

UN-Habitat Knowledge Management Strategy

Summary

In the last 10 years, UN-Habitat has had cooperation programmes and projects and capacity development interventions in over 80 countries across the world. A plethora of interventions in various development areas has made UN-Habitat a global actor in the field of sustainable urban development.

The implementation of this important mandate and responsibility has been facilitated by the Agency's expertise, capability, know-how and combining power that generated not only direct development outputs and transformative solutions, but also a rich base of collective awareness, knowledge and understanding. The cornerstone of this effort has been learning from the process, sharing some lessons, analysing and assessing results, creating an internal community of practice and capturing and processing knowledge, although not always in a systematic manner.

In 2010, UN-Habitat developed a Knowledge Strategy in view of transforming the Agency in learning and knowledge based organization. Since then, the Agency has made measurable improvements in various organizational and management areas that are related to knowledge; however, mainstreaming and institutionalizing this knowledge is far from being achieved and numerous areas are still to be developed and/or refined. It is clear that despite its strategic importance, knowledge management it is not systematically harvesting core knowledge and lessons learned, internally and externally. It is also clear that information management gaps persist and there are serious shortcomings in information and knowledge systems that have limited the improvement of performance.

The purpose of this document is to formulate a **Knowledge Management Strategy** that directly serves UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2014-2019. This Strategic Plan re-aligns the Agency's attention on four programme areas organized into seven focus areas and a project-based management approach.

This strategic paper starts by assessing UN-Habitat barriers and challenges in knowledge management grouping them in 4 distinct areas: 1) organizational process dimension; 2) systems or technical dimension; 3) individual and cultural dimension and; 4) organizational learning dimension. In a separate section, the paper analyses the progress made in the development of knowledge management assets, presenting them using the same framework of analysis with 4 areas.

The core of this strategic paper is the development of a framework for UN-Habitat Knowledge Management that is structured in 6 broad thematic areas of intervention: 1) strengthening the institutional and operational structure of knowledge management; 2) reinforcing the use of information and knowledge within the organization; 3) reinforcing KM with an adequate supporting infrastructure and systems; 4) fostering partnerships for broader knowledge-sharing and learning; 5) promoting a culture of learning and exchange; 6) creating a monitoring mechanism of the Knowledge Management Strategy.

The paper concludes with a section presenting the expected results of the Knowledge Management Strategy and the possible risks that is going to be confronted during the implementation phase.

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1. Background

In the last 10 years, UN-Habitat has had cooperation programmes and projects and capacity development interventions in over 80 countries across the world. Depicting global conditions and trends on urbanization, promoting global norms, supporting governments in the formulation and implementation of policies and strategies for sustainable urbanization, assisting in developing innovative models and interventions in a variety of urban development areas, helping mobilize national resources and external support for improving human settlements conditions make of UN-Habitat a global actor in the field of sustainable urban development.

The implementation of this important mandate and responsibility has been facilitated by the Agency's expertise, capability, know-how and combining power that generated not only direct development outputs and transformative solutions, but also a rich base of collective awareness, knowledge and understanding. The cornerstone of this effort has been learning from the process, sharing some lessons, analysing and assessing results, creating an internal community of practice and capturing and processing knowledge, although not always in a systematic manner.

In 2010, UN-Habitat developed a Knowledge Strategy in view of transforming the Agency in learning and knowledge based organization.¹ Since then, the Agency has made measurable improvements in various organizational and management areas that are related to knowledge; however, mainstreaming and institutionalizing this knowledge is far from being achieved and numerous areas are still to be developed and/or refined. It is clear that despite its strategic importance, knowledge management it is not systematically harvesting core knowledge and lessons learned, internally and externally². It is also clear that information management gaps persist and there are serious shortcomings in information and knowledge systems that have limited the improvement of performance.³

The purpose of this document is to formulate a **Knowledge Management Strategy** that directly serves UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2014-2019. This Strategic Plan re-aligns the Agency's attention on four programme areas organized into seven focus areas and a project-based management approach.⁴

The Knowledge Management Strategy will allow UN-Habitat to allocate its resources more effectively, improve individual and organizational performance, facilitate knowledge sharing for the agency and its partners and increase its impact on development results.

¹ This Knowledge Strategy was produced as part of the implementation of the organization's Medium Term Strategic and Institutional Plan 2008-2013, under the Focus Area of Excellence in Management and Results Based Management.

² UN-Habitat weaknesses (SWOT analysis), *Strategic Plan 2014-2019*, Nairobi

³ United Nations (2015) *Evaluation of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme*, Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, New York.

⁴ United Nations Human Settlement Programme, UN-Habitat (2014) *Strategic Plan 2014-2019*, Nairobi.



2. UN-Habitat need to review the Knowledge Management Strategy

Dramatic changes have occurred in the last decade. Urban growth has accelerated in many cities of the global south, while others in the north have experienced shrinking populations. Globalization and technological change have affected cities in different ways. Urban inequalities have deepened and new forms of poverty and exclusion have emerged. Questions of rights and justice have been reasserted. Threats to urban safety and security have intensified generating new quests for human security. Higher energy consumption has increased concerns about climate change and its consequences in human settlements. Many cities are sprawling, creating low density developments that make the provision of infrastructure and public transport difficult.

