



UN-HABITAT

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# UN-Habitat Guidelines on Photographs

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- **UN-Habitat Guidelines on Photographs**
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## Overview

Photographs are powerful tools of communication, capable of transcending language barriers and conveying messages with unparalleled immediacy and impact. In the realm of global communication and advocacy, particularly within the framework of organizations like UN-Habitat, the significance of high-quality photography cannot be overstated. Images possess the unique ability to capture attention, evoke emotions, and tell stories that resonate deeply with audiences worldwide.

Whether documenting urban development initiatives, illustrating environmental challenges, or showcasing the resilience of communities, well-crafted photographs serve as visual narratives that amplify the voice of those striving for positive change. Understanding the principles of photography, from composition and lighting to technical proficiency, is essential for effectively communicating messages, fostering empathy, and driving action towards sustainable urban development and inclusive communities.

## The ask

UN-Habitat needs compelling and vivid photographs showing the impact of our work around the world.

This means avoiding shots of people sitting in meetings. Instead, submit images of beneficiaries that express self-reliance and progress. It is important to show UN-Habitat's work as a collaborative process between beneficiaries, local and national governments and the international community. We need:

- 2-4 high quality photographs showing a range of shots including: close-ups of beneficiaries and wider shots contextualizing the intervention with people in the shot. As a series these should tell the story of the intervention in the field.
- Save/name each photograph jpeg file as:
- Yearmonthday\_UNHabitat\_Project name\_location [UN-Habitat/photographer's\_First name\_Surname]

For example, two images taken on 25 July 2020 are filed:

- 20200725\_UNHabitat\_BlockByBlock\_Afghanistan1\_ [UN-Habitat/John Brown].jpeg
- 20200725\_UNHabitat\_BlockByBlock\_Afghanistan2\_ [UN-Habitat/John Brown].jpeg

## How to take good photographs

Make sure your camera's date and time are set accurately as this will help with metadata.

Make sure your camera battery is charged and your lens is clean.

Do research about what it is you are photographing so that you can accurately capture the essence of the story.

People make a photograph interesting, and it shows the impact of our work better. After asking permission, shoot a variety of interesting scenes. Do not have groups of people in all the shots. For variety, also shoot action shots with individuals or only two people in the shot.

Get pictures of people doing something – action shots really work. They are key for modern web stories and social media.

Do not rush taking the photos. If necessary, ask the participants to re-enact some of how the story unfolded.

Take a number of photos in a row – this gives you options to select from, and avoids single shots with people's eyes closed.

Note down people's full names with correct spellings, so that you can caption the photographs accurately.

Move around the scene and shoot a lot from different angles (low down, high up, etc. – not only from standing height).

In general, each scene needs a range of shots to tell the story visually:

- Wide shots to contextualize
- Mid shots to show who is in the story
- Close-ups to really show the details of the activity.

Include UN-Habitat staff in a couple of scenes – but please do not send in posed group photos. Instead, show UN-Habitat colleagues at work. They must be doing something (GIS measurements, consultation with the community, checking solar panels, etc.) and they should be wearing branded clothes.

Children are appealing and easy to shoot but should not be the sole representation of the project beneficiaries (unless it is a youth-specific project) – and you must make sure you have the parent, school or guardian's permission (see annexed Consent Form).

If you must use a phone for photographs, then make sure you move yourself around the scene to get a range of shots. Please shoot in horizontal/landscape mode. Never zoom in on a camera phone as it gets pixelated – instead, get closer. Phone lenses always work better in sunlight (outdoor daylight) so ask people to step outside to photograph them.

## Avoid

- People eating, taking selfies, checking their phones, or yawning.
- Photos of people sitting in meetings or giving speeches behind a podium.
- Photos of people with eyes closed. Always take a few in a row (especially for shots with more than one person in the scene) to ensure at least one will be useable.

