013 and recommended in the 2015 OIOS evaluation of UN-Habitat. ROAS had the responsibility for its formulation which it undertook through broad collaboration with substantive Branches and country offices.

152. Finalized in November 2015, it is a thoughtful and well-conceived document addressing specifically each strategic component of ROAS' mandate. This document is on record (due to be endorsed by UN-Habitat) and, for the purpose of the evaluation, only the most salient features will be mentioned here.

153. The period of ROAS operations from 2013 (when the office receives the mandate for full regional coverage) until today are considered in this evaluation as the 'inception period'. The same period coincides with the 2013 approval of the UN-Habitat strategic plan 2014-19 and the launching within the agency of the new synergy-oriented working modality of flex-teams. The formulation of the RSP marks the end of the inception period and prepares ROAS for a fully-fledged development and outreach phase.

### Political partnership

154. The key partnership element that ROAS managed to establish and consolidate into active working synergy is the League of Arab States (LAS), technically supporting it in the formulation of its 'Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2030' which represents the regional implementation mechanism for SDG 11 and other relevant urban targets; it has been reviewed by Headquarters and is scheduled for endorsement by UN-Habitat Senior Management Board in June 2016 and be launched during the 27<sup>th</sup> Arab Summit in 2016. It is also meant to guide Arab States in the preparations and follow-up of the Habitat III Conference.

155. The Evaluator wishes to add that the value of this established high-level partnership at the regional level has earned an added significance by the support extended by ROAS country offices to their counterpart Governments in their preparation for Habitat III and toward their contribution to urban targets of the SDGs. The RSP includes in its Implementation Plan the further strengthening of this support.
156. The strong relationship with LAS has also been instrumental in securing LAS' full support in reaching out to national Governments toward the successful organization of AMFHUD.
157. in 2015 (having added three in 2013-14) ROAS targets 15 country programmes operating by 2019, of which four (Algeria, Bahrain, Tunisia, Yemen) are to be opened by end 2017.
162. It envisages a system of sub-regional offices, by strengthening the existing Kuwait office as the ROAS counterpart for the seven countries represented in the Gulf Cooperation Council, as well as the opening of a sub-regional office for the Maghreb.
163. The RSP makes a distinction among the region's countries in terms of income-status and therefore on the implications for programme development: four middle or high-income countries (Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Saudi Arabia) have made cost-sharing contributions toward ROAS' projects. Acknowledging UN-Habitat's value added for their national programmes, ROAS will attempt to replicate this model in additional countries in the same category. At the same time, renewed emphasis will be placed in assisting the two Least Developed Countries (LDC) in the region (Sudan, already active and Yemen, targeted to be opened-up in 2016).

### Vision alignment

157. ROAS uses the vision statement of the Arab Strategy for Housing and Urban Development as the basis for aligning the UN-Habitat strategic plan 2014-19 and the principles of the SDGs to the specific context of the Arab region emphasizing resilience to natural events and conflicts as well as the importance of cultural identity.
158. Accordingly, ROAS develops the UN-Habitat's vision for the Arab region as:

"Support the development of integrated, inclusive and sustainable cities and human settlements capable of providing adequate standard of living to children, youth, women and men, being well governed and resilient to shocks (natural and man-made) while preserving the Arab cultural identity"<sup>10</sup>.

159. The RSP further stresses how the UN-Habitat fundamental principles for promoting sustainable urbanization 'also apply to urban crisis response and mitigation'.

### Programme development

160. The RSP fixes ROAS targets to 2019 in line with the UN-Habitat's strategic plan 2014-19; the RSP is bound to become an additional advocacy and information vehicle in partnership with LAS and through AMFHUD.
161. From a baseline of eight active country portfolios inherited in 2012, prior to ROAS assuming management responsibility for 18 countries, to 11
164. Regional Programmes are seen as an important cornerstone for UN-Habitat's work; three active Regional Programmes are targeted by 2019. One element of the strategy is to build regional modules based on ongoing UN-Habitat Global Programmes (Safer Cities, Slum Upgrading, Land, Water) while actively working with regional partners on developing new ones aligned with the New Urban agenda arising from Habitat III.
165. Close collaboration with the UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (UNESCWA) which has the mandate in the UN system for regional programmes in the Arab region is ongoing.
166. Good prospects for active regional partnerships, based on already established contacts, exist with the Arab Towns Organization (ATO) based in Kuwait as well as with the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI), the United Cities and Local Government—Middle East and West Asia (UCLG MEWA) and the Urban Training Institute (UTI); MoUs are in place with ATO, UTI and AUDI. The target for 2016-17 is four regional MoUs in place and active. Both ATO and UCLG may

prove strategic to open up for project collaboration (ideally, first, through regional programmes) the constituency of city administrations as a new goal for ROAS. Collaboration with UTI could spearhead the regional component of training and capacity development, insofar mainly active for ROAS at the level of country offices.

### United Nations partnership

167. ROAS has already established its presence at the level of the regional United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and intends to strengthen it, also as a vehicle for UN Country Teams (UNCTs) at the national level to further the urban agenda. This in parallel with a renewed engagement in the formulation of UN programming instruments along the lines of the already positive results achieved in ROAS countries with active portfolios managing to better integrate urban concerns.
168. With UNESCWA (see also above in Regional Programmes) ROAS has elaborated the Urban Chapter on Urban Sustainability in the UNESCWA-led Arab Sustainable Development Report.

### 2019 targets

169. ROAS fixes targets for 2019, within the framework of the implementation of its strategic plan 2014-19 based on the baseline at 2015.
170. The 2019 targets foresee increased engagement in regional political partnerships and with UN partners, intensified advocacy and information outreach, and the opening of four new country programmes. In terms of human resources, ROAS has operated since 2013 with one vacant senior position. The Acting Director doubled up as Senior

Human Settlements Officer, while the Human Settlements Officer very effectively doubled up taking up multiple tasks over and above the primary concern of project development and backstopping. Yet, at the same time, the 'core resources to project portfolio ratio' in 2015 was 2 per cent, by far the lowest of all Regional Offices.

#### Recommendation 9:

It is recommended that the staffing level of ROAS be aligned with the demands of the tasks inherent in its volume of work so as to allow for further outreach and accomplishment of expected targets; more specifically it recommends the recruitment of two substantive international professionals; it is further recommended that the opportunity of this recruitment be used to ensure the language skills advisable for a fully appropriate coverage of the region with one Arabic speaker and one French speaker.

## 4.8 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

171. ROAS' approach to ensuring integration of cross-cutting issues is included in its RSP and within the current context of the Arab Region. Box 3 describes the cross-cutting issues of human rights and gender, youth and climate change in context of the Arab Region.
172. A review of ROAS' activities shows that at the regional level ROAS undertakes activities in all four areas of the cross-cutting issues.
173. Gender
- ROAS takes part in the regional UN processes on gender equality and the empowerment of women. There are currently two active

### Box 3: Cross-cutting issues in the context of the Arab Region

Firmly placed within the contextual situation of the Arab Region is the set of cross-cutting issues of concern to UN-Habitat and the current scope of ROAS' engagement in this domain, which requires a realistic stock-taking of permissible boundaries of human rights and gender-related work. Mainstreaming cross-cutting issues to regional and country level activities is a work in progress.

