

# Impact Evaluation of UN-Habitat's Housing Approach to Adequate and Affordable Housing and Poverty Reduction 2008-2019

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Synthesis Report:  
Findings, lessons learned and recommendations



UN-HABITAT

## Impact Evaluation of UN-Habitat's Housing Approach to Adequate and Affordable Housing and Poverty Reduction 2008-2019

### Synthesis Report: Findings, lessons learned and recommendations

This report is available from <http://www.unhabitat.org/evaluation>  
First published in Nairobi in January 2021 by UN-Habitat.

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Produced by the Independent Evaluation Unit

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### Acknowledgements

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**Evaluation Report 4/2020**

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January 2021



**UN-HABITAT**



# CONTENTS

<b>List of Boxes, Figures and Tables .....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>Acronyms and Abbreviations .....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>KEY MESSAGES.....</b>	<b>VI</b>
<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. The urban context and challenges for UN-Habitat .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3. Defining the UN-Habitat Housing Approach .....</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1 Understanding (defining) the UN-Habitat Housing Approach.....	11
3.2 The different lenses through which the housing approach can be evaluated.....	14
3.3 The Housing Approach Theory of Change.....	16
<b>4. Purpose and Context of the Evaluation .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>5. Methodology used in the Present Evaluation .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>6. The Evaluation Findings.....</b>	<b>27</b>
6.1 Data limitations for the estimation of outcomes and impacts.....	27
6.2 Responding to the questions in the terms of reference .....	28
6.3 Relevance and sustainability .....	32
6.4 Regional differences .....	33
<b>7. Lessons learned .....</b>	<b>38</b>
7.1 Capitalizing on UN-Habitat's acknowledged strengths in areas of comparative advantage.....	38
7.2 Essential to strengthen monitoring, information and reporting systems .....	38
7.3 Documenting and strengthening impacts .....	39
7.4 The challenges of ensuring sustainability .....	40
7.5 Summary of Key Challenges.....	40
<b>8. Recommendations .....</b>	<b>41</b>
8.1 Policy and strategic level .....	41
8.2 Management and Planning .....	42
8.3 Regional level.....	42
8.4 Country Programmes.....	43
8.5 Monitoring and evaluation .....	43
8.6 Review of findings from the ratings.....	44
<b>ANNEXES.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Annex 1: Other Reports Produced for this Evaluation .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Annex 2: References.....</b>	<b>46</b>

## LIST OF BOXES, FIGURES AND TABLES

### List of Boxes

Box 1: UN-Habitat publications discussing the Housing Approach.....	11
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### List of Figures

Figure 1: Population of the urban population living in slums (% of urban population).....	3
Figure 2: The comprehensive (adequate) housing approach framework: Programme components, strategic objectives and adequate housing criteria.....	12
Figure 3: Different lenses through which the housing approach can be assessed.....	14
Figure 4: Housing Approach Theory of Change.....	17
Figure 5: The evaluation design.....	22

### List of Tables

Table 1: Dimension 1 of an adequate housing program: Programme components (inputs).....	13
Table 2: Strategic and operational criteria for assessing the performance of a country housing programme.....	13
Table 3: The application of the ratings scales: two examples.....	25
Table 4: Ratings analysis included in Synthesis and Global Report.....	25
Table 5: Summary assessment of outputs and outcomes of the Housing Approach.....	29
Table 6: Examples of UN-Habitat shelter implementation programmes in Africa, the Arab States and Asia/Pacific which when aggregated have a significant quantitative impact.....	30
Table 7: Regional comparisons on the implementation of the housing approach.....	34
Table 8: Regional differences in achievement and impacts of strategic and operational levels of the Housing Approach.....	35
Table 9: Regional differences in the achievement of the dimensions of adequate housing.....	35
Table 10: Regional differences in the achievement of strategic objectives of adequate housing.....	37
Table 11: Regional differences in the achievement/ impacts of the operational objectives of adequate housing.....	37

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific
AGFE	Advisory Group on Forced Evictions
CPI	City Prosperity Index
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
EA	Expected accomplishment
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
GC	Governing Council
GHS 2025	Global Housing Strategy to the Year 2025
HAPs	Habitat Agenda Partners
HDP	Humanitarian, development and peacebuilding
LAS	League of Arab States
Logframe	Logical framework
NUA	New Urban Agenda
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
PAAS	Project Accrual and Accountability System
PSUP	Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme
RBM	Results-based management
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
Sida	Swedish International Development Agency
UN	United Nations
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

## KEY MESSAGES

■ UN-Habitat's major contributions to the housing sector through its Housing Approach at the global, regional and country level are widely acknowledged among housing stakeholders. It is seen as a leader in knowledge creation and dissemination on housing issues; a consistent advocate for the right to adequate housing; a promoter of transforming the lives of slum dwellers; and for its focus on cross-cutting issues of gender equality, youth and climate change.

■ UN-Habitat's critical role as a convener of global, regional and national events on housing and urban development is also widely appreciated; and its policy advice, technical assistance and capacity building support is likewise highly valued.

■ While UN-Habitat has produced many influential publications and advocacy statements relating to its housing policies, the Evaluation found the Agency does not have any document defining its Housing Approach or providing guidelines for implementing and evaluating the approach.

■ UN-Habitat's achievements are documented in the nine reports produced for this evaluation. However, the limitations on the data available from UN-Habitat sources means it was not possible to provide rigorous quantitative data on programme impacts or the total number of beneficiaries. So, while some of the global, regional and national activities and outputs can be quantified (e.g. number of knowledge reports produced; and the number of housing policies and strategies developed), it was not possible to quantify the influence (outcomes/changes) of these outputs and their impacts on adequate and affordable housing, and urban poverty reduction.