At the same time, new and emerging challenges and opportunities for urbanization have appeared. Cities have gained increased importance in regional and national economic growth. Financial, institutional and management capacities have improved. Many cities are becoming major powers in their regions, facilitating global integration. New urban configurations have emerged, including mega regions, urban corridors and city-regions, which all reflect emerging links between city growth and regional economic activity. Stronger interdependence is developing among national and sub-national levels of government, and also with other spheres of society.

The world has just adopted the UN's global goals of sustainable urban development for the next 15 years including a stand-alone goal in cities that will bring a renewed responsibility, capacity and mandate to local and sub-national governments.⁵ Habitat III Conference will be a focused effort to innovate and transcend traditional urban models to create truly integrated, inclusive and sustainable solutions. It will be an opportunity to negotiate a collective agreement – a New Urban Agenda – on the role that cities can play in sustainable development.⁶

All these changes present both new opportunities and new threats to the prospects for sustainable urban development. In order to be optimally geared to deliver its mandate and make a difference in the sustainable development agenda, UN-Habitat needs to use knowledge as a vital asset and as a value creating strategy that will increase the ability to respond better to demands, meet the objectives of the organization and facilitate progress towards the achievement of organizational goals.

3. UN-Habitat development capacities depend on improved knowledge management

UN-Habitat is a learning and knowledge-based organization. Its products and services are knowledge-intensive. When defining and implementing its core activities, the Agency deals with many types of knowledge. For instance, processes leading to outputs and results are largely based on knowledge. Its normative and operational work is mostly connected through knowledge that becomes the 'glue' that links regional and headquarters programmes and projects.

⁵ ICLEI (2015) *Transforming the Urban World to Sustainability: SDGs*, downloaded from <http://www.iclei.org/advocacy/post2015.html>.

⁶ UN-Habitat (2014) *Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development*, Concept Paper.



The Agency can produce new knowledge in specific areas of development or use existing one, particularly through best practices. It can also support technical cooperation projects that are based on knowledge and innovative-based programmes/projects aimed at institutional and policy transformation. Knowledge is also present in training and capacity development activities for governments and partners that can also help the organization to learn from them. The formulation of new projects benefits in various cases from the knowledge of past experience that avoids repeating mistakes.⁷

Since the Medium-term Strategic and Institutional Plan 2008-2013, UN-Habitat has strived to improve the effective implementation of the organization's work through Results-based Management, improved communication, and better knowledge management systems.⁸ However, knowledge management processes and systems have provided limited support to increase performance and deliver better results. The systems in place have not always been conducive to produce the adequate knowledge; its dissemination and use across the Agency has often taken too long to support the day-to-day work and the strategic thinking and management. There still remain severe internal knowledge gaps in some areas, while others produce state-of-the-art knowledge that has difficulties to spread inside and outside the organization. In sum, more systemic work is needed to use information, knowledge and learning in the Agency's efforts to achieve sustainable urban development.

UN-Habitat development capacities depend on improved knowledge management and the ability of the organization to acquire, create, refine, store, transfer, share and utilize knowledge.⁹ The Agency's strategy, organizational structure, technology infrastructure and core processes need to be all focused on creating the 'strategic knowledge platform' that holds everything together.¹⁰ This requires better institutional incentives for learning, enhanced integration and vertical/horizontal linkages within the organization, greater investment in carefully selected areas and departments, a system to organize, store and share information¹¹, and improved efforts to 'embed learning' in all the activities from strategy to post-project evaluations. To achieve these objectives and to be able to track and measure its progress¹², UN-Habitat needs an overall guiding framework. That is the aim of this Knowledge Management Strategy.

4. Assessing the barriers and challenges in knowledge management

Despite well documented constraints, UN-Habitat has made measurable improvements in various areas that are directly and indirectly related with knowledge management. Besides greater structural alignment in the Work Programme and the preparation of results targets, the Agency has improved the quality of project proposals and an integrated online project management tool.¹³ Specific internal and

⁷ Lancaster University (2003) *What is knowledge-based Organization?* Zack Michael, Organizational Learning and Knowledge 5th International Conference, United Kingdom.

⁸ UN-Habitat (2007) *Medium-term Strategic and Institutional Plan 2008-2013*, Nairobi.

⁹ King William (2009) *Knowledge Management and Organizational Learning*, Katz Graduate School of Business, University of Pittsburgh, USA.

¹⁰ Lancaster University (2003) *What is knowledge-based Organization?* Zack Michael, Organizational Learning and Knowledge 5th International Conference, United Kingdom.

¹¹ United Nations (2015) *Evaluation of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme*, Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Service, Committee for Programme and Coordination, New York.

¹² IFAD (2007) *Knowledge Management Strategy*,

¹³ United Nations (2015) *Evaluation of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme*, Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Service, Committee for Programme and Coordination, New York.



external knowledge management tools were also implemented such as the development of an enhanced extranet for the Committee of Permanent Representatives, a knowledge platform for urban partners, the Open UN-Habitat portal¹⁴ and better connectivity mechanisms for out-posted offices.

In spite of this progress, challenges to knowledge management remain. Perhaps the more general one is that from human, organizational and technical points of view knowledge is not yet systematic or fully explicit in the organization. It needs to be codified in the organization's structure. It is mainly held by some individuals and units or in specific projects and cities/countries. It is also with some partner institutions (organizations, groups and networks) and held in particular instruments (tools, software and databases) that are not necessarily connected to each other, nor systematized. Consequently, the location, access and use of information and knowledge within or outside the Agency are difficult and sometimes even unmanageable.