As a fall-out of the widespread crisis situation that overtook the promise of the Arab spring, a tangible retrocession in participatory dialogue and governance has set in, not as a general feature in all countries, but still widespread. This has in turn reduced the boundaries of engagement primarily on the issues of human rights and gender. Moreover, humanitarian crises tend to induce

an upsurge in human rights violations as well as in threats to women rights, security and stability in a context that limits advocacy opportunities and open accountability.

The conditions for the youth, always critical in light of exceptionally high unemployment rates, have also been seriously affected, fuelling a wave of transnational migration. Climate change in arid areas, further undermining agriculture-based sustainability, fuels 'excess urbanization' waves, with cities easily prevailing over the countryside in the competing demand for water and making national goals of attaining food security more elusive.



regional gender groups led by UN Women in the Arab region:

- i. The Regional Gender Theme Group that deals with advocacy and programming
  - ii. The Thematic Group on Supporting Women Leaders for UN RC/UNCT Leadership
- ROAS provides inputs on gender when reviewing concept notes for donors developed by country offices,
  - ROAS and/or Headquarters Gender Equality Unit reviews concept notes and project document at Headquarters and ROAS Project Advisory Group meetings by applying the UN-Habitat Gender Equality Marker,
  - ROAS took part in the “Arab Women in the Sustainable Development Agenda 2015 - 2030” that took place 29 November – 1 December 2015,
  - UN-Habitat ROAS and UN Women are

planning a side event at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York in March 2016 on SDG 11, target 11.7 (By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities) with focus on participation from the Arab region.

#### 174. Human Rights

- A joint gender and human rights-based approach training is being planned to build the capacity of staff at the regional and country level,
- Housing Rights and Human Rights Briefs are being prepared by the Human Rights Team at Headquarters. to support the development of the Country Programme Documents in Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, Iraq and Tunisia,
- ROAS provides input on human rights and the human rights based approach when reviewing concept notes for donors developed by Country offices,



A young woman, Kaltoum Yakoub Issa, 19 years old makes bricks for her new house in Abu Shouk camp in Sudan  
©UN-Habitat

- ROAS and/or the Gender Equality Unit reviews concept notes and project document at Headquarters. and ROAS Project Advisory Group meetings by applying the UN-Habitat Human Rights Marker.

#### 175. Youth

- ROAS has taken part in the development of the Regional Framework of Joint Strategic Actions for Young People for 2016-2017 for the Arab States, Middle East and North Africa Region. This framework has been developed through the United Nations Inter-Agency Technical Task Team on Young People,
- ROAS provides inputs on youth approach when reviewing concept notes for donors developed by Country Offices,
- ROAS and/or Headquarters Youth Unit reviews concept notes and project documents at Headquarters and ROAS Project Advisory Group meetings by applying the UN-Habitat Youth Marker.

176. For climate change see section below.

#### Integration of cross-cutting issues at the level of Country Projects

177. Even through a project review which could not reach an adequate level of detail in terms of quality and impact of intervention, the Evaluator found evidence of a large number of instances in which ROAS' projects addressed Gender and Human Rights issues courageously and with focused interventions. All land-related activities placed a marked emphasis on restoring rights or on establishing a modicum of tenure security especially in the case of refugees who, in accordance with the prevailing laws in all the countries of refuge, meet intractable obstacles to their acquiring ownership of housing, land and property, no matter how extended in time their presence in the country. Gender sensitive provisions are introduced in all attempts at land and/ or housing reform.

178. What is insufficiently developed as yet is a systematic effort at properly documenting experiences across countries and establishing a full coherence of purpose. ROAS is fully aware of the need to

improve, starting from the conceptualization of action in support of gender and human rights within project development all the way through implementation. Capacity building on Gender and Human Rights is planned for ROAS in 2016, while the PAG Secretariat is due launch a monitoring mechanism on implementation of planned activities on cross-cutting issues.

179. In the case of Youth related activities, better coordination would help: several projects involve youth in their activities. The Youth Global Programme as well as Safer Cities are both active in the ROAS region, both supporting Youth groups; there is no collaboration, however, between the two Global Programmes. Similarly, Youth Groups assisted by the Youth Programme operate with no connection with ongoing ROAS activities. ROAS has reportedly requested the Youth Programme for more information on their activities as well as for better integration.

180. Climate change, among the cross-cutting issues, is where Headquarters' normative guidance could help the most in light of recent important strides reported by the Urban Planning and Design Branch: a recent agreement with the Adaptation Fund (AF) which may lead to UN-Habitat playing a role in the implementation of projects financed by the Fund<sup>11</sup>.

181. A similar attempt is ongoing with the Green Climate Fund (GCF)<sup>12</sup>. UN-Habitat will need to develop a system of appropriate 'environmental and social safe cards' and support mainstreaming to Regional and Country Offices toward the formulation of project proposals which meet the required standards.

182. Specifically, as part of the targets to be met by 2019, as reported in ROAS RSP and commented on in the previous section, the target related to all cross cutting issues is stated as:

<sup>11</sup> AF was established in 2001 and finances adaptation projects in developing countries which are party to the Kyoto Protocol using for the purpose a share of the proceeds from the Clean Development Mechanism

<sup>12</sup> GCF, an operating entity of the Financial Mechanism of the UN Convention on Climate Change, funds adaptation and mitigation practices to reduce climate change in developing countries.

“UN-Habitat Cross-cutting markers rating: with immediate effect, 100% of new projects and programmes rated at least ‘1’; by 2019, 30% rated at least ‘2’ or ‘2a’.”<sup>13</sup>

#### Recommendation 10:

It is recommended that ROAS, as already planned, steps up ongoing assistance to Country Offices in a coordinated way to better mainstream cross-cutting issues in country projects; on the issue of Climate Change it is recommended that the Urban Planning and Design Branch and ROAS establish a strong collaboration in the attempt to define a common focus for setting up relevant initiatives at regional/country level in line with required standards of the multilateral funds financially supporting adaptation and mitigation practices to reduce climate change.

## 4.9 KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

183. Knowledge management, within UN-Habitat, is being analysed as a critical area in need of re-thinking at the same time as an agency-wide knowledge management strategy is being finalized. The gap that seems especially serious is in terms the ability to capture, internalize and disseminate all the valuable lessons emerging from field projects. The Project Cycle Management (PCM) matrix includes knowledge management in step 11, which is indicated in current practices as ‘not happening systematically’. But it also places it in the PCM as a function due to start after project closure (by shipping project records to Headquarters). Clearly, knowledge management is a function to be built from the start in any project initiative (conception and formulation); for this to be effective, system-wide procedures must be in place and clearly defined.

