

Hab Post

Updates from
UN-Habitat

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**The ROAF
strategy**
and answer
to COVID-19

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Editor's note

Dear Reader,

This week, HabPost goes to Africa and explores the strategy and answer to COVID-19 of our Regional Office for Africa (ROAf). Read about it in our feature story, which includes links to resources you might find useful in your own work.

We also continue with our series of information bites on innovation, with the hope that we can all be revolutionary, bold, and able to embrace innovation to meet the challenges of our times — just as Secretary-General António Guterres has encouraged us to do.

Happy reading!

The HabPost Team



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UN-HABITAT IN THE NEWS



UN-Habitat Executive Director meets with senior Government officials in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to discuss on-going and future urban development initiatives (ReliefWeb)



UN-Habitat builds schools to withstand floods and cyclones for 100,000 children in Mozambique (ReliefWeb)



UN-Habitat, local government and the EU join forces to combat Gender-Based Violence in Mogadishu through COVID-19 awareness forums (Africanews)



La transición ecológica empieza en las ciudades (El País)



Lebanon President Aoun to Executive Director of UN Human Settlements Programme: Lebanese will face challenges is firm (mtv)



The ROAF strategy and answer to COVID-19



UN-Habitat works with national and local African governments as well as international and regional institutions to respond to the needs of urban populations. ROAF's country and regional projects and programmes focus on areas including basic services and infrastructure development, durable solutions for internally displaced people and refugees, participatory slum upgrading, enhanced urban governance, promotion of peace and stability through participatory planning approaches, urban resilience, risk reduction and climate change adaptation, and urban and regional planning. The current active portfolio of projects of the office is spread across **twenty-four (24) countries**.

And the ROAF strategy brings this work together. The strategy marks a new paradigm shift towards sustainable cities in Africa through planning and management to prevent the development of informal settlements and guide city expansion, with a focus on secondary cities. The strategy recognizes sustainable urbanization as an engine for growth, tackling urban challenges and leveraging the opportunities

brought about by urbanization. It also positions UN-Habitat as a major player of sustainable development on the continent by embedding the urban agenda into the broader African development vision articulated in [Agenda 2063: the Africa We Want](#): a prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens, representing a dynamic force in the international arena.

Responding to COVID-19

With the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic at the beginning of last year, priorities shifted. While the deadly pandemic was already taking its toll in Asia and other parts of the world, Africa did not really start feeling the heat until the second quarter of 2020. National and local governments found themselves in the middle of a crisis they were unprepared for. From planning to access to basic services, sanitation, urban-rural linkages, climate change and resilience, the crisis brought to the limelight the very essence of UN-Habitat's programmatic work and pointed out in a very unique way the link between urban planning and governance on the one hand, and health and disaster preparedness on the other.

Given the demand for support by Member States, and the novelty of the pandemic, UN-Habitat immediately activated its emergency protocols and crisis response mechanisms. The [COVID-19 Response Plan](#) called for urgent and coordinated measures across three areas: support to local

governments and community driven solutions in informal settlements; provision of urban data evidence-based, mapping and knowledge for informed decision-making; and mitigation of economic impact and initiation of recovery. UN-Habitat intensified efforts to mobilize new resources to deliver the UN-Habitat Response Plan and scale up support to countries and cities.

In partnership with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG Africa), and Shelter Afrique, UN-Habitat took a close look at the impact, response and policy pathways related to COVID-19 in the context of African cities. The analysis, summed up in the report [COVID-19 in African Cities](#) proposes several interventions to promptly and effectively address the urban challenges of COVID-19 in Africa under the leadership of national and local governments, supported by international and regional development institutions.

Working in partnerships

To better fulfil its mandate, ROAF has established strategic partnerships with various institutions in Africa and beyond. The office is working closely with UNECA to drive the agenda of urbanization in Africa and support the African Union in building the momentum for sustainable urbanization. The office is also collaborating with United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG Africa) to engage local governments towards sustainable urban development and promote [Africities](#). Most recently, ROAF has taken steps to reinforce collaboration with philanthropies to better implement the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs in Africa, and signed a MoU with German foundation Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung for more democratic and just cities in Africa.

Alongside this effort to produce a body of knowledge on the pandemic at the continental level, UN-Habitat mobilized resources to support several Member States across sub-Saharan Africa through the distribution of prevention kits, awareness raising activities and training on barrier actions and community mobilisation, financial support to and capacity building for small enterprises, and social innovations in precarious neighbourhoods.