UN-Habitat has attempted to address this situation in the past. The key institutional components of the Medium Term Strategic and Institutional Plan (MTSIP) for 2008-2013 contemplated the development of results-based management and integrated knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation system as a way to achieve management excellence.¹⁵ The MTSIP identified knowledge management and information as 'key contributing factors to building a learning organization and as a means of strengthening cohesion and effectiveness'.¹⁶ It proposed to generate and make use of knowledge and lessons learned from field experiences by undertaking an in-depth documentation and dissemination of lessons learned and their transferability as part of the evaluation process of selected country-level activities.¹⁷

As part of the implementation of the MTSIP, a **Knowledge Strategy** was created in 2010 with the goal of helping to achieve the Agency's vision to become 'the premier reference center for information, knowledge and strategic learning about sustainable urbanization'.¹⁸ The Strategy aimed to create an enabling environment to enhance the capacity of the Agency's staff and its partners to share, reuse, and create new information and knowledge.

In view of the preparation of the Knowledge Strategy a Knowledge Audit was conducted that identified various gaps and constraints (2010). The organizational review of the Agency that was started one year after, addressed several of these constraints. However, today some of them still persist as highlighted by the 2015 OIOS Report. The evidence and current analysis shows that UN-Habitat's knowledge

¹⁴ 'Open UN-Habitat' (<http://open.unhabitat.org/>) is the transparency portal of UN-Habitat. Through the creation of the web portal integrated with data from the existing project information portal UN-Habitat Project Accrual and Accountability System (PAAS), UN-Habitat is able to show donors, partners and the public where and with whom the agency is working, the decisions taken, as well as funding and reporting related to each project implemented or supported by UN-Habitat. The initiative builds on the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), which aims to standardize all data provided by donors and agencies so that it is searchable through a single online portal. The portal has four expected accomplishments: 1) Increased public trust and discourse/ interaction with the organization; 2) Increased productivity within the organization; 3) Increased credibility with donors and partners; 4) Renewed reputation for UN-Habitat as being a leader in the global call for aid transparency—including greater debate and discussion around the UN-Habitat Agenda.

¹⁵ UN-Habitat (2007) *Medium-term Strategic and Institutional Plan 2008-2013*, Nairobi.

¹⁶ UN-Habitat (2007) *Medium-term Strategic and Institutional Plan 2008-2013*, Nairobi.

¹⁷ The mainstreaming of best practices was one of the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services in-depth programmatic assessment of UN-Habitat undertaken in 2004.

¹⁸ UN-Habitat (2012) *UN-Habitat: Knowledge Strategy: Building Knowledge based Organization*



management challenges lie in four distinct areas: 1) organizational process dimension; 2) systems or technical dimension; 3) individual and cultural dimension and; 4) organizational learning dimension.

1) Organizational Process Dimension

There is not a clear institutional leadership structure or functional unit to drive knowledge management. The current setting of knowledge management does not define roles responsibilities and accountability mechanisms. Moreover, with functions divided by divisions and branches, there is no dedicated budget for KM and levels of coordination are often problematic.

2) Systems or technical dimension – despite progress in the creation of knowledge support systems such as the Project Accrual and Accountability System (PAAS) and the integrated online management tool, technical solutions for the storage and use of information and knowledge are still inadequate (i.e. knowledge sharing between staff at HQ and the field). UN-Habitat intranet is not routinely updated and key information such as monitoring and evaluation reports are not centrally available.¹⁹ More knowledge products and systems are needed to connect with partners and clients to draw on external knowledge and to expand and disseminate better the Agency’s information and knowledge.

3) Individual and cultural dimension – Knowledge sharing is not yet fully institutionalized as a natural cross-functional practice despite the community of practice that contributes to reduce natural thematic silos of branches and regions. Staff is not always motivated to create, share and utilize knowledge for the benefit and success of the organization. Often it is not clear which knowledge share, with whom and when.²⁰ Individuals fail to connect KM into their daily work activities and understand the added value it can bring.

4) Organizational learning dimension – the mechanisms through which UN-Habitat embeds knowledge into organization process through a continuous learning has improved, but still requires to be enhanced. The project cycle to capture lessons and knowledge with the aim of reusing them for improving performance is rather weak. Learning from evaluation processes, best practices and other internal knowledge sources is low and it is not centrally available.²¹ More refinement in the different categories of knowledge users is required, particularly in new strategic areas of the organization.

5. UN-Habitat Knowledge Management Assets

As a learning and knowledge organization, UN-Habitat already has a wide range of knowledge assets. They can take the form of printed documents such as manuals or guidelines, for instance the archives and records management policy or the recently created “Enterprise Risk Management Guidelines”. Knowledge assets can also be stored in electronic repositories such as the best practices database or the

¹⁹ United Nations (2015) *Evaluation of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme*, Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Service, Committee for Programme and Coordination, New York.

²⁰ King William (2009) *Knowledge Management and Organizational Learning*, Katz Graduate School of Business, University of Pittsburgh, USA.