184. It is beyond the scope of this Evaluation to assess and advice on a system-wide level. At ROAS level, knowledge management work does not seem to be systematic. But it is also fair to say that knowledge management also needs staff fully dedicated to the

task to network and organize all the information that would be provided. ROAS, operating with minimal staff, has clearly faced a problem at that, though activities in this regard have been stepped up thanks to the recent recruitment of a Junior Professional Officer (JPO).

185. ROAS should first concentrate on essential building blocks:

- Ensure that all projects’ documentation is carefully collected and classified (from concept notes to project documents, technical and progress reports to monitoring and evaluation reports); this was found to be somehow lacking during the Evaluator’s work;
- Highlight strategic specific thematic issues, launch and support, through regional/ sub-regional information-sharing initiatives, among Country offices and partners in the region, a genuine process of transfer of knowledge (the case of the event on ‘City Profiles for countries in crisis’ is a good example of useful networking);
- Strengthen in a systematic way the already good working relations with Headquarters’ Branches and Programmes and seek their inputs and support in knowledge management initiatives; the Regional Seminar held in Dubai on Islamic Law in 2015 with the Urban Legislation Unit is a good example worth replicating.

186. These are just the essential building blocks, necessary but insufficient to guarantee effective knowledge management across the board. The Evaluator reports here a recommendation made by ROAS to the effect that each project should be ‘adopted’ by a Branch or Global Programme at Headquarters, based on thematic relevance; this

#### Recommendation 11:

ROAS should ensure that a full archive is kept and maintained within the Office and, building on the system that already exists, should gather all material produced in the field, from Concept Notes, Project Documents, Technical Reports and relevant partners’ literature. Information from ROAS countries should be shared with relevant Branches at Headquarters.

<sup>13</sup> *The cross-cutting markers (used as project design and approval tool) rate the extent to which cross-cutting issues are integrated in new projects and concepts. Ratings applied individually to each cross-cutting issue are: 0=negative/blind, 1=aware, 2=sensitive, 3=transformative. Ratings for Gender are slightly different: 2a and 2b in place of 2 and 3. It is advised that ROAS clarifies the targets in the RSP on the basis of this variation.*

Headquarters focal point would then have the task to share relevant information across the agency and key partners, signal potential useful experiences for the project in question and gather relevant advice.

#### 4.10 ENTERPRISE RISK MANAGEMENT

187. Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) was defined by the UN Secretariat in 2011<sup>14</sup> as 'the process of coordinated activities designed to direct and control an organization with regard to risk, the effect of uncertainty on objectives'. An effective system of internal control is encompassed within as an integral part of risk management. Risk is defined as the 'effect of uncertainty on objectives' of a UN organization. UN-Habitat established in 2012 a Risk Identification Matrix and introduced it in the standard project template to be prepared at project inception; it includes mitigation strategies for medium, high and critical risk.

188. In April 2015 UN-Habitat approved its ERM Implementation Guidelines – with oversight by the Advocacy, Outreach and Communication (AOC) Office – based on the UN Secretariat ERM Policy and Methodology. The document identifies the top critical risks at the UN-Habitat corporate level:

- Realization and demonstration of results in line with UN-Habitat Strategic plan and mandate,
- Fit for purpose human resources strategies, operational tools, business processes,
- Governance and oversight for enhanced accountability and risk management,
- Financing of the core budget,
- Safety and security,
- UMOJA implementation.

189. These are system-wide risks and may apply differently to various regions covered by UN-Habitat. In the case of the Arab States Region, risks 2, 4 and 6 appear as highly significant because, respectively, of the limited human resources in ROAS,

the very limited core financing which Headquarters is in a position to provide, the seriously negative impact on efficient delivery caused by UMOJA inception. In spite of these structural constraints, ROAS has performed very well with regard to risk 1. Risks 3 (oversight for enhanced risk management) and 5 (Safety and Security) require an additional comment: the region is currently affected by a high level of volatility and insecurity. Safety and security issues are, in each country, the prerogatives of the security apparatus under the oversight of the UN Security Coordinator (SC); ROAS ensures that each Country Office adheres to the SC's guidance and instructions. With respect to Risk 3, ROAS addresses the 'Business Continuity Risk' making provisions for the Amman, Beirut, Cairo and Nairobi offices to host and support staff in case of evacuations to minimize programme disruption and as much as possible ensure continuity.

190. To pre-empt critical consequences of project closure due to unforeseen lack of funding ROAS provides special backstopping primarily to projects with 6 months funding or less. A system of inter-country offices exchange and support in project development and donor relations has been established at ROAS' request (Sudan to Syria support is a notable example). ROAS is to step up knowledge management activities and donor leverage to strengthen across the region project development/implementation as well as resource mobilization.

191. A serious note of urgency for UN-Habitat and ROAS was introduced on 10 June 2014 (few months after ROAS' taking over the full mandate for 18 countries) by the sudden evacuation from Baghdad to Erbil of all international staff, following the Islamic State's inroads in Iraq. This lasted officially until October 2014, when limited individual missions to Baghdad were allowed for contingent situations. Returns to Baghdad were again and again suspended during the whole of 2015, while national staff in Baghdad often had to work from home. The Iraq Country Office reports that other UN agencies were able to send to Erbil administrative support staff for the duration of the crisis; personnel shortage both at Headquarters and ROAS level made this impossible in the case of UN-Habitat. This is a system-wide issue and strengthens the existing perception of inadequate staffing at ROAS that needs to be remedied. It too has a bearing on the Evaluative Conclusions and on previous Recommendation 9 (page 28).

<sup>14</sup> See 'Enterprise Risk Management and Internal Control Policy', United Nations, May 2011 and 'Enterprise Risk Management and Internal Control Methodology', United Nations, May 2011.

