

SOPS on Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement

Overview

Strategic partnerships are critical to successful adoption and implementation of UN-Habitat policies and programmes, advocacy, resource mobilization, co-creation of knowledge, dissemination and use, political leadership, programme design, delivery, monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

Partnerships are central to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the New Urban Agenda (NUA) and other international agreed commitments including the UN Convention on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda for Development. It was through local and global partnerships with governments in the lead and the technical support of the UN system that these global instruments were developed. *SDG 11 Make cities and communities inclusive, safe resilient and sustainable* was adopted as a result of relentless advocacy by 58 organizations led by the Urban SDGs group with the support of UN-Habitat and Friends of Cities Member States.

The Partnership and Local Government Unit

The Partnership and Local Government Unit spearheads preparation and implementation of corporate partnership policies, strategies and programmes; Serves as UN-Habitat focal point for partnerships and local governments; mobilizes and facilitates accreditation and engagement of civil society, academia, professional organizations, women, youth and children, people with disabilities and other stakeholders, intergovernmental organizations, and UN agencies in UN-Habitat intergovernmental processes, especially the governing bodies; monitors and reports on partner participation and engagement in normative and operational programmes across the Agency; facilitate identification of new stakeholders, services requesting stakeholders including sharing of relevant policy and programme information; links new partners with relevant stakeholders and UN-Habitat programmes; provides technical advice to staff and requesting member states and stakeholders on partnerships including strengthening partnerships between state and non-state actors; supports capacity building of stakeholders in monitoring SDGs and the New Urban Agenda; and enhances stakeholders' access to information.

What are partnerships?

The General Assembly working definition is: partnerships are voluntary and collaborative relationships between various parties, both public and non-public, in which all parties agree to work together to achieve a common purpose or undertake a common task and, as mutually agreed to share risks and responsibilities, resources and benefits. Partnerships should be consistent with national laws and national development strategies and plans.

Key partnership guiding principles

Staff should take note and put into practice the following key partnership principles:

- (i) national and local ownership,
- (ii) non-discrimination and leave no one behind,
- (iii) mutual understanding, equality, and justice,
- (iv) transparency,
- (v) accountability
- (vi) results oriented

Who are UN-Habitat partners?

Partners can be individuals and organizations, public and private with expertise, knowledge, technology, and resources relevant to UN-Habitat mandates. Below are specific partner categories and UN-Habitat focal points/lead offices indicated in italics:

- (i) Member states, (*Governing Bodies Secretariat*)
- (ii) Local and regional governments (*Urban Practices Branch, Partnerships and Local Governments Unit*)
- (iii) UN agencies, funds and programmes, (*New York Office*)
- (iv) Other intergovernmental bodies, development banks and institutions – European Union, African Union, Asian and South East Asian Community, Arab League, Pacific Commission, inter American cooperation, etc. (*Relevant Regional and Liaison Offices*)

- (v) Private sector/business and industry, (*Office of Executive Director*)
- (vi) Civil society and community-based organizations including faith-based organizations, (*Partnerships and Local Governments Unit*)
- (vii) Academia and research organizations, (*Capacity Development and Training Unit*)
- (viii) Professional organizations, (*Planning, Finance and Economy Section*)
- (ix) Women, (*Human Rights and Social Inclusion Section – Gender Unit*)
- (x) Children and youth, (*Human Rights and Social Inclusion – Youth Unit*)
- (xi) Workers and trade unions, (*Partnerships and Local Governments Unit*)
- (xii) Foundations and philanthropists (*Donor Relations and Strategic Resource Partnerships Unit*)
- (xiii) Indigenous people, (*Land, Housing and Shelter Section*)
- (xiv) Grassroots and informal settlements s organizations (*Land, Housing and Shelter Section*)
- (xv) Older persons (*Human Rights and Social Inclusion / Land, Housing and Shelter Section*),
- (xvi) People with disabilities, (*Human Rights and Social Inclusion*)
- (xvii) Media, (*Communications and Media Section*)
- (xviii) Farmers (*Partnerships and Local Governments Unit*)
- (xix) Parliamentarians (*Partnerships and Local Governments Unit*)

How to identify new partners?

Please note that partners are identified via different channels and platforms including through:

- (i) Calls for expressions of interest including implementing partners
- (ii) Accreditation and engagement in intergovernmental processes
- (iii) Advocacy campaigns
- (iv) Workshops, networking events and other meetings,
- (v) World, Regional and National Urban Forums,
- (vi) Partnership intelligence, desk research and reviews,
- (vii) Recommendations by Member States and other partner organizations,
- (viii) Competitions and awards including best practices,
- (ix) Requests from potential partners interested in UN-Habitat mandate .

Due Diligence

All staff should carry out due diligence on private sector, civil society organizations and other stakeholders identified to exercise care, assess and manage risks to UN-Habitat and ensure the partner meets the minimum standards for human rights, environmental sustainability, anticorruption, and labour standards. In complex cases the Partners Unit and the Legal Section can facilitate due diligence checks.

See link to UN system common approaches to due diligence for business sector, which is also applicable to other stakeholders¹.

Legal agreements and Instruments for Formal Partnerships

After identification of potential partners and carrying out of due diligence to satisfaction staff should consult the [Guidance² on Agreements and legal instruments – clearance and designated signatories including the type of partner and purpose](#) provided by the Legal Section. Where necessary please seek clarification from the Legal Section on what instrument to use and the reporting process.

