

HabPost

Updates from
UN-Habitat

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Making Room for Innovation

Editor's note

Dear Reader,

It is almost August and it has now been almost five months since many of us have started to adapt to new work modalities. Though this was very much a health requirement rather than a planned revolutionary move in the workplace, it could set the stage for long-term innovations that redefine the way we work and where we work from. In the meantime, a group of colleagues have been working on the topic of innovation for several months seeking to understand what innovation meant at UN-Habitat, what it should encompass, and how it should be approached to serve us as an organization in the ways we work and deliver. The results of the innovation survey and much more are available in this issue of HabPost, so have a read and find out for yourself! We also follow up on an earlier issue of HabPost and provide you with an update on the first session of the Executive Board for 2020 – spoiler alert, *Habemus Bureau!*

Happy Reading,

The HabPost Team

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Alerts

COVID-19

The coronavirus continues to cause disruption to the way we work, live, and travel. Here are selected highlights from the international media.

- After heavy debate in what was the EU's [longest summit](#) in two decades, EU leaders have agreed to a comprehensive coronavirus recovery package comprising of €750 billion in grants and loans to counter the impact of the pandemic in the EU. The deal will channel €390 billion in grants to the [hardest-hit countries](#), particularly Italy and Spain, as well as provide low-interest loans to aid economic recovery in member countries
- The IMF has published new findings on the [COVID-19 gender gap](#), predicting that the fallout from the pandemic will disproportionately affect the economic status of women. This is due to factors including the nature of work, informal and unpaid labour, co-responsibilities, and human capital. Read their key conclusions [here](#).
- In **New Delhi**, a new study by the National Centre for Disease Control predicts that almost [one in four](#) – or around four million people – may have been infected with the coronavirus. This is significantly higher than presently reported numbers.
- **South Africa** – Africa's worst affected country – is facing a [surge of cases](#) in one of the [world's fastest-growing coronavirus outbreaks](#). The country now records the fifth highest number of cases globally and is taking stronger mitigation measures including a four-week closure of schools, which had reopened in June.
- Following the first community outbreak since April, **Vietnam** has ordered the [evacuation of at least 80,000 tourists](#) from the tourist hotspot Da Nang, to be completed within four days from Monday 27 July. The country's widespread testing and strict quarantine measures have so far kept coronavirus infections at just 420, with no deaths.



Making Room for Innovation



Since the beginning of the year, a group of colleagues at HQ have worked tirelessly to set up our organization's innovation unit. Established in January 2020 as part of the restructuring efforts, the Innovation Unit sits in the Knowledge and Innovation Branch (ERSKID) and brings together Eduardo Moreno (eduardo.moreno@un.org), Marco Kamiya (marco.kamiya@un.org), Melissa Permezel (melissa.permezel@un.org), Pontus Westerberg (pontus.westerberg@un.org), Isabel Shirin Enyonam Wetzel (isabel.wetzel@un.org) and Tania Lim (tania.lim@un.org).

Setting up the unit required devising a realistic but ambitious work plan, developing a set of Terms of Reference, elaborating a strategy, and instilling an innovation mindset into work processes such as the Programme Review Committee (PRC). These efforts aim to strengthen innovation within the agency and expand our knowledge of and expertise in urban innovations around the world.

To gain a better understanding of the innovation needs of various countries and regions where we operate as well as those of the thematic teams

across our organization, the Innovation Unit engaged in extensive discussions with Senior Management and other colleagues. Some of the information collected is available on the [UN-Habitat innovation webpage](#), which highlights the diversity of UN-Habitat's work on urban innovation.

As you might recall, colleagues in the Innovation Unit also circulated a survey seeking to elucidate our understanding of innovation at UN-Habitat. The results of the survey are now available – we unveil them in this issue of HabPost.





UN-Habitat's definition of innovation

"For UN-Habitat, innovation means embracing and using new ideas, up-to-date means, and adopting fresh approaches to existing challenges and methods to achieve sustainable urbanization. It requires identifying new ways of working across all scales and levels of governance, from the national to community level. It is based on horizontal and collaborative working practices that take into consideration a diverse range of views, within the organization as well as externally. It is informed by the Human Rights Based Approach and must put people at the centre of the process and outcome, particularly the poor and marginalized. Innovation can take shape as a process (capacity development, collaboration), a practical tool or application (project, initiative) or as a culture (teams, institutions). It helps to efficiently deliver inclusive impacts at scale and ensures that we leave no one and no place behind."