Interventions by ROAF have reached more than 10 million people in Africa by preventing the spread of the disease in cities and informal settlements, and by mitigating the socio-economic impact of the pandemic.

But the crisis has shown that not everyone is affected equally. In fact, COVID-19 has reinforced inequalities in access to public services such as health, transport, electricity, leisure,

education, and security, and increased the needs of populations suffering from disasters and extreme events. As a contribution to the global response to COVID-19, specific surveys were conducted in a number of African countries with a focus on women, youth and people living with disabilities to strengthen their livelihoods and access to services during the pandemic.

“The lock down really hit the lowest paid people in African cities who are working in the informal sector. They often live in the most overcrowded areas where they could not adequately protect themselves from the pandemic, and there was no work to enable them to feed their families, pointing to the need to urgently address the root causes of informal settlement which represent 47 per cent of the total urban population in Africa.”

Oumar Sylla
Regional
Representative
for Africa, UN-Habitat



To address this, UN-Habitat set aside a special fund of USD 1 million for emergency interventions while further funding avenues were explored to cushion the mid- and long-term effects

of the crisis. In the same vein, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) provided USD 2 million to UN-Habitat to support national recovery efforts.

Lessons learnt

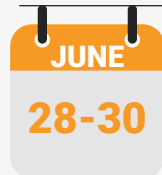
Some of the lessons learnt indicate the following:

1. The need for active presence and participation at the United Nations Country Teams (UNCT) and Project Management Teams in order to position UN-Habitat's agenda on urbanization and influence the Common Country Assessment and UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.
2. The COVID-19 crisis, though unprecedented, created an opportunity to address structural vulnerabilities and inequalities. It is an opportunity to institutionalize community led-response systems, rely on social dialogue, empower local governments, scale-up community and city level resilience, and enhance legal and institutional frameworks.
3. The emergency response initiatives allowed UN-Habitat to leverage existing partnerships for portfolio development and resource mobilization including with governments, civil society organizations, academia, the private sector, research and institutions community-based organizations, and youth and women's groups.
4. UN-Habitat was in a favourable position to start or continue building a trusted network of partners from the public and private sector as well as at the grassroots level. UN-Habitat needs to ride the momentum created to strengthen public participation at the grassroots level and build the necessary public-private-community partnerships with local authorities for resource mobilization on specific interventions.

Upcoming events and corporate calendar

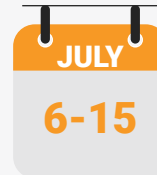


Other organizers



The EUKN-OECD Week of National Urban Policies

The event, organized by the European Urban Knowledge Network (EUKN) and the OECD, will explore how the New Leipzig Charter supports more just, green and productive National Urban Policies (NUPs). It will consist of four distinct Policy Lab sessions: the Opening Session; the 'Just' Dimension of NUPs; the 'Productive' Dimension of NUPs; the 'Green' Dimension of NUPs. The opening session will serve as a high-level kick-off for the week, providing a general introduction and framing of the topic and preparing the ground for the three following thematic sessions. The thematic Policy Lab sessions will explore how NUPs can support social cohesion, environmental sustainability and economic development in a number of European countries. [More information](#)



High-Level Political Forum 2021 under the Auspices of ECOSOC

The high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) is the core United Nations platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The meeting of the HLPF in 2021 will be held under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council. This includes the three-day ministerial meeting of the forum from Tuesday, 13 July, to Thursday, 15 July 2021 as part of the high-level segment of the Council. The theme will be "Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development". The HLPF in 2021 will discuss Sustainable Development Goals 1 on no poverty, 2 on zero hunger, 3 on good health and well-being, 8 on decent work and economic growth, 10 on reduced inequalities, 12 on responsible consumption and production, 13 on climate action, 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, and 17 on partnerships in depth. The Forum will also consider the integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the Sustainable Development Goals. [More information](#)



Key dates



29 June - 1 July, 2021

High Level Mid-term review meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

11 July

World Population Day

Vacancies

Role
Programme Management Officer, Human Settlements, P3 (Temporary Job Opening)
Duty Station
Nairobi, Kenya
28 June 2021
[Apply here](#)

Role
Information Systems Officer, P3
Duty Station
Hamburg, Germany
3 July 2021
[Apply here](#)

Role
Programme Management Officer, Administrative Support Related, P4 (Temporary Job Opening)
Duty Station
Nairobi, Kenya
28 June 2021
[Apply here](#)