■ UN-Habitat's Housing Approach achievements over the evaluation period (2008-2019), drawn from the limited available quantitative data, include:

- Knowledge Management: UN-Habitat has produced many normative products, including flagship publications, report series, fact sheets, guides, tools, etc. (e.g. over 100 thematic reports at global, regional and country level; 52 publications on housing rights; 30 national housing profiles).
- Advocacy: A number of significant outcomes and impacts have resulted from UN-Habitat's advocacy activities (e.g. World Urban Forums have drawn thousands of participants; 167 countries have adopted the New Urban Agenda (NUA); the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (PSUP) has reached out to 10.45 million people living in 39 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries and 190 cities).
- Policy Advice: Improved housing policy and strategy frameworks have been adopted in many countries as a result of policy advice from UN-Habitat (e.g. 34 national housing policies; 21 national slum upgrading and prevention policies/or strategies; 32 citywide slum upgrading and prevention strategies).
- Technical Assistance/Capacity Building: Many regional, national and local authorities and other Habitat Agenda Partners (HAPs) have benefitted from UN-Habitat technical assistance and capacity building support to improve housing policies, strategies and programmes (e.g. League of Arab States (LAS) to develop the Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2030; 200 ministry, local government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs) and private sector actors trained on the PSUP approach).
- Implementation: Operational implementation support provided by UN-Habitat at the country level to: Pilot projects; Public housing programmes; Post-crisis recovery and reconstruction interventions, and Slum upgrading and prevention interventions has resulted in very significant outputs, outcomes and impacts (e.g., one million housing units constructed in the



Asia Pacific countries through the 'People's Process; Secure tenure for over 800,000 slum dwellers and improved living conditions for over 500,000 slum dwellers through the PSUP).

The evaluation also found significant inter- and intra-regional differences and inter-country variations on how the Housing Approach is operationalized and housing strategies are approached.

■ UN-Habitat collects many sources of housing-related data on its policies, programmes and projects at global, regional and country levels; as well as on broad urban development issues (e.g.: the City Prosperity Initiative (CPI), the urban and poverty-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the urban observatories among many others). However, the present evaluation concurs with the findings of a 2015 Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) In-depth Evaluation of UN-Habitat that while regional and global initiatives and events are well documented, information on country level projects and programmes does not provide consistent complete, and comparable documentation on programme outputs, outcomes and impacts. As a consequence, there is very little reliable information available to assess the extent to which UN-Habitat is achieving its broad development objectives and the intended outcomes and impacts of its country programmes.

■ Importantly, the evaluation found that all the necessary policies, frameworks and procedures for country-level data collection and analysis have already been developed – for example, the Project Accrual and Accountability System (PAAS), results-based management (RBM) and logical frameworks (logframes) – as well as the evaluation policy framework and the evaluation manual. However, UN-Habitat's budget and staffing constraints has meant that it has not been possible to systematically implement these data collection and evaluation policies. Many key informant interviews found regional and country-office trade-offs between fund-raising and project implementation, on the one hand and monitoring and documentation on the other.

■ The evaluation also identified a number of challenges that have impacted UN-Habitat's work in housing

- UN-Habitat has only limited capacity to ensure governments follow-through on commitments made at global level events, and signed declarations and agreements.
- In many countries UN-Habitat has only provided limited support to national housing programmes owing to capacity limitations.
- Generally, UN-Habitat is perceived as having only limited capacity to support and implement large-scale housing programmes.
- UN-Habitat is considered to have reduced its earlier role as a forceful promoter of housing rights.
- Some stakeholders are of the belief that UN-Habitat's earlier linkages to civil society have weakened.
- While sources such as the annual reports provide substantial information and data, including annual tracking of specific programmes/projects and other interventions; the lack of consistency in how the data is collected and presented means that current documentation does not provide a sound basis for comparative country-level programme and project monitoring and evaluation.

■ UN-Habitat should consider incorporating some of the new big data and data science tools and techniques into its evaluations (e.g. satellites and drones, social media analysis and the creation of integrated data platforms that combine administrative data sets and government survey data).



Escaleras de comuna take residents up into a hillside community in Medellín, Colombia © Julius Mwelu/UN-Habitat

# 1. INTRODUCTION

In July 2019 the Independent Evaluation Unit of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) commissioned a study to “**Evaluate the Impact of UN-Habitat’s Housing Approach to Adequate, Affordable Housing and Poverty Reduction 2008-2019**”. Completed in March 2020, this was the first evaluation commissioned to assess the implementation and impacts at the global, regional and country levels of UN-Habitat’s approach to addressing the challenge of provision of affordable and adequate housing and shelter to low-income and vulnerable populations. The evaluation also assessed the impacts of housing policies and programmes on the reduction of poverty,

Housing is a central driver in economic and social development, and is consequently affected by multiple economic, political, socio-cultural, demographic and climate-related factors. The evaluation was therefore designed to contribute to the major policy decisions that are being debated within UN-Habitat – not least of which is ensuring that housing policies are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11. It provides a multi-level (global, regional and country) perspective on the challenges and opportunities for UN-Habitat in the complex, dynamic and rapidly changing global urban context. In addition to reflecting the changing dynamics of the urban development dialogue, the housing approach must have the flexibility to adapt to significant regional and country differences.

There are also significant inter- and intra-regional differences on how housing strategies are approached, and consequently, an important contribution of the evaluation was to clearly articulate the UN-Habitat “Housing Approach” and to propose a set of evaluation criteria for assessing how closely country programmes apply each of the different components and dimensions of the approach.

Given the complexity of the urban environment within which UN-Habitat operates, another contribution of the evaluation was to build-on and refine existing theory of change frameworks explaining the complex and interactive processes through which the Housing Approach combines its policy, advocacy, knowledge management, technical assistance/capacity building and implementation support tools to achieve its intended outputs, outcomes and impacts.

The evaluation applied a number of methodologies to assess UN-Habitat’s Housing Approach. These included: portfolio analysis, complexity-focused evaluation, the application of a theory of change, and contribution and comparative advantage analysis. While it was not possible to fully implement these several approaches due to time and budget constraints and to limited data availability, it is hoped this evaluation will lay the groundwork for the fuller application of these methodologies in future evaluations.

