

# UN-Habitat

## Scoping Mission to Ukraine

2 – 14 October 2022



**UN HABITAT**  
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

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### Main findings

UN-Habitat's urban crisis response in Ukraine follows a request made by its Executive Board (March 2022), where UN-Habitat Executive Director was requested [...] *to engage with countries newly affected by conflict and disaster, such as Ukraine, [...] in particular using urban profiling to assess the needs, vulnerabilities and capacities of urban areas and the establishment of urban recovery frameworks where relevant and subject to the availability of funding;* and a request by the Ukrainian government to provide support on local and regional recovery planning.

The scoping mission allowed to ground truth the proposed urban recovery approach, ensuring UN-Habitat brings added value considering existing capacities and the ongoing response. It allowed also to explore all needed operational partnerships.

#### The main findings of the scoping mission are:

1. UN-Habitat can support more area-based and integrated assessments of physical and human impact of the war, using its urban expertise and its urban profiling approach informed by digital data platforms, tailored to the local contexts. This should support the short-term emergency and longer-term recovery and returns, where possible and needed.
2. UN-Habitat can support the development of urban recovery frameworks, as a backbone for the complex local and regional recovery planning called for by the government, helping to sustain decentralisation gains made and aligning also bottom-up urban recovery efforts with nationally driven recovery planning.
3. The focus should be on the smaller *hromadas* that have less capacity and experience. Technical support is best pooled into municipal support units, anchored in pre-war capacity building efforts, that can cover multiple localities, allowing for live learning and knowledge sharing including with the better capacitated bigger cities. A key contribution lies also in providing urban planning support, working closely with networks of Ukrainian professionals.
4. The above requires an in-country presence of UN-Habitat as soon as possible. A wide range of potential partnerships have been identified that would allow for nimble and efficient operations, adding international expertise only where needed.

### Mission overview

As part of the Urban Crisis Track during the 11<sup>th</sup> edition of the World Urban Forum organised in June 2022 in Katowice, Poland, a broad mobilization of stakeholders engaged in the response in Ukraine took place. Following the World Urban Forum, the Ministry for Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine (Minregion) addressed a letter requesting UN-Habitat *to provide expert assistance for developing comprehensive recovery programmes for regions and communities (its parts) in cooperation with the Minregion, regional state administrations and local self-government authorities. In addition to providing expert support for the development of programs, [Minregion] suggest[s] also considering the possibility of participating in the restoration of a pilot territorial community or city based on developed comprehensive restoration programmes.*

UN-Habitat has been part of the UN Country Team in Ukraine since March 2022 and contributed actively to the UN Transitional Framework 2022-2023. UN-Habitat has also created an ad-hoc Ukraine Crisis Response Task Force in May 2022 to ensure a corporate response.

## Mission objectives

1. Build a better understanding of the situation on the ground, looking at the governance environment and the ongoing and planned interventions relevant to urban recovery, including damage assessments, to ground truth and tailor UN-Habitat's proposed programmatic framework;
2. Discuss with a wide range of stakeholders, including Minregion, the UN Country Team, INGOs and civil society, on how UN-Habitat can best add value in the immediate and longer term and what operational partnerships will be needed for an effective contribution.

## Mission set-up

UN-Habitat deployed two in-house experts, namely Ryan Knox, a senior expert in urban recovery in conflict contexts, and Mariana Lessa Voïta, programme management officer and part of UN-Habitat's global urban crisis programme. A total of 38 meetings were conducted with a variety of stakeholders in Kyiv and Chernihiv oblasts. Stakeholders include representatives from national, regional and local governments, UN agencies, NGOs, development agencies, bilateral and multilateral donors, and CSOs among others ([Annex 1](#)). Site visits to Lviv and Kharkiv oblast were cancelled due to security and logistical challenges. The mission was cut short on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October due to the flare up in the war. The mission was concluded remotely from Warsaw in Poland.

## Key elements of the analysis

The mission provided an opportunity to better understand critical elements to further guide UN-Habitat's response.

### A. Sustaining the decentralisation gains and enable bottom-up local recovery efforts

#### Important decentralisation gains

Since 2014, Ukraine has been engaged in a successful decentralisation reform to enhance regional development, combat corruption, and increase service delivery to its citizens. The reform resulted in the voluntary amalgamation of the existing 11,518 municipalities (*hromadas*) into 1,469 municipalities, with extended competences, in line with the European Charter of Local-Self Government, such as healthcare, education, social care, waste management, energy/water access and public transport.