## 5. EVALUATIVE CONCLUSIONS

192. This Chapter captures the main conclusions of the Evaluation.
193. UN-Habitat made a policy choice in deciding to open a Regional Office for the Arab Region, normally not an easy one for all the inevitable uncertainty with respect to sustainability, cost implications and required administrative adjustments. This Report states, at the outset of the Evaluative Conclusions, that the choice paid off in more than one way.
194. Recalling the three-pronged purpose of the Evaluation:
- ROAS, having inherited from ROAAS an already valuable and promising portfolio, has achieved a very sizable increase in delivery.
  - To implement its strategies, UN-Habitat can now count on an established resource within a crucial region of the world at a critical time, the year of the celebration of the Habitat III Conference, the build-up of activities toward the accomplishment of SDG 11 and almost mid-way to the conclusion of its strategic plan 2014-19.
  - ROAS has indeed provided the 'added value' sought by UN-Habitat in promoting its key policy messages in the region, acquiring in the process added political legitimacy, proximity to national partners and increased efficiency.
195. It is of course a work in progress, but, staying with the methodology adopted for this Evaluation, the prerequisites for success have been established by ROAS in its 'inception time' effectively and in a very short period.
- i. In spite of the very significant increase in project portfolio, vulnerability factors remain (as detailed in Chapter 4) as it is usual for project portfolios of an agency saddled by structural disadvantages vis a vis other providers of technical assistance; it is now incumbent upon UN-Habitat to try to reduce the identified constraints in programme development which seriously limit ROAS' major potential to achieve more.
  - ii. These constraints are heavily felt especially at country level where evidence gathered during the assignment indicates a set of competent and dedicated Country Teams, often understaffed, often operating in difficult circumstances, some with exclusively national staff. These produce quality work in support of governments and communities, ensure UN-Habitat's presence and advocacy for its message, generate major revenue for Headquarters, but, so far and for most of them, getting little in return, barring isolated, much appreciated and useful technical inputs to their activities.
  - iii. In terms of prospects for both Impact and Sustainability, ROAS' record is commendable; in terms of Impact, the Evaluation highlighted how, thanks to the establishment of ROAS, UN-Habitat's presence, legitimacy and credibility were much enhanced; its projects, even in highly conflictive environments, manage to establish, among primarily humanitarian-oriented agencies, a rather unique niche where the potential for reintegration and recovery is firmly set. This has a positive bearing, at country level, where project initiatives are designed with a focus on establishing the prerequisites for sustainable improvement as the situation permits. For the region as a whole, ROAS enters 2016 with very good Sustainability prospects, availing of an approved project portfolio that, even without new additions, would guarantee its continued operations for several years to come. Highly Satisfactory ratings would be justified for both Criteria; yet, the extremely volatile situation in the region, the structural vulnerabilities affecting UN-Habitat operations, the insofar brief ROAS Inception period now moving on to consolidation, all argue for caution, hence Satisfactory ratings on both counts.

- iv. A very relevant factor in the scope of the Evaluation refers to the overall high level of harmonious relationship (testified to, virtually unanimously, by Country offices and Headquarters) that ROAS has established; there is therefore genuine scope for enhancing work synergies Headquarters–ROAS–Country Office maintaining a demand-driven approach in all instances.
- v. Finally, it may be noted that ROAS operated throughout this period with one vacant senior position; as the UN-Habitat Management Analysis of Approved Strategic plan ending Limits - 2015 shows (and the May 2015 OIOS Audit of ROAS reports), “the ‘core resources to project portfolio ratio’ in 2015 was 2 per cent, by far the lowest of all Regional Offices”. The Acting Director doubled up as Senior Human Settlements Officer, while the Human Settlements Officer very effectively doubled up taking up multiple tasks over and above the primary concern of project development and backstopping.
196. The rating of performance that follows in Table 2 reflects the Conclusions and the results of the Findings and factors-in the set of constraints ROAS has successfully managed to contend with.
197. Interesting lessons emerge from the evaluation, mainly from the Evaluation Findings Chapter.

Table 2: **Rating of Performance**

Evaluation Criteria	Rating of Performance	Characteristics
Relevance	Highly satisfactory (5)	The strategy adopted by ROAS and the programmes under implementation are fully relevant to the region’s needs; alignment with corporate strategic goals has been promoted in a determined way with notable positive results.
Efficiency	Highly satisfactory (5)	ROAS has managed to produce a remarkable growth in project portfolio and rapid results in establishing the prerequisites for implementation of its SP 2014-19 in spite of insufficient resources.
Effectiveness	Satisfactory (4)	Satisfactory results achieved in programme development, establishment of crucial political partnerships and promotion of corporate agenda are in parallel with areas of work in need of strengthening as acknowledged in ROAS’ RSP.
Impact Outlook	Satisfactory (4)	Highly enhanced credibility and good record, regionally as well as nationally, have resulted in greater ability to assist the region in normative reform as well as in operational programming and action including in countries in the midst of severe crises.
Sustainability	Satisfactory (4)	ROAS has demonstrated that a high potential for further development of UN-Habitat’s activities in the region does exist, though, as this Report has detailed, vulnerabilities remain (some structural, some that may be jointly addressed by Headquarters and ROAS).

## 5. LESSONS LEARNED

198. Incremental alignment with the demanding normative reform goals of the Strategic plan 2014-19 is possible even in the most unlikely circumstances of widespread crisis. Project portfolios in six countries affected by crisis are testimony to that; in fact, alignment tends to emerge naturally as a result of the direct engagement of Country Teams with Government and donors though their main priorities would inevitably relate to emergency concerns. UN-Habitat has confirmed in the Arab region that its presence among primarily humanitarian agencies fills a critical niche in terms of introducing key recovery, stabilization and development oriented goals (land management and tenure arrangements, integration of refugees/IDPs within host communities, identification of sustainable priority interventions in urban areas and so on). The value of this lesson is not sufficiently internalized at Headquarters and needs to be better integrated in the agency's normative agenda; stepping up focused Headquarters' support mechanisms would be beneficial.
199. Egypt is the closest among ROAS countries in building a programme along the lines of the three-pronged approach advocated by UN-Habitat. Egypt of course availed of the proximity with ROAS in Cairo and was fortunate to be one of the four countries selected for the implementation of ASUD, hence receiving funds for the purpose. Nevertheless, the fully national Country Team-led progress of coordinating under a common policy and operational framework a number of distinct interventions (in the planning, land management, legal reform, urban economy, urban services etc.), supported by a variety of UN-Habitat institutional units, provides a useful lesson for UN-Habitat. Analysing the process, taking stock of problems which arose (primarily of coordination) and assessing results so far would undeniably provide a valuable case study for UN-Habitat in all active countries (see to this effect the paragraph following Lesson 3).
200. Beside several examples of punctual synergy between Headquarters-ROAS-Country Offices, translating in positive and tangible support to field operations, a good lesson emerges from instances in which synergy of efforts was applied to project formulation and resource mobilization. Two cases stand out:
- a. The joint effort among the Kuwait sub-regional Office, the Urban Planning and Design Branch and the Research and Capacity Building Branch, under coordination of the Programme Division leading to the inception of the USD 25 million 'Future Saudi Cities Programme', aligned with the principles of the New Urban Agenda (NUA).
  - b. The collaboration between ROAS and the Urban Planning and Design Branch leading to the formulation, approval and financing by the UN Development Account of a project to prepare National Housing Policies (NUP) in four countries in 2016. These initiatives will allow to simultaneously address urgent policy gaps at the national level, produce a model for replication in other ROAS countries, advance the process of alignment of national policy contexts (and ROAS Country Programmes) with the priorities inherent in the UN-Habitat reform agenda, bring additional financing for field activities. Although problems have been noted in Saudi Arabia, it is a model that all Thematic Branches and Global Programmes need to consider adopting, in consultation with ROAS, to strengthen the transfer of their normative products to the country level as well as Headquarters resource mobilization.
201. The second and third lessons learned indicate an ongoing 'learning in process': synergy of effort in project development and implementation is not in itself a guarantee for smooth integration of inputs around a common purpose. Internal problems and contradictions have been noted by some of the actors involved in both the Saudi Arabia and Egypt programmes. Building a culture of 'working as one' that reduces the weight of 'turf attitudes' by individual Branches/Units, clarifies respective

prerogatives of Headquarters, ROAS and country offices and, at the same time, allows for the harmonization of Headquarters normative goals with the overriding priorities of national authorities is still work in progress. Internal reviews (scheduled for Saudi Arabia in 2016) and/or Evaluations (like those of the Iraq Country Programme in 2012 and of the Sudan Country Programme in 2014) are useful and advisable mechanisms to advance the learning process.