The present report is a synthesis of the evaluation conducted by the Evaluation Team comprising Simon Deprez (evaluation specialist), Michael Majale (housing specialist) and Michael Bamberger (development evaluation specialist) and presented in nine separate evaluation reports. The present report was prepared by Michael Bamberger in collaboration with Michael Majale and with contributions from Simon Deprez.

## 2. THE URBAN CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES FOR UN-HABITAT

### Global urbanization trends

The UN-Habitat is the United Nations (UN) agency mandated to promote adequate housing for all and sustainable urbanization. These twin aims, together with its Governing Council (GC) and United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolutions and organizational policies and strategies have informed its 'Housing Approach' through which it seeks to deliver on its mandate.

The future of the world's population is indisputably urban. With more than half of the world's population living in urban areas (55%, up from 30% in 1950), urbanization determines the spatial distribution of the world's population and is one of the four demographic mega-trends – the three others being the growth of the global population; population ageing; and international migration. Estimates and projections of urbanization in *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision*<sup>1</sup> indicate that future human population growth will be accounted for almost entirely by a growing number of city dwellers.

The world is urbanizing rapidly, and as it does so the global housing challenge is growing too. Some 55% of the world's population is now urban and this figure is projected to increase to 60% by 2030. Almost (90%) of the global urban population growth during this period will take place in developing regions of the world, in particular in Asia and Africa. The growth in numbers has been paralleled by the urbanization of poverty, through which an increasing proportion of the world's poor are to be found in cities and towns, as opposed to rural areas as was previously the case in many developing countries. In 2010 around 40% of the world's population, was living in poverty<sup>2</sup> in urban areas. This number is projected to rise to over 50% by 2030<sup>3</sup>.

### The urbanization of poverty

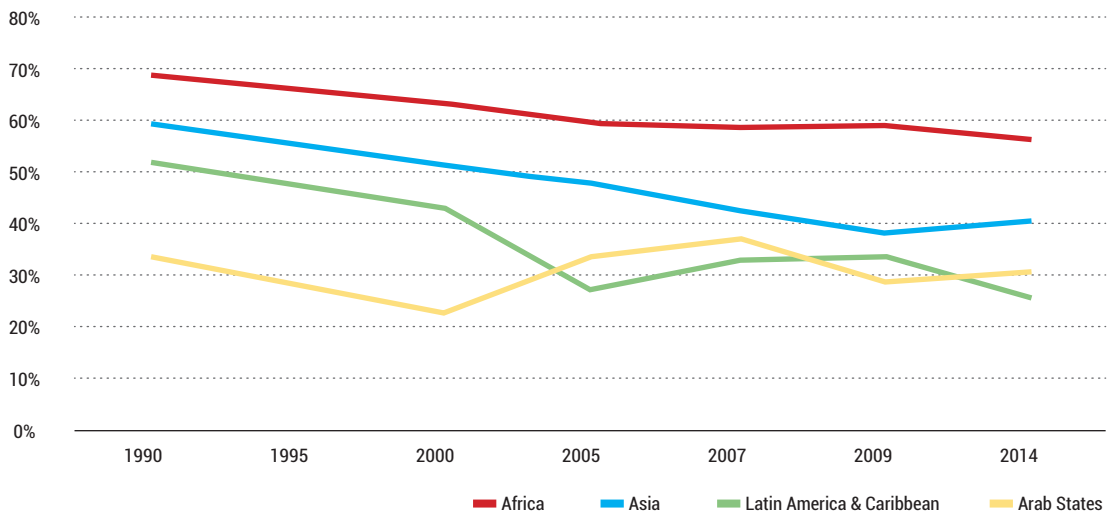
In almost every country, in both developing and developed economies, there are two parallel cities: the formal city where the wealthy and most of the middle class and workers in the formal sector of the economy live and thrive, and the informal sector comprising informal settlements with poor quality housing, and informal income-generating activities from which the majority of urban dwellers earn their livelihoods. In many cities as much as 75-80 per cent of the population live and struggle in the informal sector. These are two separate worlds, with different needs and priorities, and often in conflict. The rapid urbanization has resulted in continually increasing demand for land for housing, economic activities and urban services which, depending on the political system may lead to pressures for eviction of informal settlements and/or the removal or upgrading of sub-standard housing. In countries that are more sympathetic to the needs of the poor there is continual pressure on limited resources and provision of services, and almost always a reactive approach that does not systematically address the challenges until they have already become acute. The Evaluation was not able to identify any country that, through UN-Habitat's Housing Approach, has developed housing policies and programmes able to address the magnitude of the problem and to steadily increase the proportion of the population with access to adequate housing and services.

While the proportion of slum dwellers has decreased in some countries as a result of successful UN-Habitat led efforts to meet Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 7 (Figure 1), the absolute numbers of slum dwellers have increased because of the overall total population growth.

1 United Nations (2019) *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision*

2 On less than US\$2 Purchasing Power Parity

3 Muller, J. (2010) *Reforming the United Nations: The Challenge of Working Together*, UN-Habitat (2014) *Un-Habitat Policy and Plan for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2014-2019*

**Figure 1: Population of the urban population living in slums (% of urban population)**

Source: UN-Habitat

By 2030, about 40% of the estimated 4 billion people living in urban areas worldwide, will need adequate housing. For housing to be adequate, UN-Habitat and UNHCR have identified seven essential criteria (conditions): (i) Security of tenure; (ii) Availability of services, facilities, and infrastructure; (iii) Affordability; (iv) Habitability; (v) Accessibility; (vi) Location; and (vii) Cultural adequacy<sup>4</sup>. This translates into the need to complete 96,150 housing units per day with secure tenure and basic infrastructure and services from now until 2030 to progressively realize the right to adequate housing for all<sup>5</sup>. The housing need is greatest in developing countries, where in some cases over 80% of the population lives in slums<sup>6</sup>, which are characterized by insecurity of tenure; a lack of basic urban services; and poor quality and overcrowded housing conditions. Moreover, slums are often located in hazardous areas such as flood plains and hillsides, where the residents, most of whom are women and youth, are especially vulnerable to climate change events. In many countries, forced evictions and slum demolitions continue unabated, despite it being recognized as a gross violation of human rights<sup>7</sup>.