²¹ There a key points of intervention were learning is critical, for example, design of new project, developing country programme profiles (for high level missions, resource mobilization), regular risk management review the Board, etc.



project accrual and accountability system (PAAS). They can also be assets held by teams who have been working on focused problems such as the Post 2015 Development Agenda team and knowledge that is embedded in the organization's products, processes and relationships.²²

All these knowledge assets are a key component of UN-Habitat KM framework. Some of them need to be improved or effectively employed. Others need to be validated, collated or structured, and various others need to be produced.²³ The most important institutional KM assets created since the MTSIP 2008-2013 and UN-Habitat's organizational review are the following:

Organizational process dimension

- A centralized coordination of strategic planning, performance monitoring and reporting that brings better focus on policy, strategy and knowledge, particularly through the Enhanced Normative and Operational Framework.
- A more unified system of data collection and reporting and the use of information.
- Greater structural alignment to the Agency's corporate results targets and the mechanisms for improving the quality of its project proposal.²⁴
- The establishment of a matrix structure with more interaction between thematic and regional offices and a wide range of mechanisms to enhance knowledge sharing that include:
 - The creation of a Programme Division which ensures better horizontal coordination through regular meetings, retreats, in-house agreements and other mechanisms.
 - Annual strategic planning meetings to ensure that existing knowledge from all offices feeds into biennial programmes of work and annual work plans.
 - Annual progress report on the strategic plan which presents an analysis of results achieved towards implementation of the strategic plan.
 - Preparation of Country Programme Documents that integrate plans, strategy, data and information.
 - Establishment of a Project Advisory Group which ensures that all relevant branches and regions, cross-cutting issues (gender, youth, human rights and climate change), and evaluation contribute to knowledge from current and past experiences when new projects are being designed.

Systems or technical dimension

- The enhancement of information technology platforms – including internet, Habnet, the Gateway portal, corporate Web-enabled workplaces and shared drivers of data and information. The roll-out of an integrated online project management tool.
- The development of an enhanced extranet for the Committee of Permanent Representatives, enhanced connectivity for out-posted offices for improved access to mission critical system, and a knowledge platform for urban partners that now has 7,000 registered users, three major urban networks and another two under development.
- The enhancement of a Project Accrual and Accountability System (PAAS) that includes features to systematically capture knowledge from projects including best practices and lessons learnt, provide

²² Ibid.

²³ IFAD (2007) *Knowledge Management Strategy*

²⁴ United Nations (2015) *Evaluation of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme*, Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Service, Committee for Programme and Coordination, New York.



databases of project related archives, evaluations and tracking of implementation of evaluation recommendations, legal instruments to support knowledge reuse.

- The processing of archives and records from field projects and the central repository to support knowledge reuse and sharing.

Individual and cultural dimension

- Formal knowledge exchange activities are organized and directed to the development of corporate and organizational values. Town hall meetings and other informal meetings are regularly organized.
- Knowledge management activities to facilitate knowledge sharing for the organization and partners, such as the induction courses to new members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and regular brown bag lunch meetings.
- Training in HQ and regional offices for team building and to promote lessons sharing as well as social connections and interactions such as regular branch retreats and meetings.
- Communities of practice for partners and staff to contact one another individually or through groups with common interests, needs and challenges. Meetings with urban partners to learn from their experience and comparative advantages such as Urban Dialogues.

Organizational learning dimension

- UN-Habitat has committed resources over many years in support of research on sustainable urban development, regional knowledge networks and specialized knowledge events such as the World Urban Forums.
- The Agency has produced flagship, regional and thematic publications to share knowledge and research findings, some of which have been widely disseminated and recognized by the international community and partners.
- The Agency has systematically produced data and indicators and provided standards indicators to measure progress towards different aspects of sustainable urban development. This is the case for instance with the City Prosperity Initiative that provides decision makers with the knowledge to guide urban policies, strategies and benchmarks for their success.
- The establishment of the *urban lectures* series to share knowledge on particular urban themes and the 'Urban Dialogues' as an open up urban platform for debate on topics related to the new urban agenda and establishment of urban thinkers campus to learn, share and brainstorm on urban knowledge issues.
- The Habitat University Partnership (UNI) is a platform created within the academia and UN-Habitat to disseminate, exchange and share information and knowledge. This platform supports the partners' collaborative drive towards sustainable urban development, enabling progressive efforts based on the cumulative experiences throughout the Initiative's global network of partners.
- Independent evaluations conducted by UN-Habitat and others of its project and the annual monitoring report on the results of UN-Habitat's operations have served to assess performance, learn from the experience and critically question existing knowledge and inform decision-making.
- Continuous information and knowledge programmes including capacity building of Habitat Agenda partners, customized research and alerts for staff on urban themes, and the archives and records programme for preservation of organizational memory.

Finally, the recent launch of the Umoja Enterprise Resource Planning system – a process, system and learning KM asset – is expected to provide a central knowledge base of policies and procedures to facilitate learning and support decentralization of functions to achieve greater levels of efficiency.



UMOJA will also enhance the management of information and knowledge to support enhanced decision making and management of the organization’s resources and project portfolio.

All these institutional assets need to be assessed, centralized in their use and systematically applied in all programmes/projects and regions.

Knowledge management is the planning, organizing, motivating and controlling of processes and systems, and enhancing the organizational structure, to ensure that its knowledge-related assets are improved and effectively employed to achieve corporate objectives.²⁵

6. A framework for UN-Habitat Knowledge Management

The Strategic Plan 2014-2019 envisages UN-Habitat to continue to be a learning and knowledge institution and recognizes that the Agency needs to “systematically harvest core knowledge and lessons learned, internally and externally”.²⁶ The mission of the organization is to provide normative or policy advice and technical assistance largely based on information and knowledge. More specifically, as part of the focus area 7: Research and Capacity Development, the Agency’s Strategic Result aims that “Knowledge of sustainable urbanization issues (can be) disseminated and capacity enhanced at international, national and local levels in order to improve formulation and implementation of evidence based policies and programmes and to improve public awareness of the benefits of and conditions necessary for sustainable urbanization”.²⁷ This demands that country level and local level services include the production of local urban knowledge and information and knowledge on best practices and lessons learned in terms of policies, programmes, and institutional arrangements that are fit for purpose for different urban contexts. Finally, the Strategic Plan 2014-2019 makes explicit references to knowledge focused results in all of its 7 focus areas.