## ANNEX 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE

### 1. Background Information on UN-Habitat

1. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all. Its mandate is both a normative and operational. The main documents outlining the mandate of the UN-Habitat are the Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements, the Habitat Agenda, the Declaration on Cities, MDGs and strengthening the mandate and status in UN GA Resolution A/56/206.
2. The UN-Habitat was initially established as the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements in 1977 through General Assembly Resolution 32/162. In 1996, during the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, a new normative mandate for the Centre was added: to support and monitor the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.
3. The Istanbul+5 Conference in 2001, was a special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. The session recommended strengthening the Centre. This led to the decision of the regular session of the General Assembly to elevate the Centre to a fully-fledged "Programme" now known as the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), through Resolution 56/206 of 21 December 2001. Other important decisions in Resolution 56/206 include strengthening the normative role of UN-Habitat, designating the agency as the focal point within the United Nations System for human settlements and establishing the World Urban Forum to foster debate on human settlements.
4. Adoption of Resolution 56/206 also showed the commitment of Member States to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goal target of achieving a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. The outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 further gave UN-Habitat the responsibility for monitoring and reporting on progress in achieving the targets on access to safe drinking water and halving the proportion of people who do not have access to basic sanitation.
5. The Medium-Term Strategic and Institutional Plan (MTSIP) 2008-2013 helped to sharpen the programmatic focus of UN-Habitat. It brought about better alignment of programmes, and played a catalytic role in building partnerships and leveraging funding for the Agency's programmes (Evaluation Report 1/2012, MTSIP).
6. The Strategic Plan 2014-2019 replaced the MTSIP in 2014. The Strategic Plan's focus, which correspond to the seven branches of the Agency are also the sub-programmes in the 2014-2015 biennial strategic framework, and work programme and budget. In the Strategic Plan reporting is unified into a single process with also Regional Offices reporting to substantive areas on projects implemented.
7. A 2011 internal review of the organizational set-up led to a restructuring of UN-Habitat's organization. The main characteristics of the new organization structure were: a flatter matrix organization; a project-based organization; a flexible organization working through flex teams and an organization with delegation of authority down to the project level; and for field projects and normative policy work to be managed through a project-based accountability approach. The organizational structure after the reform consists of four offices—Office of the Executive Director, Programme Division, Operations Division and External Relations Division—and seven thematic branches, three liaison offices and four regional offices.
8. In 2012, an evaluation was conducted on the implementation of the MTSIP. The evaluation looked at the progress, achievement and challenges of delivery at the time of organizational reform, including role of regional offices. It recommended to dedicate more effort to fully involve the regional and country offices in the design, formulation and initiation of programmes; for regional offices to formulate strategic development frameworks for their respective regions and countries and implement

regional programmes; to strengthen the UNDAF/Delivering as One process especially in countries with a good potential for UN-Habitat interventions; to develop or update existing Habitat Country Programme Documents to reflect the individual countries' need for sustainable urbanization and associated capacity development and implemented in line with the implementation of the Project Based Management Policy. The evaluation also recommended developing a decentralized approach for country level engagement for countries in which UN-Habitat would have a substantial potential for interventions.

9. In follow-up to the 2012 MTSIP evaluation, regional offices have been delegated more responsibility as part of the UN-Habitat Organizational Responsibility and Accountability Policy. Currently, regional strategies are under formulation which are "region specific" to include national interest with the aim to promote a greater ownership and create leverage based on a decentralized approach.

### Urbanization in the Arab States Region

10. The Arab region is characterized by considerable differences in income levels, policy agendas and requirements. In 2014, out of the 22 countries, around half of the countries have experienced internal conflict or long-term political instability in the past few years. <sup>1</sup>
11. The major challenges facing the region are the need to provide gainful employment to its young people and anticipated climate change. With 60 per cent of the population below 25 years of age, Arab countries face the challenge of providing employment opportunities for their young people whose current unemployment rates range from 11 per cent in Kuwait to 35 per cent in Morocco. Disenchantment and poverty induced by a lack of mobility has been one of the fuelling mechanisms for the recent political polarization of the region.
12. With the exception of Iraq, Arab countries have some of the scarcest water resources per capita in the world and groundwater reserves are being depleted at alarming rates. Although 85 per cent of the region's water is used for agriculture, most countries in the region import more than 50 per cent of their caloric intake. Climate change induced temperature increases and precipitation declines are projected to increase water scarcity and the frequency of severe droughts and also decrease agricultural productivity by 10 to 40 per cent, potentially leading to further poverty induced rural to urban migration. Desertification and the associated threats of future water and food insecurity for its growing urban populations are among the key defining problems of the region. In addition, most of the region's major cities, economic centers and transportation hubs activity are in low-lying, coastal areas. A rise in sea level could be disastrous for many of the region's densely populated coastal cities. Faced with these pressures, most of the region's governments have embarked on spatial interventions to guide new urban developments. Many cities are drafting strategic plans, linking various development projects and renewal programmes under the umbrella of a broader vision. New cities are being created as centers of excellence, innovation, technology and research. Cities are also marketing themselves as international tourism destinations, putting more emphasis on marketing their historic and cultural assets than ever before. Whether through culture, education and research or financial niches, cities in the Arab world are putting their mark on the map.
13. To implement these plans successfully and manage increasingly large and complex urban systems, governments in Arab countries will need to better coordinate the complementary roles of central and local governments better and increase the participation of the private sector in urban development. Historically, these countries have been highly centralized and the devolution of responsibilities to local authorities has been uneven, with a tendency for central governments to devolve responsibilities without a commensurate redistribution of funding or giving local authorities the power to raise revenue at the local level. At the time of writing, the repercussions of the 2011 protests remain unclear, although the widespread debates demonstrate the need for a new participatory approach to governance.
  1. The evaluation builds on the categorization of Arab States based on the 2012 State of Arab Cities Report prepared by UN-Habitat. It classified the Arab Region into four groups:
    - i. *Mashreq (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria):*
  2. As a result of the ongoing conflicts in Palestine, Iraq and Lebanon as well as the recent conflict in Syria

<sup>1</sup> UN-Habitat (2012), *State of Arab Cities Report 2012*.

and Lebanon, the Mashreq countries are home to 50 per cent of the world's registered refugees. Their presence, as well as internal rural-urban migration, has placed immense pressure on cities. Informal settlements, which tend to lack improved sanitation but otherwise offer decent housing conditions, have proliferated in Mashreq cities, with as many as 62 per cent of households in Greater Cairo living in such settlements. Except for Iraq, the Mashreq countries are oil poor and have fiscal deficits that constrain their ability to subsidize costs to the poor significantly as food and energy prices rise.