The innovation survey

43 survey responses were received spanning a wide array of functions, levels, and locations. Answers and comments revolved around the definition of innovation at UN-Habitat, the mandate and work of the Innovation Unit, as well as on procedures and inner workings of our organization.

1. Definition

Overall, respondents were happy with the proposed definition. The main suggestions for enrichment included: technological elements, though colleagues appreciated that innovation is broader than technology and digitalization; context, with different places and contexts having different levels and conceptions of innovation; room for risk, failure and learning, which are inherent to innovation; and the capacity to develop and implement new and innovative approaches.

2. Mandate of the Innovation Unit

Respondents expressed the need for the Innovation Unit to provide guidance around the agency on the design and implementation of innovative projects or initiatives, develop innovative tools, knowledge, cases and products, and explore new technologies and data and their applicability to UN-Habitat's programmes.

3. Inner workings

What should an innovation unit look like, and what values should it uphold? Respondents attached importance to the promotion of a culture of innovation, and indicated the need for the unit to be flexible and dynamic. This includes providing training and learning opportunities – for instance on design thinking – and lessons from pilots based on strong monitoring on innovative practices. Interestingly, several comments related to optimization of processes within the agency, such as e-signatures, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and the facilitation of processes with MACS, Legal, and OED. The Innovation Unit has drawn the attention of ERSKID and MACS to the comments for a collaborative approach to addressing the issues raised, some of which are beyond the current scope of the Innovation Unit.

What's next?

The list of tasks is long for colleagues at the Innovation Unit, but here is a snapshot of a few activities that they have engaged in recently:

1. The development of an **inventory of urban innovations** that tracks some of the interesting innovative ideas emerging from different cities around the world in response to COVID-19. This will soon be available on UN-Habitat's website – do share ideas for inclusion in the inventory!
2. The development of a set of **policy papers on innovation** in cities, as part of a larger programme designed to build and strengthen UN-Habitat's capacity on urban innovation.
3. Negotiations with partners to set up an **Innovation Technology Accelerator for Cities** in Hamburg, Germany – updates coming soon!
4. Designing other tools to **help partners strengthen their engagement with innovation**.
5. Participation in the **PRC review process** from an innovation point of view to enhance innovative thinking in project design and implementation.
6. Conducting **interviews** with colleagues to better grasp the nature of innovation in different teams and offices, as well as how internal guidance can be shaped going forward.
7. Refining **UN-Habitat's innovation webpage**. If you would like to feature an innovative story on the page, please get in touch with colleagues from the Innovation Unit – either directly with any of the team members or via email to unhabitat-innovation@un.org.
8. Exploring funding opportunities related to innovation.

Do not hesitate to reach out to the Innovation unit with any enquiries, comments, ideas, or great examples of urban innovations. They'll be happy to hear from you!

Vacancies

Role
Programme Management Officer, Human Settlements, P3
Duty Station
Nairobi, Kenya
Deadline
7 August 2020
[Apply Here](#)

Role
Special Assistant, Administration, D1
Duty Station
Nairobi, Kenya
Deadline
23 August 2020
[Apply Here](#)

Role
Global Future Cities Programme Urban Planning and Finance Expert
Duty Station
Nairobi, Kenya
Deadline
4 August 2020
[Apply Here](#)

Role
Programme Management Officer, Human Settlements, P4
Duty Station
Damascus, Syria
Deadline
15 August 2020
[Apply Here](#)

Role
Chief of Communications (Project Post), P5
Duty Station
Nairobi, Kenya
Deadline
18 August 2020
[Apply Here](#)

Role
Global Future Cities Programme Mid-Level Public Finance Expert
Duty Station
Nairobi, Kenya
Deadline
20 August 2020
[Apply Here](#)

Role
Global Future Cities Programme Senior Urban Mobility Expert
Duty Station
Nairobi, Kenya
Deadline
7 August 2020
[Apply Here](#)

Role
Programme Management Assistant (2 Positions), G5
Duty Station
Nairobi, Kenya
Deadline
5 August 2020
[Apply Here](#)

Role
Intern - Urban Planning Intern for Humanitarian and Development Practice
Duty Station
Home based
Deadline
4 August 2020
[Apply Here](#)