UN-Habitat recognizes that an enabling framework is needed to guide KM of the Strategic Plan and support the desired improvements. It is clear that the key to success is to ensure that all aspects of this framework are built on and embedded in the organization’s work processes, systems, culture and products.²⁸ To do so, the framework should consider new opportunities for improvement succinctly presented in Table 1 and key fundamental **principles** that operate as success factors listed in Table 2.

Table 1: **Opportunities for Improvement of Knowledge Management**

- The creation of a New Urban Agenda (NUA) and the reassertion of UN-Habitat lead role as the UN focal point for sustainable urbanization provide the organization with an opportunity to strengthen its role as the premier reference center for knowledge on urban issues.
- The adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda with the acceptance of a stand-alone goal on cities (goal 11) as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide an opportunity for UN-Habitat to take the lead in global and local monitoring and the use of information.
- The alignment of UN-Habitat Strategic Plan with biennial work programmes and budgets that reaffirm the role of UN-Habitat as a learning and knowledge organization.

²⁵ Definition adapted from King William (2009), *op cit*.

²⁶ UN-Habitat (2014) *Strategic Plan 2014-2019*, Nairobi, p. 6.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 12

²⁸ Adapted from IFAD Knowledge Management Strategy, 2007

- The performance and impact measurement indicators in UN-Habitat's strategic plan(s) could be aligned to the SDGs indicators and measured through a common framework such as the City Prosperity Index to ensure a more systematic use of data, information and knowledge.
- Strengthened Best Practices Programmes and database will be aligned to key themes and indicators of the NUA and the SDGs, connecting in a more organic manner data to knowledge and decision-making.
- The operationalization of the Umoja Enterprise Resource Planning system provides a central knowledge base of policies and procedures to facilitate learning.
- Project Accrual and Accountability System (PAAS) allows for better management information and knowledge to support enhanced decision making, management and monitoring of the organization's resources and project portfolio.

In times of limited financial and human resources, UN-Habitat needs to do an effort to identify key priority areas in knowledge management that are more adequate to address existing challenges and achieve strategic corporate objectives. Other important areas of knowledge are to be developed through an incremental approach.

Based on the 2010 Knowledge Strategy and the related knowledge audit, lessons learned in the last 5 years, internal and external evaluations, including the 2015 OIOS evaluation, feedback from partners, various consultations, priorities of the Strategic Plan 2014-2019, and strategic management decisions, the new or enhanced Management Strategy 2015 proposes to prioritize and invest in the following 6 broad KM areas: 1) strengthening the institutional and operational structure of KM; 2) reinforcing the use of information and knowledge within the organization; 3) reinforcing KM with an adequate supporting infrastructure and systems; 4) fostering partnerships for broader knowledge-sharing and learning; 5) promoting a culture of learning and exchange; 6) creating a monitoring mechanism of the Knowledge Management Strategy.

Table 2: Guiding Principles for UN-Habitat Framework for Knowledge Management²⁹			
Knowledge challenges and interventions	1. Organizational Process Dimension	Top Management	The Top management is the initiator, sponsor and promoter of KM – it gives a clear mandate for KM to happen.
		Financial resources	The KM Strategy should be endowed with adequate resources – clear budget and delivery strategy
		Structure and responsibility	KM is integrated in existing processes and in a dedicated unit or unit – need of a champion responsible
		Responsibility	Responsibility and competence are clearly defined (manager, specialist and role of general staff)
		Alignment and organization	Permanent consultations between regions and HQ – KM is most effective when transferred within a specific context ³⁰
		Meta-communication of Knowledge Management	Knowledge management goals are transparent and the strategy communicated with stakeholders and external partners
	2. Individual and Cultural Dimension	Staff Member Motivation	Staff members are motivated to participate through award systems and by the value added that KM brings
			Staff members are open to KM and have the desire to promote it themselves
		Social nets and relations	Networks are set up for regular face-to-face meetings to encourage knowledge exchange.
			Community of practice are organized to develop trust among staff to secure the acceptance of the available knowledge
	Human being – staff aspects	Information and knowledge sharing flows and channels are open and operational	
		Emotional barriers are taken away to secure the success of KM	
	3. Systems Dimension	Application system	A supporting system is integrated in the available IT-infrastructure and not as a separate structure
			Existing programmes such as best practices are integrated into KM systems
		System content	KM systems are guaranteed by developing user- friendly interfaces – people-centered and not document-centered. ³¹
			Guidelines for the content of the system are clearly defined
	System evaluation	KM techniques are developed for day-to-day interaction (e.g. debriefing)	
	4. Organizational Learning	Excellence in management	Monitoring and verification process are created to measure the KM Strategy
			Staff skills are well aligned with the MTSIP requirements
		Personnel development	Articulate KM to priority areas and research themes
Continuous training and coaching to secure KM and adequate qualification of staff members			
Learning from external partners	Develop a personalized approach to KM, versus a codified general approach		
		KM is not for the organization only. Learning and sharing needs to be open to public and partners	

²⁹ Framework adapted from Lehner F. and Hass Nicolas (2010) *Knowledge Management Success Factors: Proposal of an Empirical Research*, Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management Volume 8 Issue 1, 2010 (79 - 90).