*i. Maghreb (Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania):*

3. The Maghreb countries are typically more than 50 per cent urbanized, and have slowed in their urban growth rates. Current urban policy focuses on diversifying their economies, linking major urban areas and planning to redirect growth to secondary cities in the interior. Agriculture remains a major employment base for Morocco and saw a 17 per cent growth in Algeria. While young people under 25 years of age comprise 48 per cent of the total population, their unemployment rate reaches 70 per cent among men with only a primary education and this represents the bulk of total unemployment. The Maghreb countries have made the most significant gains in reducing the number of urban households living with shelter deprivations; their efforts demonstrate that slum upgrading and service provision for the poor can be achieved with a strong political commitment.

*i. Gulf Cooperation Council (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates):*

4. Given that 90 per cent of the Gulf Peninsula is desert, Gulf Cooperation Council countries are among the most urbanized in the world and several of the emirates function as city-states. These countries have achieved major milestones in infrastructure, health and education, and have reached their Millennium Development Goals.<sup>8</sup> Faced with declining oil reserves and the rising cost of subsidies in energy, water and housing, the policy focus now addresses economic diversification, the absorption of nationals into the private sector labor force, affordable housing and environmental sustainability. Highly-ambitious projects in public transportation planning and urban environmental sustainability are underway, although urban planning is still often

done as a piecemeal effort.

*i. Southern Tier (Comoros, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen):*

5. Following prolonged periods of conflict, governments in the Southern Tier have been unable to secure basic services for most of their citizens. With the exception of Djibouti, these countries are still predominantly rural but are now experiencing the highest urbanization rates in the region. The ability of these less-developed Arab countries to cope with rapid urbanization and move from rural to urban-based settlement patterns will be of critical importance in the coming decades. Looking forward, climate change will worsen droughts in the Horn of Africa. The danger of new conflicts over water and oil rights may complicate the orderly split of Sudan into North and South.

### 3. UN-Habitat in the Arab Region

#### 3.1 Role and Function of the Regional Office for Arab States

6. Until 2011, substantive support was provided to the Arab region by the Regional Office for Africa and Arab States (ROAAS). However, because of the increasing urbanization challenges facing the Arab region, the member states pledged for a stand-alone Regional Office catering for the Arab States. In September 2010, the Government of Egypt signed the Cooperation Agreement with UN-Habitat on the establishment of a Regional Office dedicated to the Arab States, which was accredited in April 2011.

7. The Regional Office for Arab States (ROAS) is responsible for implementing UN-Habitat's mandate at regional level by promoting socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all. ROAS provides technical cooperation and capacity building in line with UN-Habitat's seven substantive areas for 18 countries across the Arab region: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Sudan, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

8. It works closely with the League of Arab States (LAS) on housing and urban development issues.

9. Presently, ROAS and LAS are drafting a strategy for sustainable urban development in Arab States. ROAS also supports the Secretariat of the Arab Ministerial

Forum on Housing and Urban Development (AMFHUD).

### 3.2 UN-Habitat Delivery in the Arab States Region

10. The ROAS office comprises of a Regional Director, two Human Settlements Officers, a Regional Programme Management Officer, and administrative staff. The regional office is reinforced by the country offices in the Arab region, the Jordan communications hub based in Amman, and the sub-regional office in Kuwait.

### 3.3 Operational/Field Programme Resources

11. In 2014, there was 11 active country programmes in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Sudan. At the beginning of 2014, the project portfolio in the Arab States was USD118 million, with an annual expected project delivery for 2014 of USD45 million. The delivery of projects has steadily grown since the establishment of the regional office in 2011. The priority area of Risk Reduction and Rehabilitation absorbed a large share of the regional portfolio. The majority of projects in the region have been technically backstopped by the regional office and country offices.

### 3.4 Normative Products

12. As of January 2015, the ROAS website contained three normative products, used by the regional office and country offices. Subjects covered ranged from mainstreaming biodiversity conservation in tourism sector development in Jordan to UN-Habitat partnership with Arab States. Other units in UN-Habitat have also produced normative products with a particular focus on the region, a number of which have also been translated into Arabic including the State of the World's Cities 2010/2011 – Cities for All: Bridging the Urban Divide in an Arabic Language Version. The evaluation will prepare a complete list of these.

13. The majority of news materials were about proceedings from regional workshops and consultation events such as the Youth from Arab region discuss sustainable urbanization at the sidelines of 6th International Conference on Informal Urbanism held in Cairo, Egypt, 2014.

## 4. Purpose of the Evaluation

14. UN-Habitat is undertaking this evaluation of the Regional Office for Arab States with the aim of providing UN-Habitat management and key

stakeholders, including partners and member states, on what has been achieved and learned in terms of:

- i. The results of the establishment of ROAS on corporate delivery to countries in the region;
- ii. The progress made on implementing UN-Habitat's strategies and corporate decisions to decentralize functions to the Arab States region;
- iii. The "added value" of UN-Habitat ROAS in addressing urbanization issues.

### 4.1 Objectives of the Evaluation

15. The evaluation of the ROAS is to provide the agency, its governing bodies and donors with an independent evaluative assessment of the agency's operational experience, achievements, opportunities and challenges. What will be learned from the evaluation findings are expected to play an instrumental role in shaping the focus of UN-Habitat in planning and programming projects, influencing strategies, adjusting and correcting as appropriate, exploiting opportunities, replicating and up-scaling the implementation approach used, and generating credible value for targeted beneficiaries and addressing regional and national priorities.
16. Specifically, the evaluation findings and lessons learnt will inform decisions of the senior management on future operations of ROAS. Evaluation results will also contribute to UN-Habitat's planning, reporting and accountability.

Key objectives of the evaluation are to:

- Assess the relevance of UN-Habitat's mandate in the region promoting socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all;
- Assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the regional office in representing UN-Habitat and channeling information between UN-Habitat, government, partners, and other United Nations agencies and intergovernmental institutions
- Assess efficiency and effectiveness of the regional office in advocacy, technical cooperation and capacity building;

- Assess the effectiveness of the relationships of the office with relevant partners;
- Assess the transparency and accountability of the regional office in view of a results-based management approach;
- Assess how the implementation of the organization reform and decentralization have impacted the regional office and delivery in the region;
- Assess the resource mobilization of the regional office.

## 5. Evaluation Framework

### 5.1 Scope

17. The evaluation is expected to assess achievement, challenges and opportunities of the regional office. The focus should be on delivery in the region since the establishment of ROAS in April 2011, especially in terms of priority-setting and planning, partnerships, delivery, institutional set-up, resources, staffing and delegation of authority. The evaluation analysis will be based on the Theory of Change, which outlines the results chain and is integrated with the Regional Office's TORs and log frames of key projects implemented.

### 5.2 Criteria

18. The evaluation will assess the performance of ROAS within the goals of enhancing delivery, technical cooperation and capacity building to the countries in the region against UN system standard evaluation criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.
19. Additional criteria to be taken into account throughout the evaluation will be the promotion of gender mainstreaming for gender equality, youth participation, human rights and climate change.