Role
Global Future Cities Programme Senior Resilience Expert
Duty Station
Home based
Deadline
13 August 2020
[Apply Here](#)

Role
Global Future Cities Programme Senior Public Finance Expert
Duty Station
Home based
Deadline
20 August 2020
[Apply Here](#)

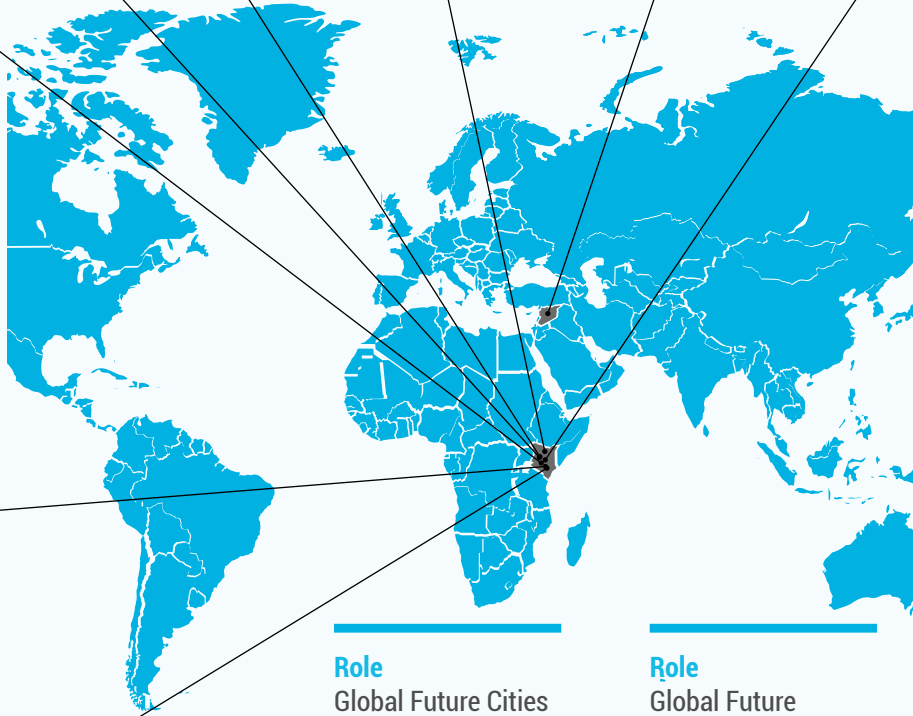
Role
Global Future Cities Programme Videographer, Photographer and Storyteller
Duty Station
Home based
Deadline
7 August 2020
[Apply Here](#)

Role
Intern - Technical Support
Duty Station
Home based
Deadline
4 August 2020
[Apply Here](#)

Role
Experto en análisis y planificación territorial regional y vínculos urbano-rurales
Duty Station
Home based
Deadline
3 August 2020
[Apply Here](#)

Role
Experto en planeación de infraestructura de transporte y conectividad
Duty Station
Home based
Deadline
3 August 2020
[Apply Here](#)

Role
Experto senior en desarrollo económico territorial-productividad
Duty Station
Home based
Deadline
3 August 2020
[Apply Here](#)



Upcoming events and corporate calendar



Other organizers



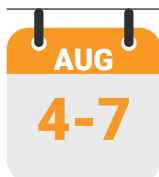
Using Risk Information and Disaster Risk Profiles to Inform DRR and Decision Making in Africa

A series of webinars hosted by UNDRR will draw on existing approaches to disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and sustainable development to strengthen coordination across DRR actors at the national and supra-national levels. The first of the webinars, on 30 July, will reflect on the process of developing continental, regional and national road maps for risk information. The panel will assess the value of country-level quantitative risk profiles in enabling crucial decisions to be made, taking into consideration information on the probable impacts of disaster events. You can access more information on the webinar series and register to attend through the [UNDRR website](#).



International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

Every 9 August, the international community comes together to celebrate indigenous peoples and to further the special measures required to protect their rights and maintain their distinct cultures and way of life. This year focuses on COVID-19 and indigenous peoples' resilience. As we fight against the spread of the pandemic, it is more important than ever to safeguard indigenous peoples, their knowledge, and their territories, which are home to 80% of the world's biodiversity. Indigenous people can teach us much about how to rebalance our relationship with nature and reduce the risk of future pandemics. A UN special event on 9 August will feature a panel discussion on the innovative ways indigenous peoples continue demonstrating resilience and strength in the face of the pandemic, while confronting grave threats to their survival. Find out more [here](#).