³⁰ UNDP (2014) *UNDP Knowledge Management Strategy Framework 2014-2017*

³¹ Ibid.

1) Strengthening the institutional and operational structure of KM

UN-Habitat will adopt a systemic response on knowledge management that is embedded in the Agency's structure at the level of the strategy, work plan, programmes, focus areas and regions. A new **KM governance arrangement** will be set up with a larger scope of influence. This new body will be located in a dedicated unit, the **Research and Capacity Development Branch** and under the coordination of a chief substantive officer that will be the Leader of the **Knowledge Unit**.³²

The new knowledge unit will have a clear role and responsibilities in order to better meet the needs of the Agency for the creation, dissemination and utilization of knowledge. With more competences, the KM unit will have the capacity to fulfill organizational objectives of the Strategic Plan. The unit will provide KM support to the design and implementation of the Agency's practices, programmes and projects both in headquarters and regions. It will lead the institutionalization of a KM system through enhanced integration and the reinforcement of horizontal linkages within the organization. The unit will coordinate with Divisions, Branches and Regions to ensure that knowledge is fully integrated in the Agency's activities at different levels, systems and process. More specifically it will:

- (1) Establish and mainstream a consistent knowledge based methodology for planning, measuring the progress and impact of interventions and reporting on sustainable urbanization;
- (2) Enhance strategic partnership approaches enriching and expanding UN-Habitat's partners' database to include information on partners' performance and their comparative advantages from a substantive, operational, and geographic point of view;
- (3) Empower partners and actors of development cooperation through the external access to UN-Habitat's knowledge and information on operations and normative work;
- (4) Enhance current sustainable urbanization knowledge exchange platforms to create a global reference center on urbanization with information on who is doing what, where and with what impact;
- (5) Liaise with appropriate organizational entities to enhance current internal information and knowledge management tools and systems including the PAAS, intranet and other information technology platforms to be better use as part of learning and knowledge process.

The Programme Division will coordinate with the KM unit to appropriately integrate learning steps in the process and standards that are developed to support programme and project delivery. The Operations Division, including the Quality Assurance Unit and with the involvement of the Evaluation Unit, will develop an overall concept for assessing learning performance. The Heads of Branches responsible for the 7 thematic areas will appropriately address KM in their work and in relation with their networks. The Leaders Units will ensure effective, harmonized and integrated use of KM assets and resources. The new KM unit will increase accountability and effectiveness. Its proposed structure is provided below:

Core objective 1: In order to strengthen the system for organizing, storing and sharing information and knowledge, UN-Habitat will create an organizational entity such as a dedicated unit of KM within the Research and Capacity Development Branch with clear role and responsibilities and endowed with adequate resource

³² This Unit is currently the research Unit within the Research and Capacity Development Branch.

2) Reinforcing the use of information and knowledge within the organization

UN-Habitat ambition is to render knowledge sharing and collaboration a part of the Agency's daily activities. KM should not be considered as an administrative burden that keeps people from doing their jobs.³³ For that purpose business processes are to be further standardized to ensure that they are applied consistently in all areas of information and knowledge in order to produce feedback loops for continuous improvement.

UN-Habitat intends to create conditions to undertake continuous **critical analysis** of past and on-going projects and programmes to reflect on their processes, results and impacts to better use experiences and lessons in the programming and projects process. UN-Habitat will also undertake **substantive analysis** of global, regional, national and local development issues to capture, codify and disseminate information to inform decision-making and project preparation. By standardizing business process such as peer-reviews, after-actions reviews, peer-to-peer exchange, cross-thematic thinking and inter-disciplinary analysis, the organization can consistently review past experiences and existing best practices to apply lessons learned in the design and formulation of new projects since the inception phase.³⁴

A revised version of the UN-Habitat Programme and Project Cycle Manual (2013)³⁵ will be integrated to KM practices available and used in UN-Habitat. The organizational learning cycle that can be separated into four incremental steps – knowledge creation, knowledge storage, knowledge sharing and knowledge use – will be the basis to produce specific KM instruments for each one of these steps. Table 3 provides a preliminary list of possible instruments that need to be adjusted to make them more relevant to clients' needs and uses and more flexible for their continuous adaptation. They need to be custom-made for wider distribution and with the possibility of integrating measurable conditions in terms of quality and impact.³⁶

UN-Habitat Knowledge Management Strategy (Organizational Learning Cycle)				
	knowledge creation (acquisition, creation and refinement)	knowledge storage**	knowledge sharing** (transfer and sharing)	knowledge use**
KM instruments	Induction guide Project review Peer review Cross-thematic thinking Inter-disciplinary analysis	Database Archives and records PAAS	Intranet & Extranet Publications & reports Induction seminars Peer reviews peer-to-peer exchange Knowledge for a Evaluations	Partners database After-use reviews Project Advisory Group
(*) Training and capacity building activities and the preparation of manuals, guides, templates and other tools can occur in all steps of the organizational learning cycle. (**)Tools such as PAAS, Open UN-Habitat or Habnet would support all areas of storage, sharing and use.				

³³ Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (2009) *Knowledge Management and Institutional Learning in the SDC*, Evaluation 2009/2, Bern.