The reform allowed for the transfer of key tax resources to municipalities to deliver the services related to their new mandate. This also resulted in much stronger legitimacy for local governments and a growing practice of participatory governance, with an enhanced capacity to mobilize local stakeholders.

The decentralisation process is still incomplete and fragile, and now delayed by the war. This is particularly true for the pre-war capacity building programmes for the younger and smaller *hromadas* who have limited capacities and experience to deliver their mandate. An adjustment is needed as they are now faced with new responsibilities and tasks in the immediate response and recovery. Any technical support needs to prioritize these smaller towns and cities and build on previous and ongoing capacity building programmes.

#### Advocacy and capacity building with the Associations of Local Government in Ukraine

An important component of any decentralisation reform concerns the creation of Local Government Associations (LGAs), that can play an important role in advocating for, and supporting capacity building of member local governments. While the Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC) has the widest membership and strongest capacity, there are several other LGAs including the Association of Amalgamated Territories and Communities (AATC), the Association of Small Towns of Ukraine (ASTU) and the Ukrainian Association of Rayon and Oblast Councils.

## Impact of the Martial Law on local governments

A Presidential Decree has enacted the martial law in Ukraine. Regional military administrations were temporarily established and became responsible for certain powers that had previously been entrusted to local authorities, including the preparation and approval of local budgets, the management of property of communal ownership, the provision of town-planning conditions, and decision on the regulation of land relations among others.

During the mission, decentralisation actors and local governments recognized that, while a certain degree of re-centralisation is considered necessary in war times, it is important to maintain an emphasis on the temporary nature of these provisions, so that previous gains in decentralisation will not be reversed. The vertical alignment of different governance levels, in particular in the further design and planning of urban and regional recovery, needs further clarity. It is also essential to strengthen participatory approaches to planning the response and recovery, mobilizing all available capacities (including youth, local private sector, etc.) and to ensure local ownership.

### **B. Ensuring more integrated urban profiling of the human and physical impact of the war and related displacements**

At the macro-level, a Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA) was conducted by the World Bank, the European Union and the Government of Ukraine, measuring the damage across sectors up to 1st June 2022, with housing being the most affected (40%). There is a diverse typology of impact that calls for tailored approaches to each situation. The new phase in the war (October 2022) with the full scale targeting of critical infrastructure (energy, water, etc) has a major impact on the functionality of neighbourhoods and entire towns and cities.

The number of assessments is growing, with diversified approaches to measure the physical impact of the war on the built environment and the human impact on communities. The government has been leading the efforts to establish data platforms to bring all the sectoral information together. Innovative approaches are also being pursued at the local level (ex. Chernihiv, Kharkiv), including on participatory involvement of inhabitants.

UN-Habitat's urban expertise, and its urban profiling experience, is welcomed to further strengthen the integration of sectoral assessments, to add more granularity down to the neighbourhood level and focus on the functionality at different scale levels. This should allow to connect assessments of physical and human impact, including what forces people to leave and what will allow them to return. This should support stronger area-based approaches, as called for by the Resident Coordinator, both for the immediate recovery needs as for the longer term.

### **C. Tailoring spatial planning approaches as a basis for urban and regional recovery planning**

Prior to the conflict, legislation adopted by the Parliament in June 2020 (Law #711-IX) introduced 'comprehensive development plans' to support land use and spatial planning by *hromadas* after amalgamation and introducing 'integrated urban development concepts' as guiding planning tools. Minregion issued methodological guidelines which external partners began to support in specific locations, now cut short by the war.

The Ukrainian Government started the formulation of a national recovery plan through sectoral working groups, including one on "construction, urban planning, modernisation of cities and regions"<sup>1</sup>. Regional military administrations have developed 'fast recovery plans', listing the most urgent needs at the regional level. Recently, the Parliament has adopted a new legislation (Law#2254-IX) that will allow for the creation of 'complex recovery programmes' for war-affected regions and municipalities, which defines the main spatial and socio-economic priorities for territorial recovery. The mission team mapped emerging efforts to develop municipal recovery plans.

National and local government have also demonstrated a strong desire not just to build back but to drive urban regeneration, in line with the best European practice and standards towards green, inclusive, and healthy cities. This needs to be anchored in re-imagined urban and subregional economies, capable also of retaining the youth. Minregion and a range of partners showed a strong interest in UN-Habitat sharing its own experience of developing urban recovery plans from other country contexts.