Walk/Bike/Places

Walk/Bike/Places brings together walking, bicycling, and placemaking professionals from the public and private sectors, based in North America. The focus of this year's event is "Implementation — how we get things done". The programme will feature local and national government efforts to build public spaces and transportation systems that preserve the health and safety of all users, promote social connections, and reduce environmental impact. For the full programme and registration, visit: <https://www.walkbikeplaces.org/>.





Learning

Digital Now: Learning to harness the power of modern digital communications for the United Nations

Digital Now is a new online learning experience launched by UNDP that offers a comprehensive set of learning tools to improve our skills and ability to collaborate efficiently in the digital era. The platform provides resources including expert talks, tutorials, podcasts and other learning materials on topics ranging from digital advertising and social media to hosting effective webinars, UX design and more. Check out the platform [here](#).

Training on Gender-Inclusive Language & Gender Equality

In an effort to contribute to “a working environment that embraces equality, eradicates bias and is inclusive for all staff”, the UN Language and Communications training unit has collaborated with the Department of Operational Support to present new online training resources on gender-inclusive language and gender-equality. The series of webinars and online courses will focus on raising awareness and training on the uses of gender-inclusive language, including gender inclusive communications, gender neutrality, and understanding the UN Guidelines on Inclusive Language, which you can find [here](#). Courses are available in Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish and are currently available free of charge for all eligible participants – including non-Secretariat staff. More information and Inspira learning codes are available through the Language Learning [brochure](#).

UN BLUE LINE – SDG Primer

The SDG Primer is a free online course presented through the Blue Line – a global learning hub for UN staff for personalized and self-directed learning. The SDG primer course aims to establish a common base of understanding and approach for the UN system in supporting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is meant to inform, in broad terms, the programmes and actions of all UN entities, including their engagement with government and civil society partners. The course is open to staff members and includes a three-hour module and an assessment test. Participants will receive a certificate upon completion. You can find out more and register at: <https://www.unssc.org/courses/sdg-primer/>. If you're not a staff member, you can still access the primer [here](#). Contact development@unssc.org for any queries.

LINKEDIN LEARNING – Finding and Benefiting from a Mentor

While many think mentors are for those new to the workforce, the truth is you can benefit from the advice and opportunities offered by a mentor at any stage in your career. This short course explains how to identify a mentor and get the most from the relationship. Find out what mentoring really means, why it's so important, and learn how to initiate this valuable relationship and maximize the value of meetings with your mentor to benefit your career. You are never too experienced or too successful to benefit from a mentor! Find out more and register [here](#).





Habemus Bureau!

Yesterday, 29 July 2020, following nominations from their respective regional groups of states, the following countries were elected by acclamation to the new Bureau of the Executive Board for the term 2020-2021 during the resumed virtual session of the Board:

-  **Iran** (Chair) for the Group of Asia-Pacific States
-  **Egypt** (Vice Chair) for the Group of African States
-  **Chile** (Vice Chair) for the Group of Latin and Caribbean States
-  **France** (Vice Chair) for the Group of Western Europe and other States
-  **Serbia** (Rapporteur) for the Group of Eastern European States

Our Executive Director welcomed incoming members of the Bureau and assured them of her commitment to working with all to serve UN-Habitat and Member States.

The conclusion of these elections successfully closes the first session of the Executive Board for the year 2020. The second session of the Board is tentatively scheduled for 27-29 October 2020. The Secretariat has already started planning for this event which should, among others, see the Board consider and approve the work programme and budget for 2021.

Functions of the Bureau



The Bureau of the Executive Board meets as necessary. Its functions include the preparation and organization of Board meetings, facilitation of transparent decision-making, and promotion of dialogue.

The Bureau guides the Board in its conduct of work. It does not, however, have the authority to make decisions on any substantive matters. The Bureau briefs the Board on its deliberations and highlights issues and recommendations that require consideration and action by the Board.



Participate!

Want your story featured? Submit your ideas or reach out to us at unhabitat-habpost@un.org.

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