### 5.3 Evaluation Questions

#### Relevance

- To what extent are the current location and structure of the regional office, sub-regional and country office and complementarity with headquarters enabling in delivery in the region?
- What extent is the extent of current coverage

at country level in the region?

- To what extent are priority needs met at regional, sub-regional and country level in the areas of UN-Habitat's mandate and MTSIP/strategic plan?
- To what extent are external stakeholders participating in priority setting of UN-Habitat's work in the region and at country level?
- What is UN-Habitat's contribution to UNDAFs and alignment between UN-Habitat programming, as formulated in the MTSIP/Strategic Plan?
- What are the differences in alignment between UN-Habitat corporate and regional/sub-regional priorities before and after 2011?

#### Efficiency

- To what extent are the institutional arrangements adequate for UN-Habitat delivery in the region and at country level by headquarters and ROAS?
- To what extent have resources available from regular budget and the foundation, extra-budgetary/donor funds changed since 2011 and what are the trends?

#### Effectiveness

- What are the major UN-Habitat achievements and challenges in meeting regional and country needs?
- What actual and potential financial and technical resources are available to UN-Habitat for improving its presence and work in the region?
- To what extent has delegation of authority in administration and finance, including procurement, and agreements of cooperation and memoranda of understanding, as well as human resource management been implemented?
- To what extent has delegation of authority extended into priority setting and work planning?
- To what extent are procedures, instruments

and resources made available at the regional office and at country level to discharge the received authority and responsibility?

- Have there been any changes in the regional office authority and capacity in resource mobilization taking into account achievements and challenges in the region?
- What is the level of coherence, coordination among and integration of headquarters, regional office work plans and global projects implemented in the region?
- To extent are knowledge management, communication, coordination and collaboration mechanisms among headquarters, regional office, sub-regional offices and country offices, including flex teams in place for ensuring quality delivery at regional and country level (in view of changes since 2011)?
- To what extent are the regional office's technical skill mix, competence and size adequate to address regional priorities/ results and manage UN-Habitat delivery?
- How is regional office and sub-regional office staff-time allocation to global programmes and field programme activities and headquarter-led initiatives balanced between administration and operational support?

### Impact Outlook

- What are the major UN-Habitat achievement and challenges in diffusing UN-Habitat's normative and field work at regional and country level?
- To what extent has the ROAS attained results to the targeted beneficiaries, governments, partners, participants, whether individuals, communities, institutions, etc.?

### Sustainability

- To what extent are partnerships and alliances with governments, UN agencies, NGOs and any other regional entity in the regional and at country level fostered and used in the delivery?

## 6. Evaluation Approach and Methodology

### 6.1 Stakeholder Involvement

20. The evaluation will be participatory and involving key stakeholders. Stakeholders will be kept informed of the evaluation processes including design, information, collection, and evaluation reporting and results dissemination to create a positive attitude towards the evaluation and enhance its utilization. Relevant UN-Habitat entities, United Nations agencies, national partners, beneficiaries of key projects implemented in the region, donors and other civil society organizations may participate through surveys, interviews or focus group discussions.
21. The evaluation process will start with internal self-evaluation conducted by UN-Habitat followed by independent external evaluation.

### 6.2 Methods and Tools

22. The evaluation shall be independent and carried out by following the evaluation norms and standards of the United Nations system. A variety of methods will be applied to collect information during the evaluation. These methodologies include the following elements:
  - Desk review of relevant documents, including internal self-evaluation by UN-Habitat;
  - Interviews with Senior Management and staff of ROAS, sub-regional offices and country offices;
  - Focus group discussions with selected representatives of United Nations agencies, permanent missions and other relevant partners;
  - A stakeholder survey seeking views on the scope and quality of work of ROAS related to UN-Habitat's mandate, with a view to enhance policy coherence;
  - Interview with Executive and Direction Management staff and other relevant staff members at headquarters.
23. The evaluator will describe expected data analysis and instruments to be used in the inception report.

### 6.3 The Evaluation Report

24. Presentation of the evaluation findings should follow the standard format of UN-Habitat Evaluation Reports (see checklist for UN-Habitat Evaluation Reports).

## 7. Evaluation Management Arrangements

### 7.1 Role of the Evaluation Unit

25. The UN-Habitat Evaluation Unit will commission the evaluation as a centralized evaluation and will manage the evaluation process. The evaluation will be undertaken by one international consultant. The consultant shall be independent and not involved in the delivery of ROAS projects or programme delivery for a minimum of seven years.
26. An internal reference group will set up by the Evaluation Unit with members from the Evaluation Unit, the Office of the Executive Director, ROAS, the Programme Division and the Operations Division. The reference group will be responsible for providing comments on the inception report and draft of the evaluation report.
27. The Evaluation Unit will ensure the evaluation is contracted to a suitable candidate in consultation with ROAS. The Evaluation Unit will provide advice on code of conduct of evaluation; providing technical support as required. The Evaluation Unit will ensure that contractual requirements are met and approve all deliverables (inception report/ work plan, draft reports and final evaluation report).

### 7.2 Role of the Regional Office for Arab States

28. The ROAS will provide logistical support to the consultant and documentation. ROAS will be consulted throughout the evaluation process in developing TORs, selection of consultant, and review of the inception report and draft reports. It is also member of the internal reference group created for the purpose of this evaluation.

### 7.3 Evaluator's Responsibilities

29. The evaluator is responsible for meeting professional and ethical standards in planning and conducting the evaluation and producing the expected deliverables.
30. The evaluator is expected to take the lead in developing data collection instruments such as surveys and interviews, guides and focus group discussions for the different stakeholders, in consultation with the Chief, Evaluation Unit, UN-

Habitat. He/she will conduct assessment and analyses data that will support findings, conclusions and recommendations, and prepares all deliverables and finalizes the evaluation report based on feedback and comments provided on the draft report. The evaluator will also prepare a debriefing presentation on key findings of the evaluation and lead the presentation to UN-Habitat Senior Management.

### 7.4 Qualifications and Expertise of Consultant

31. The evaluation shall be carried out by one consultant. The international consultant is expected to have:
- i. Advanced degree in social and economic development, evaluation or other related fields;
  - ii. At least 10 years of relevant experience in social and economic development of which at least five should be in research and evaluation;
  - iii. Familiarity with the United Nations System and preferably with knowledge and familiarity with UN-Habitat's work;
  - iv. Proven knowledge and experience in working with international organizations is required;
  - v. Ability to write clearly and effectively;
  - vi. Must possess very good interpersonal skills and the ability to work in a multicultural environment, with a commitment to timeliness and quality;
  - vii. Fluency as well as excellent writing skills in English and Arabic is essential as most data collection will be in English and Arabic.

### 7.5 Work Schedule

32. The evaluation will be conducted for a period of eight weeks spread over four months, including desk review, data collection and analysis and drafting of report, during the months of September 2015 to January 2016. The consultant is expected to prepare an inception report with work plan that will operationalize the evaluation. In the inception report understanding of the evaluation questions, methods to be used, limitation or constraints to the evaluation as well as schedules and delivery dates to guide the execution of the evaluation should be detailed.