³⁴ UNDP (2014) *UNDP Knowledge Management Strategy Framework 2014-2017*

³⁵ UN-Habitat (2003) *UN-Habitat Programme and Project Cycle Manual*, Nairobi.

³⁶ UNDP (2014), *op cit.*

Core objective 2: for a greater impact in the use of information and knowledge, critical analysis of past and on-going projects and programmes and substantive analysis of global, regional, national and local development issues must be routinely organized and integrated into programming and projects process across all 7 sub-programmes.

3) Reinforcing KM with an adequate supporting infrastructure and systems

UN-Habitat will put in place a more supportive infrastructure to achieve its KM objectives. This infrastructure will enhance information systems and related knowledge management tools. Existing information and knowledge platforms such as the Project Accrual and the Accountability System (PAAS), the Best Practice Database, the external knowledge information portal and other archives and records repositories will be further developed, horizontally integrated and internalized for constant use. Social media and internet tools will enable all staff and project personnel to participate in knowledge management activities in a more constant manner. As a result of this, policy documents, studies and outputs – often recognized as of high quality – will be systematically documented and integrated in various knowledge processes to better support desired policy transformations, enhanced knowledge and attitude and behaviors changes.³⁷ Internet, Habnet and other computer systems such as Web-based information management need to be continuously improved and routinely updated to allow UN-Habitat and its partners to create, store, share and use knowledge about sustainable urban development.

The Best Practice Programme will be reviewed, updated and adjusted as required to new programmatic needs and policy requirements such as the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Development Goals. Advanced computer systems and specially designed applications will be created to connect best practices to decision-making in global programmes such as the City Prosperity Initiative.

Data Information systems from the very beginning of the project formulation to the implementation and the technology final evaluation will be constantly updated and improved to capture in real time data and information, including information from frequently occurring events.³⁸ Policy analysis, programme and project results and evaluation reports will be centralized and systematically integrated in knowledge repositories that are as much as possible automatized. Users' interfaces of these systems that need to communicate relevant contents will be properly designed to make them practical and useful to facilitate continuous learning and sharing. When designing these instruments, UN-Habitat will strive to include internal and external users to guarantee relevance and effective use of them.

Core objective 3: Support functions and systems for information and knowledge management must be continuously improved and routinely updated to facilitate continuous learning and sharing

4) Fostering partnerships for broader knowledge-sharing and learning

UN-Habitat considers knowledge as a global public good. The Agency's objective is to share this knowledge on an open content basis.³⁹ For that purpose, systems and communication networks need to be created and organizational culture developed to ensure that information and knowledge is systematically shared with partners. Learning and sharing should be organized in regions and specialized programmes and projects within branches that have network structures. The KM unit needs

³⁷ United Nations (2015), OIOS

³⁸ These frequently occurring events refer to Board meeting records, speeches of the Executive Director, reports of the Office of the Executive Director, etc. United Nations (2015), OIOS

³⁹ Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (2009), *op cit*.

to facilitate this process and support the production of knowledge needs of staff working directly with partners, including the Office of External Relations and the Partners unit.

As a learning and knowledge organization, UN-Habitat needs to create conditions to systematically and collectively learn from the experience of its partners. The Agency has to enhance the systems and instruments that draw on external knowledge in order to expand its technical capacities and delivery responses for advisory and policy services. It is also important to recognize that more and more organizations and funding agencies are attaching special importance to the ability to create and use knowledge resulting from UN-Habitat interventions. These partners emphasize that the value they confer to the Agency depends increasingly on the capacity to develop innovative projects and programmes that have the potential to be scaled up based on the adequate and timely information and knowledge.

UN-Habitat has developed numerous partnerships in the last years with various organizations and research centres. In order to ensure that these partnerships are strategic and if possible long-term and multi-project basis, there is a need to develop plans, guides and evaluation mechanisms to guarantee that they culminate with real learning and sharing activities. By building on existing partnerships and creating new ones, UN-Habitat will adopt a much more focused and selective approach to develop learning and knowledge sharing alliances. For that purpose, the Agency will systematically assess its partners' performance using a standard benchmark that can be consolidated in a central repository framework. It will also develop tools to support the evaluation of mutual activities, including impact analysis, and the preparation of joint reports using standardized frameworks such as the City Prosperity Initiative. This will allow the Agency to identify the comparative advantages of partners from a technical and normative point of view, adding a geographic and thematic distinction of their interventions.

Core objective 4: For a greater impact on project delivery and policy interventions, the scope of KM must be enlarged to integrate strategic partners, making clear the connection to knowledge-sharing and learning, including the regular evaluation of operational and normative activities.

5) Promoting a culture of learning and exchange

UN-Habitat will strive to reinforce a culture of collaboration and enhance open channels to ensure that information and knowledge is shared in a day-to-day basis. Possible thematic, branch and regional silos will continue to be addressed through changes in the organizational culture and by designing and implementing standardized processes that are aligned with this new culture.

UN-Habitat has made important progress in the use and creation of knowledge in the delivery of outputs by the different branches and regions. These are significant institutional gains that need to be reinforced by fostering a culture of open exchange at all levels of the organization. The Agency needs to show with concrete examples how the increase of knowledge-sharing and collaboration contributes to a better achievement of the Work Programme objectives. All staff members need to perceive with clarity a value added when they exchange information and knowledge. In this manner, they will be willing to embrace knowledge in the different cycles of the organizational learning process and in the production of specific knowledge instruments. By participating in meetings, peer reviews, knowledge conversations, critical analysis teams, etc., staffs will feel part of development thinking, policies and solutions.⁴⁰ This will contribute to increase accountability and participation.