### Ongoing debates on housing policies and strategies

There are a number of ongoing debates on urban policies that UN-Habitat continues to address<sup>8</sup>:

- What is the appropriate role for the private sector in national housing policies?
- The role of subsidies and how low-income housing should be priced
- Most slum upgrading policies are reactive in that UN-Habitat, government and donors do not become involved until the size and complexity of slums makes any systematic planning or regulation impossible. Is it feasible to implement proactive policies that anticipate and regulate how slums evolve?
- The linkages between housing policies, city planning and economic development. How should housing's roles as a motor of economic development, and as a provider of the right to shelter and essential services be reconciled?

4 OHCHR and UN-Habitat (2009) The Right to Adequate Housing.

5 UN-Habitat (2016) Global Housing Strategy (2016-2019)

6 Arimah, B.C. (2010) Slums as Expressions of Social Exclusion: Explaining the Prevalence of Slums in African Countries

7 UN General Assembly (2018) Report of the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing as a Component of the Right to an Adequate Standard of Living, and on the Right to Non-Discrimination in This Context

8 Many of these debates are reflected in Global Housing Strategy to the Year 2025 (GHS 2025) and the work of the PSUP on national and citywide slum upgrading strategies.

- Shelter strategies evolve in complex environments, but many housing policies and housing research programmes are based on relatively simple models and fail to capture the complex interactions between housing and economic, political, demographic, socio-cultural and climate change. How can complexity-responsive housing strategies be developed?
- How can UN-Habitat reconcile the gap between its relatively modest resources and the enormous scale of the deficit of affordable and habitable shelter? How can the agency leverage its areas of comparative advantage so as to maximize its impact?
- Given the complexities of the housing and urban sectors, how can the outcomes and impacts of housing interventions be evaluated?

## The challenges and opportunities for UN-Habitat

While UN-Habitat has extensive and recognized experience in most areas of housing strategies, policies and programmes, its limited resources means that while many of its interventions have been technically successful, they tend to be on a relatively small scale, often only reaching (at most) a few thousand households. Most successful interventions have been in emergency and refugee contexts which have a different dynamic and do not directly impact the (formal) housing market. At the same time, estimates show that at least 100 million households live in substandard housing, and the evaluation could not find evidence, in the countries studied, where UN-Habitat interventions through the Housing Approach have contributed significantly to reduced deficits

UN-Habitat is always working in partnership with, and through international and national agencies where its influence is through advocacy, promoting policy reform and sharing technical expertise (through knowledge management, technical assistance and capacity development). While the agency is recognized as a powerful advocate, through international conferences and publications, it has limited capacity to leverage its experience on a larger scale. In most countries, government policies mainly focus on the formal sector, often seeking to strengthen the role of the private

housing sector. However, the focus of the housing market is mainly to provide housing for the more profitable formal sector of the economy and the informal sector is less economically attractive.

At the same time there is a dynamic informal housing market that is providing land, housing and services for the majority of the population living in the informal sector. This market responds to economic demand but is largely unregulated, and consequently is usually focusing on individual households and communities, and is not working on a city-wide or urban plan. In many communities there are residents' associations or different kinds of civil organizations that do have a community-wide vision, but their interests are often different from, or in conflict with, the urban authorities and commercial developers, and there tends to be only limited coordination.

UN-Habitat and governments have a critical role to play in addressing these challenges, by adopting pro-poor policies and regulatory frameworks; improving access to land; committing to inclusive basic infrastructure and service provision; diversifying housing solutions; and implementing policies, strategies, programmes and projects to improve and prevent slums. All these interventions need to be informed by a sound evidence base; enabled by policy and regulatory frameworks; and require adequate institutional and technical capacity to implement them, which will also require effective collaboration and partnership with a wide range of stakeholders. All of these challenges are addressed in the UN-Habitat Housing Approach discussed in the following Chapter.

## Regional variations [Details are discussed more fully in the regional reports]

Each region is unique with different challenges, traditions, political and economic dynamics, etc., as is made clear in the global report. Even within each region there are significant variations between countries, as shown in the four regional reports — Africa, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean — prepared as part of this evaluation. The regional differences in the strategies and approaches adopted by UN-Habitat are largely due to the differences in the economic, political, socio-cultural, demographic and climate change contexts in each region.



In 1950, Africa had the lowest proportion of urban population (14%) of any geographic region, but since then it experienced the fastest rate of urbanization of any developing region and by 2018 its urban share had risen to 43%. While Africa's rate of urbanization is projected to decrease over the coming years, it is expected to reach 59% by 2050. The rapid urban population growth is a function of three factors: 1) natural population increase; 2) in-migration from rural areas; and 3) the transformation of previously rural settlements into urban ones (or reclassification). In addition, many African countries continue to suffer from conflict, high proportions of internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and multiple natural disasters, all of which have affected the patterns of urban growth and the rising demand for adequate and affordable houses.

There are however wide regional variations within the continent. Southern Africa and Northern Africa have already reached urban-majority populations, with shares of 62% and 52% respectively<sup>9</sup>, while the corresponding figures for Central and Eastern Africa are 44% and 26% respectively. There are also significant differences between countries – e.g. during the period 1990-2018, Rwanda urbanized the fastest with an average annual increase in the proportion urban of 4.1% compared to 2.7% for Burkina Faso and Uganda<sup>10</sup>. But most countries cannot adequately cope with the rapid urbanization, and the rate of urban population growth is overwhelming the institutional, human technical and financial, resource capacities of central and local governments to plan and manage urban development and provide infrastructure and services. The fast growing urban

population is characterized by a disproportionately larger share of youth, high rates of unemployment and underemployment, and high dependence on the informal economy for jobs<sup>11</sup>. The challenges are being compounded by the urbanization of poverty, whereby an increasing proportion of poor households are now located in urban rather than rural areas. This is manifested most conspicuously in the proliferation and expansion of slums and informal settlements.