Implementing partners

These organizations, which are instrumental in assisting UN-Habitat to deliver projects and programmes at the local, national, regional and global levels. All staff should familiarize themselves with which provide guidance on identification, risk assessment and management and selection of implementing partners. These can range from national and local governments to civil society, academia, UN agencies and other stakeholders.

¹ <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/unsdg-common-approach-prospect-research-and-due-diligence-business-sector-partnerships>.

²

https://habnet.unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/11662_UN_Habitat_Agreements_&_Legal_Instruments_Clearance_&_Signatories.pdf

Reporting on cooperation and collaboration with partners

UN-Habitat is required to report to the UN-Habitat Assembly and Executive Board on cooperation and collaboration with NGOs, UN agencies, funds and programmes, local and regional governments and intergovernmental organizations. This report is complimented with the assessment of implementation of Memorandum of Understanding and agreements of Cooperation signed between UN-Habitat and a range of stakeholders. These reports are prepared by the Partnerships and Local Governments Unit in consultation with all Units/Sections/Branches/Divisions and regional and liaison offices.

At the end of an Agreement of Cooperation and Memorandum of Understanding staff should submit to the Partners Unit a brief assessment (not more than 2 pages) of the achievements, challenges, lessons learned, how human rights, gender equality, inclusion and accessibility issues were dealt with in the course of implementation. These reports are used as inputs to mandatory reports submitted to Senior management and Member states within the context of the Executive Board, Committee of Permanent Representatives and the UN-Habitat Assembly.

Staff are also required to provide the Partnerships and Local Governments Unit with information on new partners they collaborate with by **1 December of each year** to update the corporate partners data base which is used to invite, mobilize and disseminate information to stakeholders on intergovernmental meetings and relevant global events on sustainable urban development including invitation to the UN-Habitat Assembly, Executive Board, World Urban Forum, etc.

Focal points for partner categories and legal agreements have a duty to report on partner engagement every year by 1 December 2020, and at the end of the duration of any legal agreement.

Communicating with partners

Staff members communicate with partners on a daily basis through email, phone calls, virtual and face to face meetings. The following table guides on official communication with governments, UN entities, and major groups and other stakeholders:

Name of partner	Responsible Office	Drafting of letters	Dispatching of letters	CC
Government (Ministries, Heads of States, government institutions) Local Governments	Secretariat to the Governing Bodies	Requesting staff member/office in consultation with the respective Regional Director, SGB, and the OED	SGB	Regional Director, the OED, and the requesting staff member/ office
UN entities	Office of the Executive Director	Requesting staff member/ office in consultation with the OED, the New York liaison office, and the respective UN entity focal point	The OED	The requesting staff member/ office, the New York liaison office, and the respective UN entity focal point
Major groups and other stakeholders	Requesting staff member/ office	Requesting staff member/ office	Requesting staff member/ office or the partnerships and local governments Unit	
UN-Habitat Assembly - the Executive Board, the CPR, World Urban Forum, WHD, WCD, and other mass communication related to UN agencies, intergovernmental bodies, local and regional governments, civil society, academia and other stakeholders	Partnerships and Local Governments Unit in consultation with GBS, New York Office, and other relevant Branches, and regional offices	Partnerships and Local Governments Unit in consultation with the event focal points and the OED	Partnerships and Local Governments Unit	Event focal points

Other useful partnership tools and instruments

Staff are encouraged to review and understand the following instruments which provide guidance on UN system-wide collaboration on sustainable urban development, engagement with the private sector and multi stakeholder engagement in country UN sustainable development frameworks.

- a) UN system-wide strategy and collaborative framework on sustainable urban development³.
- b) The UN Global compact which aims at helping business to find entry points to UN partnerships⁴.
- c) UN Common Minimum Standards for Multi Stakeholder Engagement in Country UN Sustainable Development Framework⁵.

Stakeholder engagement in intergovernmental processes

UN-Habitat strives to ensure partner engagement in inter-governmental processes particularly UN-Habitat governance and oversight mechanisms and events at global level which impacts on the work of the agency, especially the UN-Habitat Assembly and subsidiary organs – the Executive Board and the Committee of Permanent representatives, and related Ad-hoc working subcommittees in accordance with the rules of procedure. Below are key entry points and related focal points:

- (i) Accreditation (*Partnerships and Local Governments Unit*)
- (ii) Organization of side events, special sessions, and exhibitions at UN-Habitat events (*Communications & Media Section*),
- (iii) Experts and panelists at dialogues, (*Global Solutions Division*)
- (iv) Participation in thematic meetings - land, housing, safer cities, public space, urban planning, water, sanitation, transport and infrastructure, urban health, etc. (*Thematic Focal Points*) and regional caucuses (*Regional Directors and Liaison Offices*)
- (v) Contribution to agenda setting for key inter-governmental meetings (*Partnerships and Local Governments Unit*)

Please note that information on accreditation for each session of the Executive Board and the UN-Habitat Assembly is available at www.unhabitat.org/governance. Staff should visit this website and also contact the respective focal points in real time to ensure that the partners they work with are informed and take necessary action to avoid disappointment later on.

³ <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/2019-07/un-system-wide-strategy-on-sustainable-urban-development-1.pdf>

⁴ See <https://unglobalcompact.org/about/un-business-agenda>, and Business.un.org for more information.

⁵ See <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/UNSDG-Common-Minimum-Standards-for-Multi-Stakeholder.pdf>