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<sup>1</sup> The recovery plans are accessible here: <https://www.urc2022.com/conference-materials>

## Proposed UN-Habitat support to the intervention in Ukraine

The mission confirmed the relevance of UN-Habitat's proposed technical support, in line also with the decision of the Executive Board and the request of the Ukrainian Government, focusing on urban profiling and urban recovery frameworks. The mission will allow to update UN-Habitat Country Programme Framework for the urban crisis response and recovery in Ukraine.

### Key elements to consider when detailing UN-Habitat's support

- All interventions need to be designed as contributions to ongoing initiatives and priorities in Ukraine, maximizing UN-Habitat's added value and urban expertise, while addressing gaps where need be.
- UN-Habitat can support the government in consolidating approaches to urban and regional recovery, providing guidance to a wide variety of actors which are needed to allow for scale and speed and supporting area-based coordination and response.
- All meetings confirmed the relevance of the Urban Recovery Framework (URF)<sup>2</sup>, with its focus on identifying and address immediate and medium-term urban recovery priorities, as highly relevant and timely for the response in Ukrainian cities. The approach aligns with the type of response that the Government has been calling for from the UN, and with the type of response that the UN intends to further implement, working closely with UNDP, UNHCR and IOM.

### Urban Recovery Framework (URF)

There are excellent opportunities for urban recovery frameworks to guide local area-based analysis/profiling, recovery planning and implementation, as well as related national policy dialogue, given:

- the focus on building back better or 'forward', socially, environmentally, economically and politically;
- the need for more integrated urban recovery planning recognizing the diverse typologies of impact;
- the importance of sustaining gains in the decentralisation process;
- the need to emphasise accountable local public service delivery in recovery interventions;
- the existence of strong capacities at the local, regional and national level in Ukraine;
- the advances made in adopting an e-governance agenda for the country;
- an openness on the part of national authorities and parliamentary committees to further adjust the legislative and policy frameworks.

This should consider different scale levels: from the smallest units (communities led by the *starostas*), to the amalgamated municipalities themselves (*hromadas*), including an analysis of connectivity with their rural hinterland. This will connect with the work of the regional administration (*oblast*) who have already developed 'fast recovery plans'.

Strong alignment with non-UN development actors, preferably in the same locations, will be important to ensure a continuum from area-based recovery into decentralisation and EU-integration preparations support. GIZ (U-LEAD and IUD projects), USAID (HOVERLA and DOBRE projects), SALAR International (PROSTO and DSP projects), and the Council of Europe are important partners.

### Digital Urban Data Platforms and urban profiling

The URF approach is underpinned by the first set of interventions by UN-Habitat's Innovation Technology Accelerator for Cities (UNITAC)<sup>3</sup> with support from the German Government. It promotes the use of digital urban generation and analysis for evidence-based decision making. An inception phase is about to start in December

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<sup>2</sup> <https://unhabitat.org/urban-recovery-framework>

<sup>3</sup> <https://unitac.un.org/>

2022 allowing to detail the activities, working closely with Minregion, the Ministry of Digital Transformation and all relevant stakeholders active on assessments and digital platforms. This will allow also to embed the project within the ongoing initiatives of the Government and UNDP on the damage assessment monitoring GIS system. UN-Habitat could support an expansion of the scope beyond damage data, to better support local authorities in planning processes, and ultimately enrich the policy dialog on the scope and use of the platform.

### Intermunicipal technical support units

The establishment of intermunicipal technical support units would play a critical role in supporting the recovery planning process. UN-Habitat has developed global expertise in similar interventions, including for instance in Southern Lebanon and through its “Urban labs<sup>4</sup>”.

In Ukraine, these units could potentially host 3 to 4 local experts (urban/recovery planners, HLP analysts, socio-economic specialists, etc.), with secondments from local partners, and supported by UN-Habitat international and local experts. These support units could be instrumental in supporting cities establishing their ‘complex recovery plans’, as per the applicable legislation. The mission explored options on how to best anchor these support units institutionally. UN-Habitat could also consider supporting the education of Ukrainian urban experts by accompanying the development of academic curricula, through partnerships with Ukrainian universities.

### Policy guidance for sustainable local recovery efforts

Every UN-Habitat intervention for urban recovery in Ukraine should integrate the production of urban policy papers, as a contribution to the national policy dialogue, working closely with other UN partners. A parallel can be drawn from Syria, where UN-Habitat produced national policy papers based loosely around the 7 pillars of the URF, which integrated examples of implementation as piloted in the year prior to completing the publications.