Access to adequate and affordable urban housing is a growing challenge in countries across Africa. The challenge is thus largely one of affordability: the cost of even the cheapest housing supplied by the formal sector is unaffordable for the majority of urban households in the region. As a result, vast numbers of households are compelled to live in inadequate housing in slums and informal settlements. These are often located in areas exposed to natural hazards, including climate-change induced extreme events such as cyclones, floods and landslides.

African Governments have used a variety of approaches and models to realize adequate housing from the aspect of affordability, including affordable housing and slum upgrading programmes, with varying degrees of implementation success – but all of which are yet to fully realize the objective of increasing access to adequate, affordable housing. Thus, while the proportion of slum dwellers has decreased in some countries owing to successful UN-Habitat-led efforts.

9 Bah, E.-h.M., et al. (2018) Housing Market Dynamics in Africa

10 United Nations (2019) World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision.

11 African Planning Association and UN-Habitat (2013) The State of Planning in Africa: An Overview



## Arab States

The urban population in Arab countries more than quadrupled from 1970 to 2010 and will more than double again from 2010 to 2050. With a total population of 414,491,886 people of whom almost 60% live in urban areas, with the number expected to reach 68% by 2050, the Arab States Region is one of the most rapidly urbanizing regions in the world. The high urbanization rates have been driven by several factors, including natural population growth, socio-economic transformation and imbalanced economic development, which have stimulated both rural-urban migration and increased international labour migration within countries and across the region. In addition, displacement induced by political instability and conflict, as well as by adverse climatic conditions, has significantly impacted Arab cities. Internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees and international migrants live mainly in cities, and represent a growing proportion of the urban population

There are however wide variations in urbanization rates across sub-regions. There are also considerable variations among individual countries due to physical geography, climatic conditions, biodiversity, agricultural systems, politico-socio-economic systems, non-implementation of urban development policies, and population movements and concentrations resulting from conflict and insecurity in the region.

Some Arab States have developed policies and strategies for secondary and new cities to improve urban-rural economic linkages and achieve more equitable economic development, but uneven development remains a major challenge facing most countries in the region. Rural-to-urban migration and population movements from small to medium and large cities in search of jobs, social

services and amenities continue unabated. Regional urban socioeconomic dynamics have also fuelled increased labour migration across countries, in addition to displacement induced by man-made and natural disasters<sup>12</sup>.

The Arab States region has faced various conflict and post-conflict situations in the past few decades, with most of the countries having suffered from at least one conflict in the last decade. Conflicts have resulted in a weakening of the rule of law, declining national and, in particular, local government capacity to provide services; a spread of informal housing and land grabbing; and increased levels of crime and reduced urban safety<sup>13</sup>. The conflicts have had profound global, regional and national consequences – triggering massive internal and external displacement and refugee flows, regional instability and risk of further conflict.

The Arab region is one of the most vulnerable in the world to the impacts of climate change and interactions among: high temperatures, scarcity of water resources, increased drought and desertification, increased salinity of groundwater, threats to coastal areas, and the spread of epidemics, pests and diseases. Most of the region is comprised of over-arid, arid and semi-arid ecological zones. Ninety per cent of the population in the region lives on 4% of the total area, and over 60% cent in cities and towns. In many countries, most of the population, government and administrative centres and physical assets are located along, or close to, the coastline. The coastal cities, and coastal and marine areas in general, have experience significant growth in economic and development activities in recent years, which has increased vulnerability to climate change<sup>14</sup>.

12 League of Arab States (2016) Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2030.

13 UN-Habitat (2020) Informal Settlements in the Arab Region: Towards Arab Cities without Informal Settlements\* Analysis and Prospects.

14 UN-Habitat (2019) Local Climate Action in the Arab Region: Lessons Learned and Way Forward





## Asia and the Pacific

2018 figures show that half of the Asia and Pacific population, or 2.4 billion people, are living in cities and towns, and that the region is urbanising rapidly and will need to absorb 120,000 new residents into its cities every day. This translates into a housing need of at least 20,000 housing units per day. Although the general trend of rapid urbanisation and population growth is common to all Asian countries, there are notable differences. National urbanisation levels, for example, range from 100% in Singapore to 13% in Papua New Guinea. The continued growth of cities has placed enormous strain on land and housing supply. The continued expansion of urban slums and informal settlements is a physical manifestation of poorly functioning housing sectors, which are failing to provide affordable housing alternatives, especially for low- and middle-income households. Asia has experienced strong economic growth over the last three decades and the economic development in many countries has lifted millions of people out of income poverty and fostered the emergence of an urban middle class that now includes about 2 billion people. The massive reduction in income poverty has not always addressed other aspects of poverty, such as inadequate housing, or lack of access to safe water and sanitation, and it remains difficult for the urban poor and minority groups to gain access to affordable or adequate housing and services.

However, the proportion of the urban population living in slums in East Asia and the Pacific region fell significantly, from an estimated 55% to 35%, between 1990 to 2015; while in South Asia it dropped from 64% to 44%. But while the proportion living in slum conditions has fallen, the absolute numbers of slum dwellers have risen and over half a billion slum dwellers now live in the region. Asia and the Pacific are home to the

world's largest urban slum populations and the largest concentrations of people living below the poverty line.

In addition to inadequate housing, Asia is also facing major urban health, climate change and disaster risks issues. The region has experienced some of the worst natural disasters of the past decades, and the region is also home to some of the world's most polluted and unhealthy cities. Asian cities are also among the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. One billion Asian urban residents may face multiple high or extreme natural hazards in the region by 2030.