### 7.6 Deliverables

33. There are three primary deliverables for this evaluation:

- i. Inception report with evaluation work plan. Once approved, it will become the key management document for the evaluation, guiding evaluation delivery in accordance with UN-Habitat's expectations throughout the performance of the contract.
- ii. Draft evaluation report(s). The evaluator will prepare evaluation report draft(s) to be reviewed by UN-Habitat. The draft should follow UN-Habitat's standard format for evaluation reports. It should be logic in manner and be a concise report presenting evidenced findings, lessons learned and actionable recommendations.
- iii. Final evaluation report, including executive summary and appendices, will be prepared

by the evaluator in English, incorporating comments received by UN-Habitat, and follow UN-Habitat's standard format for an evaluation report. The report should not exceed 35 pages (excluding executive summary and appendices).

### 7.7 Resources

34. The funds for the evaluation are made available from ROAS. Daily substance allowance will be paid only when working outside the official duty station of consultant. The remuneration rate of the consultant will be determined by functions performed, qualifications, and experience. The consultant to conduct this evaluation should preferably be equivalent P5.
35. The final report must meet the UN-Habitat quality criteria in line with the terms of reference. Payment may be withheld until the evaluation report meets the assessment criteria of the evaluation report.



## ANNEX 2: LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

### At Nairobi UN-Habitat Headquarters

**Mr. Martin Barugahare**, Chief, Evaluation Unit

**Ms. Susanne Bech**, Evaluation Officer, Evaluation Unit

**Mr. Andrew Cox**, Chief, Office of the Executive Director

**Prof. Oyebanji Oyeyinka**, Ag. Director, Regional Office for Africa

**Mr. Alioune Badiane**, Director, Programme Division

**Ms. Jane Nyakairu**, Acting Head, Management and Operations Division

**Ms. Liliana Contreras**, Senior PMO, Regional and Country Operations

**Mr. Remy Sietchiping**, Unit Leader, Regional and Metropolitan Planning Unit

**Ms. Ombretta Tempra**, Global Land Tool Network

**Mr. Robert Lewis-Lettington**, a.i Coordinator, Urban Legislation and Governance Branch

**Mr. Raf Tuts**, Coordinator, Urban Planning and Design Branch and Slum Upgrading Branch

**Dr. Aisa Kirabo Kacyira**, Deputy Executive Director

**Ms. Channe Oguzhan**, Human Rights Coordinator

**Mr. Douglas Ragan**, Chief, Youth and Livelihoods, Urban Economy Branch

**Mr Claudio Acioly**, Head, Capacity Development Unit

**Mr Yuma Assiago**, Urban Safety Expert, Safer Cities Programme

**Ms. Rocio Kessler**, Senior Coordination Officer, Donor Relations & Resource Mobilization Service

**Mr. Eduardo Moreno**, Coordinator, Research and Capacity Building Branch

**Ms. Kerstin Sommer**, Ag. Slum Upgrading Unit Leader, Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme

**Ms. Laura Petrella**, Leader City Planning, Extension and Design Unit

### In Cairo

**Mr. Dyfed Aubrey**, Acting Director and Senior Human Settlements Officer, ROAS

**Ms. Katja Schaefer**, Human Settlements Officer, ROAS

**Mr. Ayoub Mebrahtu**, Project Administrator, ROAS

**Mr. Jo Berg**, Junior Professional Officer, ROAS

**Ms. Rania Hedeya**, Programme Manager, UN-Habitat Egypt Project Office

**Dr. Bassem Fahmy**, Program Manager, Principal Adviser, UN-Habitat Egypt Project Office

**Mr. Mohamed Nada**, Program Manager and Advisor on Decentralization, Urban Policies, Governance and Legislations, UN-Habitat, Egypt Project Office

**Ms. Anita Nirody**, UN Resident Coordinator, UNDP Resident Representative

**Mr. Mohamed Naciri**, Regional Director, UN Women

**Mr. Mohab Elrefaie**, Senior Advisor, Participatory Development Program, GIZ

**Ms. Salva Abdel Wahab**, Vice President, Planning and Urban Development, GOPP

**Eng. Aida Fam**, Director General, General Urban Planning, GOPP

**Ms. Madiha Mahmoud**, Project Manager, balanced Spatial Development, GOPP

**Mr. Tamer Hammad**, First Secretary Department of Environment and Sustainable Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

### In Kuwait

**Mr. Tarek El-Sheikh**, Director UN-Habitat Program, Saudi Arabia and Regional Representative for the Gulf Cooperation Council

**Ms. Dima Al-Khatib**, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative

**Dr. Ameerah Al-Hassan**, Assistant Head of Mission, UNOPS

**Mr. Rakam Al-Nesif**, Secretary of the Parliamentary Housing Committee

**Mr. Ahmed Al-Sabieh**, Secretary General Arab Towns Organization and Director General Kuwait Municipality

**Mr. Khaled A. Mahdi**, Assistant General Secretary, Supreme Council for Planning and Development

**Eng. Anwar A. AlHelailah**, Director of Private Sector Projects, Public Authority for Housing Welfare.

### Through Skype

**Mr. Marco Kamiya**, Urban Economy Branch

**Mr. Andre Dzikus**, Coordinator, Urban Basic Services Branch and ag. Risk Reduction & Rehabilitation Branch

**Mr. Naison Mutizwa-Mangiza**, Director & Principal Adviser, Policy and Strategic Planning, OED

**Mr. Dan Lewis**, Head, City Resilience Profiling Programme

**Mr. Szilard Fricska**, Chief Technical Adviser, Country Representative, UN-Habitat Syria

**Mr. Erfan Ali**, Head of Iraq Programme, UN-Habitat

**Mr. Joe Hooper**, Country Director, UN-Habitat Palestine

**Mr. Zeyad El-Shakra**, Deputy Head of Office, UN-Habitat Palestine

**Ms. Nour Al-Masoud**, Programme Management Officer, UN-Habitat Palestine

**Mr. Tarek Osseiran**, Project Officer, UN-Habitat Lebanon

**Mr. Monceyf Fadili**, Adviser, UN-Habitat Morocco

**Mr. Wael Al-Ashhab**, Head of Country Programme, UN-Habitat Sudan

**Ms. Iman Zaki Abdel Hamid**, Head of Office, Programme Manager, UN-Habitat Jordan

**Mr. Justin Bonongwe**, Financial Management Officer, Management and Operations Division

## ANNEX 3: BIBLIOGRAPHY

(general documents only; does not include project documentation and technical reports)

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UN-Habitat: Evaluation of the UN-Habitat Iraq Country Programme (2004-2012)	2012
UN-Habitat: Emergency Fund – Policy and procedures	June 2012
UN-Habitat: Internal Development Fund (IDF) – Policy and procedures	June 2012
UN-Habitat: Project-Based Management	November 2012
UN-Habitat: Cost Allocation and Recovery Policy	June 2012
UN-Habitat: Organizational Responsibility and Accountability Policy	August 2012
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