A focus on the following topics may be pertinent: URF policy brief with recommendations for ‘complex recovery planning’ and financing of recovery; housing sector recovery framework; fit for purpose land administration; environmental sustainability and climate resilience in urban recovery; area-based recovery-decentralisation continuum; urban heritage preservation; urban recovery monitoring frameworks (SDG 11+); durable solutions and area-based returns programming; delivery of urban services.

### Specialised technical support

The mission was not able to explore further specialised technical support to the Ukrainian Water and Sanitation Utilities through UN-Habitat’s Global Water Operator Partnerships (GWOPA) and on Housing, Land and Property (HLP). This will be further examined given UN-Habitat’s technical expertise in these two areas.

## Operational set-up of UN-Habitat in Ukraine

### Team and partnerships

UN-Habitat’s primary interlocutor in the Ukrainian government is the Ministry for Communities and Territories Development (Minregion). The collaboration can be further clarified based on the proposed UN-Habitat Country Programme Framework for Ukraine on urban crisis response and recovery. The Framework should allow for a series of support programmes aligning with ongoing and planned initiatives by partners with an operational footprint (ex. UNHCR, UNDP, IOM, etc.).

A core in-country team (minimum 1 P5, 1 P3), as well as a consortium of local partners who can support initial analysis/profiling and recovery planning work are urgently needed to advance UN-Habitat’s engagement.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.globalfuturecities.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/220624\\_LAB%20WUF%20PORTFOLIO.pdf](https://www.globalfuturecities.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/220624_LAB%20WUF%20PORTFOLIO.pdf)

Partnering with Local Government Associations and existing national programmes supporting local governments (see above) will be critical, including for the establishment of inter-municipal advisory support units.

In its interventions, UN-Habitat should also rely on partnerships with members of the Global Alliance for Urban Crises with a footprint in the country, such as IMPACT Initiatives and the Joint IDP Profiling Service (JIPS), with expertise in data collection and analysis as well as durable solutions for IDPs in Ukraine. On urban planning, the mission identified ReStart Ukraine and Ro3kvit as strong partners in the areas of sustainable urban planning in Ukraine. In addition, it will be important to engage the private sector, considering their role in the recovery.

### Potential locations

Identified locations for an initial engagement include cities and regions affected by the conflict either by physical damages or by influxes of IDPs, or a combination of both. Given the nature of UN-Habitat planned interventions, the cities in territories currently occupied or on the front line are not considered. As a result, oblasts in the North and East such as Kyiv, Chernihiv, Sumy, Dnipro and Kharkiv oblasts, as well as oblasts heavily affected by shelling such as Odessa and Mykolaiv, and oblasts facing important influxes of IDPs in the Western part of the country should be considered.

### Timeline

UN-Habitat will remain guided by the decisions of the UNCT and the Resident Coordinator on programme criticality and UN's presence. UN-Habitat continues the preparations for early deployment in 2023 and intends to work closely with UN and non-UN partners with an existing presence to ensure efficient implementation of activities. The initial focus will be to support the ongoing assessments and urban profiling activities that can also support emergency recovery efforts working closely with UNHCR and UNDP.

## Annex – List of organisations met during the mission

### National, Regional and Local governments

Ministry for Communities and Territories Development (Minregion)  
Chernihiv Oblast  
Kyiv Oblast  
Chernihiv municipality  
Kyivska municipality  
Ivanivka municipality

### Local government associations

Association of Amalgamated Territorial Communities (AATC)  
Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC)

### State agencies

State Fund for Support of Youth Housing Construction

### Development agencies

GIZ, SDC, SIDA, USAID

### Multilateral

Council of Europe, Delegation of the European Union to Ukraine

### UN agencies

Resident Coordinator Office, IOM, UNDP, UNECE, UNHCR, UNOPS

### NGOs

IMPACT Initiatives, JIPS, Norwegian People's Aid, Norwegian Refugee Council, Peer Foundation, SALAR International, ReStart Ukraine, Ro3kvit

Due to the prevailing security situation, meetings with the following partners were postponed (in alphabetical order): Danish Refugee Council (DRC); Egis; NGO Forum; OCHA; OECD; Parliamentary commission on Environment and Natural Management; Parliamentary commission on State Power, Local Self Governments, regional and urban development; Ukrainian Union of Architects (CANY); U-LEAD (GIZ).