As in other regions, Asian housing policies have evolved over time. From the 1950s, housing theory and practice was based on direct government provision of public housing for rent or sale. High-density, multi-storied apartment blocks influenced by Modernist Movement ideals became the dominant approach to replace low-rise, slum housing inhabited by low-income households. However, in most countries these programmes proved to be expensive, and designs based on European models did not respond to traditional needs and ways of living. The units were also too expensive for the low-income population. Consequently, such housing was limited in supply, poorly maintained, and mainly occupied by middle- and upper-income groups, and informal housing continued to expand.

From the 1960s, in response to the failures of direct housing provision, many Asian countries began to adopt the self-housing approach promoted by agencies such as the World Bank. However, the approach proved less successful than in Latin America and parts of Africa where the occupation of publicly owned land was often tolerated, and residents were able to progressively

construct their houses. In contrast, in Asia there was a greater probability of eviction because of the upsurge in land prices provoked by fast-paced economic growth and associated urbanisation. Also, residents were faced with unsupportive institutional, regulatory and economic arrangements that prevented them from undertaking self-help housing projects within the formal regulatory system.

By the 1970s, Asian governments began to see the importance of the housing sector for economic and social development. In many ways, this emerged from the first Habitat conference in 1976 that focused on the need to remove institutional and regulatory constraints to support not only self-help housing but also a range of housing options for households at different income levels. From the 1980s onwards, housing theory and policy shifted the role of governments away from direct providers of serviced land and housing towards enabling a wider range of market actors to produce housing, and the government's role became to 'enable' the market to work through housing sector reforms that encouraged private investment and efficient housing production at scale.

In South and Southeast Asia in particular, industrialisation and export orientated growth fuelled strong economic development during the 1990s, which

had significant structural effects, particularly for housing affordability. However, structural socio-economic changes in Asian cities from the 1990s onwards continued the exclusion of lower-income groups from housing markets.

To face these many challenges, Asia has demonstrated the ability to address affordable land and housing supply. Unlike in other regions, Asian countries, especially those in Southeast Asia, adopted enabling strategies, recognising the limitations and challenges of self-help housing schemes, and slum upgrading became a prevailing practice in many Asian cities.

In many ways, Southeast Asian countries were global pioneers in slum upgrading programmes. Since the 1960s, programmes such as the Kampung Improvement Programme in Indonesia and the Baan Mankong programme in Thailand have demonstrated the opportunities available to improve the environmental, social and economic dimensions of slums and informal settlements through engaging with a wide range of stakeholders. In many Asian countries, the central actors of improving access to adequate housing are the slum dwellers themselves, supported by local civil society.



Countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region vary significantly with respect to heritage and colonial histories, radically different geographies and demographics (especially between mainland countries and the Caribbean islands), social development, political traditions and economies (from very poor to upper-middle income).

Latin America and the Caribbean is the most urbanized developing region in the world, with 81% of its population living in urban areas in 2018, and this is projected to increase to 90% in 25 years. A number of different urbanization trends have been identified: slow growth rates of megacities due to lower levels of rural-urban migration; high growth of mid-size cities which offer new poles of development; and greater intra-city migration. Although Latin America is one of the regions with the greatest economic inequality, in 2014 the proportion of the population living in slums was quite low compared to other developing regions. While the proportion of slum dwellers is over 40% in many poor countries, in relatively wealthy countries such as Chile, Mexico and Colombia the proportions are well under 15%. The main challenge therefore is not, as in other regions, to address the issues of rapid urbanization but rather to improve quality of life, close inequality gaps and achieve sustainability in existing neighbourhoods and cities.

Many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have adopted centralized, top-down national housing policies. After several decades promoting self-help housing programs, recent decades have seen policies providing incentives to the private sector, who have tended to focus on the provision of housing for higher income groups, including in many countries the provision of housing for formal sector workers, many of whom are covered by special housing insurance schemes.

Policies towards slums and inadequate housing have varied widely, and change according to political orientation and the international environment. Policies have ranged from efforts to relocate slum dwellers from prime urban land to a range of approaches to plan new slums and to upgrade existing slums. Debates about the role of the private sector in housing, and the pros and cons of "neo-liberal" approaches have often been central to these debates.

Many countries also have a large indigenous population, and in many cases their special housing needs are not adequately addressed.

## Comparing UN-Habitat's regional portfolios

In each region the structure of the programme portfolios reflects the differences in regional characteristics and the priorities of the country and regional portfolios to address these differences. The portfolios are discussed in more detail in chapter 4 of the Global Report but the main priorities are the following:

- In **Asia and Pacific**, one of the biggest budgets, the programme portfolio is characterized by the greatest proportion of post-crisis interventions and by the biggest share in slum upgrading programmes and in basic services provision.
- The **Africa** region, the second biggest portfolio, has many housing interventions. It has the most urban-related programmes and projects, as well as the highest number of land-related interventions.
- In the **Arab States**, the most significant portfolio is the post-crisis interventions, with the region having the highest number, and ranking second in terms of urban governance, finance or planning interventions. It has the greatest proportion of housing-related interventions (15%).
- In **Latin America** has the smallest UN-Habitat housing portfolio of the four main regions, with the main focus being on urban-related interventions.



Some of the government housing project buildings project Port-au-Prince, Haiti © Julius Mwelu/UN-Habitat

## 3. DEFINING THE UN-HABITAT HOUSING APPROACH

### 3.1 Understanding (defining) the UN-Habitat Housing Approach

The purpose of the Evaluation was to “*evaluate the impact of UN-Habitat’s Housing Approach on adequate, affordable housing and poverty reduction*” between 2008-2019. This required a clear articulation of how UN-Habitat defines its Housing Approach and a set of criteria for assessing the implementation and outcomes of *the Approach*, and its contribution to achieving the development objectives of the agency.

The Evaluation found a broad consensus within UN-Habitat on the purpose and structure of the Housing Approach. It is understood to be an organisational strategy providing a systematic approach to address adequate housing issues that incorporates a core strategy to promote housing reforms that will trigger implementation of improved housing interventions. The Approach is based on:

- recognition and promotion of housing rights
- revision of housing-related laws, policies and regulatory frameworks
- adoption of improved housing policy and strategic frameworks
- implementation of improved housing and slum-related programmes and projects.