Role
Programme Management Officer, P3 (Temporary Job Opening)
Duty Station
Nairobi, Kenya
29 June 2021
[Apply here](#)



Role
Associate Administrative Officer, P2
Duty Station
Panama City, Panama
30 July 2021
[Apply here](#)

Role
Chief Technical Adviser (Project), P5 (Temporary Job Opening)
Duty Station
Kinshasa, DRC
30 June 2021
[Apply here](#)

Role
Finance and Budget Assistant, G6
Duty Station
Nairobi, Kenya
6 July 2021
[Apply here](#)

Role
Programme Management Officer, Human Settlements, P4
Duty Station
Nairobi, Kenya
16 July 2021
[Apply here](#)

Role
Programme Management Officer, Human Settlements, P3
Duty Station
Nairobi, Kenya
25 June 2021
[Apply here](#)



Innovation corner

Challenge-driven innovations

For the last few years, UN-Habitat has been looking at new ways to foster urban innovation. Our strategic plan calls for innovative funding opportunities, partnerships, and methodologies – including open and challenge-driven innovation.

Innovation challenges have gained popularity and have proven effective in leveraging entrepreneurial potential towards competitive and efficient solutions to the most pressing challenges in cities.

These challenges typically involve teams and individuals proposing solutions to pressing urban challenges in exchange for a reward.

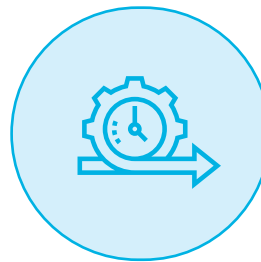
Using innovation contests in the public sector has several advantages:



Effectively connecting the public to the community of local innovators



Allowing organizers to pose open-ended problems rather than impose prescriptive solutions frameworks



Providing a diverse choice of out-of-the-box, agile solutions

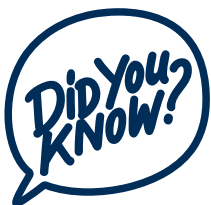


Attracting start-ups and the private sector

The Innovation section's last roundtable focused on how we as an organization could leverage challenge-driven innovation to accelerate the achievement of our mandate and goals.

The roundtable featured presentations from [NESTA](#), the [Mohammed Bin Rashid Initiative](#), [Impact Canada](#), and [Viable Cities](#). Given the increasing interest in best practices for managing

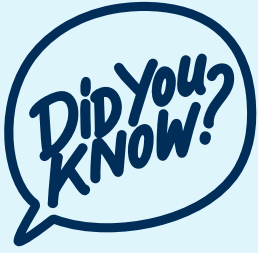
innovation challenges, UN-Habitat will prepare and share a methodology to guide the design and execution process of challenges.



UN-Habitat is currently running a [climate smart cities challenge](#) to develop, test and scale cutting-edge solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Four cities, Curitiba (Brazil), Bogotá (Colombia), Bristol (UK) and Makindye-Ssabagabo

(Uganda) have been selected. The learnings from the challenge process will inform a challenge-driven methodology that can be leveraged by UN-Habitat colleagues.

For more information, check out the [post event report](#) of the roundtable which includes a summary of the presentations and links to the challenge guides of the organizations that participated in the roundtable. You may also get in touch with the Innovation section (un-habitat-innovation@un.org) if you are interested in challenge-driven innovations and looking for tips on how to adopt them in your projects and programmes.



UN-Habitat has just published its comprehensive **Report on Urban October 2020**.



Urban October 2020 saw a record breaking **753 events** in **74 countries** and **230 cities** registered on the UN-Habitat website covering all aspects of sustainable urbanization. This included **540 events** in the Americas, **75 in Europe**, **62 in Africa**, **54 in Asia** and **5 in Oceania**.

World Habitat Day, which took place on 5 October 2020 with the theme Housing for All: A Better Urban Future featured **69 events** in **42 countries** and **59 cities** with the Global Observance in Surabaya, Indonesia.

World Cities Day (WCD) was on 31 October under the sub theme Valuing our communities and cities with **77 events** in **39 countries** and **70 cities**. The first Global Observance of WCD in Africa was hosted by Nakuru in Kenya.

This year, Urban October will focus on the climate crisis. World Habitat Day will be held on 4 October under the theme *Accelerating urban action for a carbon-free world*, and World Cities Day on 31 October 2021 under the theme *Adapting Cities for Climate Resilience*.

For more information about Urban October 2021 and how to participate visit [https://urbanoctober.unhabitat.org/!](https://urbanoctober.unhabitat.org/)



Participate!

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

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