## Technical requirements

For the website and publications, high resolution is essential:

- Minimum camera resolution: 12 megapixels or larger
- Photo size: minimum 28 cms/11 inches on the short side at 300 dpi resolution
- File type: JPG between 2.5 MB and 4 MB
- Colour Space: Adobe RGB
- Images should be fully captioned. The caption should be embedded (in English) in the IPTC metadata if possible.

## Captions

Each photo needs a caption in the present tense with:

- Names of people in the shot (with correct spelling and titles)
- Basic project description and context
- Date (in UN style: 20 August 2020)
- Location and country
- Credit. This must always be in UN style: [UN-Habitat/photographer's first name surname], e.g. [UN-Habitat/Julius Mwelu]

For example:

- Maimunah Mohd Sharif, UN-Habitat Executive Director (left), and Martha Delgado Peralta, UN-Habitat Assembly President, share a moment outside the headquarters of the United Nations in Nairobi during the High-Level Political Forum. 17 July 2020, Nairobi, Kenya. [UN-Habitat/Daisy Sisulu]

## Metadata

Please embed the caption and credit in the photograph metadata if you can. If you can't embed metadata, please let us know and submit the captions and credit below the story or in the email and we will embed captions at the Nairobi HQ office.

## Storage and access

All UN-Habitat photos are stored in a digital asset management platform called CANTO (<https://unhabitat.canto.global/>). To host photos in CANTO, send an email to Julius Mwelu ([julius.mwelu@un.org](mailto:julius.mwelu@un.org)) following the guidance contained in these guidelines.

Please do not insert photos in a Word document – they must be attached to an email separately as high resolution jpegs or sent as jpeg files via WeTransfer.

## Copyright

UN-Habitat retains copyright entitlements to all photographs submitted to it. If any photo is from a photographer hired by a regional office / unit for a specific assignment, please ensure their signed contract includes the full "General Conditions of Contracts" document that all UN-Habitat interns/contractors/affiliates sign. Within this is the standard UN copyright clause: "Title Rights, Copyrights, Patents and other Propriety Rights" permitting UN-Habitat to use their work (clause 3).

The United Nations and its agencies are expected to show exemplary compliance with international copyright law. This means it is illegal to lift photos or graphics from magazines, books or web pages without written permission (and often this entails payment). Any photo that is unattributed and used without consent is illegal and risks the organization facing legal action. If we have not received written permission to use a picture or if we have not paid for it, it is illegal for us to use it in any way whatsoever.



MULTIMEDIA PARTICIPANT  
RELEASE AND CONSENT FORM

**This is not a release for commercial use.**

By signing this release form, I hereby grant UN-Habitat and the **United Nations Secretariat** the right to reproduce, display and disseminate worldwide and in perpetuity, in any traditional or electronic media format, the information I have provided, including photographs, video and audio footage taken of me, my name, statement and any other information I have provided for use.

The entire copyright of this multimedia work will belong to UN-Habitat, and will be used for the promotion of sustainable urbanization and the work of UN-Habitat. This UN-Habitat copyright extends to all existing media and future media in all territories. Upon completion of the project I am aware that multimedia materials may be used whole or in parts in web stories, printed publications, broadcast on television, shared on social media and/or published permanently on the internet. I am aware that the photographs, audio and video footage taken of me will be stored as an archive. I understand the audio and video footage recorded will be edited down, and UN-Habitat is under no obligation to include me in final versions of films or stories.

I release UN-Habitat from all liability and any claims I may have arising out of the use and publication of this material

The photographs / video footage containing my likeness were taken on (date) \_\_\_\_\_  
in the (location including town/country) \_\_\_\_\_  
by (photographer's & videographer's name) \_\_\_\_\_

I further confirm that these images are a true likeness of me and the images were taken with my knowledge and consent.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Subject                      Age                      Date                      Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address and mobile number

**IF SUBJECT IS A CHILD UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE:**

I confirm that I am the legal guardian of the child named above and therefore may grant permission for this subject release on behalf of the child:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Legal Guardian / Relationship to Child                      Date                      Signature of Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Witness / Organization Affiliation                      Date                      Witness Signature