While there is a broad consensus within UN-Habitat on the elements of the Approach which is discussed in a number of high-profile UN-Habitat publications (see Box 1), there is no agreed and documented definition of the Approach. Consequently, for the purposes of the present evaluation the consultants developed an operational definition of the Approach that could be applied consistently across regions to document how, and to what degree different countries and regions were applying the Approach. The Evaluation did not pass judgement on whether country programmes should conform to all of the criteria, but only provided a clear reference for UN-Habitat to assess the findings of the analysis and its implications. The regional reports

#### Box 1: UN-Habitat publications discussing the Housing Approach

- Mid-Term Strategic and Institutional Plan 2008-2013
- Strategic Plan 2014-2019
- Housing at the Centre of the New Urban Agenda 2015
- Adequate Housing Criteria (OHCHR and UN-Habitat)

found that each regional programme prioritized different elements of the Approach. Furthermore, priorities among the different components have also varied over time.

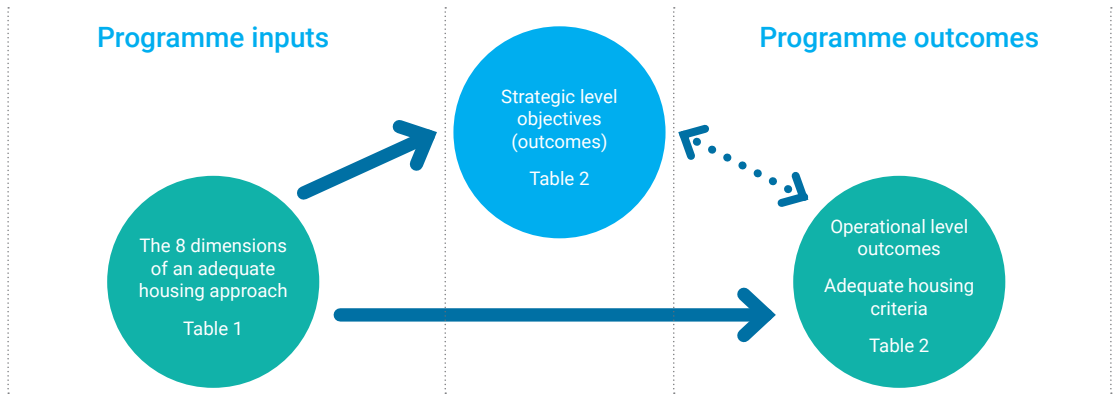
The analysis also showed that depending on the context the Approach could be considered as: A policy framework, a country programme guideline, an advocacy document and a framework or checklist for assessing the adequacy of UN-Habitat housing programmes or policies.

#### *The definition of the Housing Approach*

The definition of the Housing Approach framework developed for the purposes of this evaluation combines three components (see Figure 2):

- **Component 1:** The housing approach inputs. The eight dimensions included in a comprehensive housing approach (Table 1) combine UN-Habitat’s five main housing programme areas (knowledge management, advocacy, policy advice, technical assistance/capacity development, and supporting the implementation of adequate housing and slum upgrading); with three additional requirements to ensure: Integration with other areas of UN-Habitat activity (housing finance, urban planning, etc.); adequate attention to cross-cutting themes; and planning for sustainability.

**Figure 2: The comprehensive (adequate) housing approach framework: Programme components, strategic objectives and adequate housing criteria**



### The Criteria for assessing housing approach outcomes (Table 2)

- Component 2: Strategic outcomes.** These are the indicators used to assess the achievement of desired housing-related policy changes at the country and city level. The indicators include five strategic outcomes of an adequate housing programme, and five strategic outcomes relating to poverty reduction and cross-cutting themes.
- Component 3: Operational outcomes.** There are seven indicators covering the desired changes at the level of individual housing programmes

The logic of the framework, as illustrated in Figure 2, is to document the extent to which UN-Habitat country housing programmes are incorporating the 8 programmatic inputs defined in Table 1, and the extent to which desired housing outputs were achieved at the strategic policy level and at the operational level. The two red arrows indicate that there is a causal relationship between the effective implementation of the 8 dimensions of the housing approach (Table 1), and the intended strategic and operational level outcomes (Table 2). However, the black dotted line indicates that the causal relationship between strategic and operational outcomes is less clear, and could operate in either or both directions. For example, the implementation of progressive housing policies could result in improved

quality of life in the slums, but it is also possible that successful slum upgrading projects could encourage policy makers to focus on pro-poor housing policies. In a more detailed analysis it would be possible to assess the impact of individual activities (technical assistance, knowledge management etc) on particular strategic or operational outcomes.

For assessing inputs, the assessment was conducted at two levels:

- Level 1: indicates whether a country programme included a particular input – without assessing scale or quality
- Level 2: rates the quality of the input on a 5-point scale (see Chapter 6).

Both strategic and operational outcomes were rated on a 5-point scale (see Chapter 6).

The conditions under which the evaluation was conducted did not permit the use of rigorous quantitative (experimental and quasi-experimental) designs. Consequently, it was only possible to make a judgmental assessment of the extent to which the UN-Habitat Housing Approach had contributed to the observed changes in outcomes. However, the triangulation of data from the analysis of different UN-Habitat sources, with the case studies and key-informant interviews together provided credible evidence on the effectiveness of the Housing Approach, and the areas of strength and weakness.