UN-Habitat's new organizational culture is part of the corporate goals of this KM Strategy. To ensure that positive transformation occurs, the norms that motivate behavioral attitudes need to articulate information and knowledge sharing objectives, the modalities to implement programmes and projects need to explicitly define collective endeavors and individual and cross-sectional forms of collaboration, with clear incentives and reward systems for learning and sharing (e.g. positive changes to be reflected in staff performance evaluations or learning time budgets in cost recovery estimations). Positive transformation can only happen if all staff members are confronted with cultural change if UN-Habitat's Work Programme and the Branch/Region specific work plans and deliverables define concise and concrete objectives of learning and exchange with clear metrics and measurements in every activity.⁴¹ Still, positive change requires that computer information and communication systems work as a catalyst to improve participation and help to increase the levels of information sharing.

Core objective 5: The culture of information and knowledge sharing needs to be further strengthened, including the development of collaborative mechanisms and standardized processes that are aligned with this new culture to ensure that the Agency operates on a day-to-day basis as a learning organization.

6) Creating a monitoring mechanism of the Knowledge Management Strategy

UN-Habitat has been using a range of monitoring tools that have a connection with the use of data, information and knowledge. In addition to the Integrated Monitoring and Document Information System (IMDIS), the Results-based Monitoring and Reporting (M&E), the monitoring and evaluation of projects and the project completion reports are some of these tools. More recently, the Agency created the Project Accrual and Accountability System (PAAS) and global monitoring tools and databases such as the City Prosperity Initiative that all work as valuable platforms for systemic learning and sharing. As part of this KM Strategy, UN-Habitat is going to put in place a centralized monitoring mechanism to oversee its overall implementation. This monitoring mechanism will provide a common outlook and periodic assessments in the six broad areas of the strategy with regards to the KM cycle. It will assess progress and identify setbacks and constraints related to the organizational process of KM, the use of systems and tools, the changes in the organization and in the learning and knowledge dimension. The monitoring mechanism will include benchmarks for measuring progress of the KM strategy and, as much as possible, it will be proposed as the main monitoring framework tool for all partners, including for their own evaluation. In the medium term, it will be used to realign the performance indicators of UN-Habitat strategic plans and to conduct impact evaluations of projects and programmes articulated to existing monitoring frameworks such as the City Prosperity Initiative.

A sound monitoring mechanism of the KM Strategy can be used to connect to resource mobilization strategies and the overall allocation of resources. It can also be used to assess the impact of projects to demonstrate UN-Habitat's relevance and added value, informing the Operations Division and the staff about the benefits of KM in achieving corporate objectives.⁴²

Core objective 6: An integrated monitoring mechanism for the KM Strategy must be developed with clear benchmarks and indicators and clearly articulated to the overall decision-making of the organization.



⁴¹ Adapted from the KM strategy, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (2009), *op cit*.

⁴² Adapted from the KM strategy, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (2009), *op cit*.

7. Expected results of the Knowledge Management Strategy⁴³

The successful implementation of the KM Strategy is to equip UN-Habitat with better conditions to fulfil its mission of promoting sustainable urban development. With better organizational structures, systems, instruments and tools for the creation, storage, sharing and use of knowledge, the Agency will be in better position to achieve its mandate.

Internalized as an organizational good, knowledge will contribute to develop a more critical and substantive regard of the Agency's work and results. This will bring clear improvements in performance ability, institutional development and improved business intelligence for informed decision-making.⁴⁴ It will also have positive impact on partners' relations, the reorganization of branches' and regions' work, higher visibility and more fund-raising prospects.

At the individual level, the expected results of the KM Strategy will bring better understanding of the appropriate roles and responsibilities of every staff with clear improvements in their personal performance. Success in the implementation of learning and KM will also translate in distinguishing among to 'know-what', 'know-how', 'know-why' and 'know-where' that is critical for clarifying priorities and taking appropriate decisions.

In short, the Knowledge Management Strategy will allow UN-Habitat to allocate its resources more effectively, improve individual and organizational performance, facilitate knowledge sharing for the agency and its partners and increase its impact on development results.

8. Risks

The implementation of UN-Habitat Knowledge Management Strategy will bear direct and indirect costs. To avoid having an onerous process, the Agency needs to better use existing resources and to piggyback in many other opportunities to produce more with less. Still, as indicated in Section 4 "Assessing the barriers and challenges of KM", there is a need to invest in the organizational structure, enhance information management systems, expend in the development of the organizational culture for learning and sharing information and knowledge, and utilize some resources for the reinforcement of the organization learning mechanism. All this can be done in an incremental manner, but still it requires clear budgetary provisions and human resource allocation in the Strategic Plans and the Work Programmes. Failure to do so will result in serious difficulties to internalize KM in the organizational structure.

UN-Habitat KM Strategy is a collective organizational endeavour that demands well-defined, coordinated efforts from Divisions, Branches and Region Offices, in the absence of this, the strategy will not be properly implemented or it will be managed in a fragmented manner with poor results and lack of institutional focus. In case knowledge management tools and systems are not properly developed or their content is poor, and staff cannot use them due to inadequate training, the KM strategy will suffer from proper and effective implementation.



⁴³ This section will describe at a further stage the change expected at the overall level, including clear measurable indicators and targets for the core objectives of the strategy.

⁴⁴ Adapted from the KM strategy, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (2009), *op cit*.