**Table 1: Dimension 1 of an adequate housing program: Programme components (inputs)**

<b>The programme components (types of intervention)</b>
1. Advocacy
2. Knowledge management
3. Policy advice
4. Technical assistance and capacity development
5. Supporting the implementation of adequate housing and slum upgrading.
<b>Additional requirements for ensuring housing programs contribute to broader development objectives</b>
6. Integration (coordination) of the housing program with other UN-Habitat programs
7. Adequate attention to cross-cutting themes (gender, youth, climate change)
8. Sustainability of the housing programs

Source: Developed by the Evaluation Consultants drawing on country case studies, key informant interviews and UN-Habitat publications

**Table 2 :Strategic and operational criteria for assessing the performance of a country housing programme<sup>15</sup>**

<b>Dimension 2: Strategic outcomes</b>	<b>Dimension 3: Operational outcomes</b>
<b>Adequate housing</b>	
1. Increase access to adequate housing for all and particularly for low-income households	1. Security of tenure
2. Support diversification of adequate housing solutions and government interventions	2. Availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure
3. Support for advocacy groups and self-organizing housing initiatives (by NGOs and INGOs)	3. Affordability
4. Provide adequate housing to crisis-affected populations (conflict, disaster, migration etc)	4. Habitability
5. Improve living conditions in existing slums/informal settlements	5. Accessibility
<b>Poverty reduction and cross-cutting issues</b>	
6. Increase housing affordability for all focusing on low-income households	6. Location
7. Improve access to economic resources, affordable goods and services for low-income households	7. Cultural adequacy
8. Improve social inclusion and integration at city-wide scale	
9. Support targeted housing programmes for female-headed households, the elderly or youth.	
10. Support climate change responsive housing strategies and programmes	

Source: Developed by the evaluation consultants

Source: UNHCR and UN-Habitat (2009).

15 The criteria are described in the Main Report Section 2.2 Table 2

The application of the Housing Approach does not always involve all the five elements – the application varies across the different levels and geographies, from global to local, from region to region, and from country to country. It may also be proactive or demand-driven, and hence have different entry points. Also, the five elements do not necessarily need to be structured sequentially and implemented in a linear manner; but rather can be implemented more flexibly or iteratively. The unique characteristics of each region are discussed in Chapter 2, and regional differences in outcomes for the 3 dimensions are presented in Chapter 6.

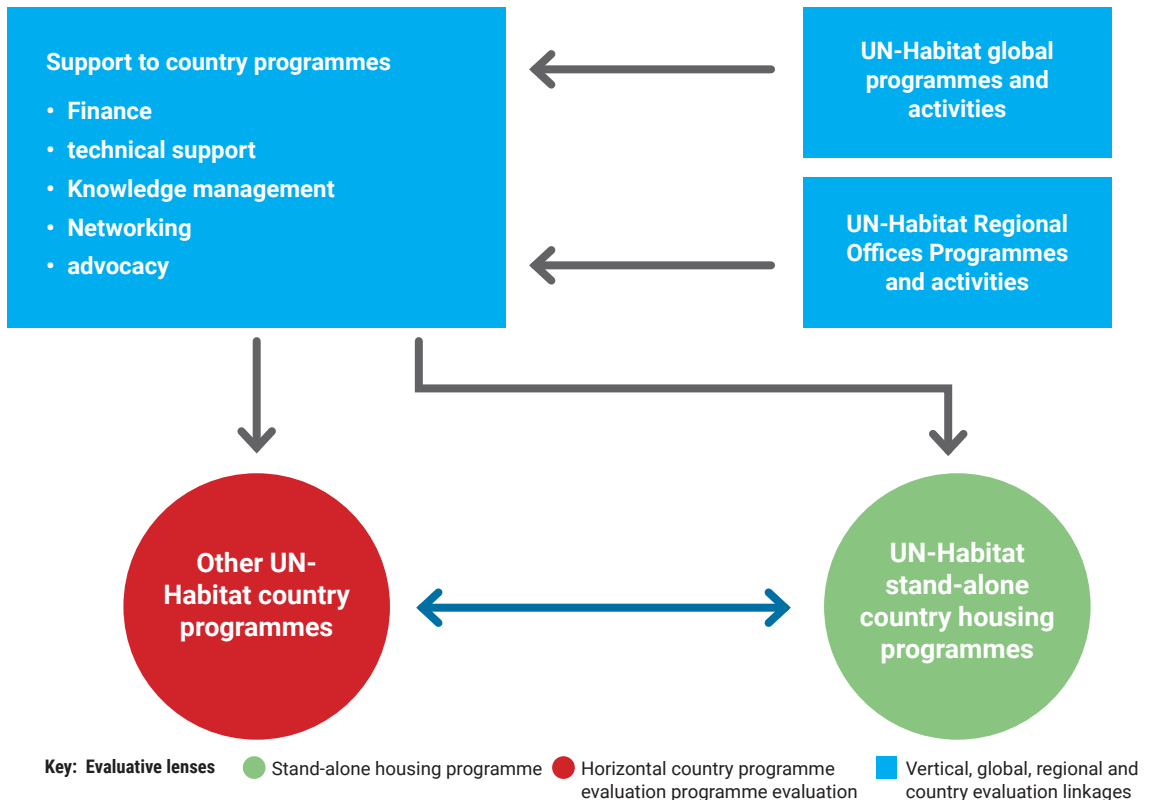
### Collaboration with government and partner agencies

All of UN-Habitat's programmes are designed and implemented in collaboration and coordination with national and local government agencies, UN partners, donor agencies. Civil society and academia are also involved in many programmes. The regional reports describe in detail the wide range of partnerships at the country and regional levels, while the Global Report also describes the regional and global partnerships.

## 3.2 The different lenses through which the housing approach can be evaluated

The evaluation found that the housing approach framework can be applied to assess the Housing Approach from several different perspectives (Figure 3):

**Figure 3: Different lenses through which the housing approach can be assessed**





- a. **Perspective 1: Stand-alone assessment.** The most common application is to consider the housing approach as a stand-alone component of a UN-Habitat country programme which is designed, implemented and evaluated independently of other activities within the country. In this case the implementation of the approach would be assessed in terms of its effectiveness in implementing the five programme components included in Table 1 (advocacy, policy advice, knowledge management, technical assistance/ capacity development and project implementation).
- b. **Perspective 2: Horizontal coordination.** While the Approach would usually be implemented as a stand-alone program, its success in achieving many of the strategic and operational objectives may depend on how well it is coordinated with other UN-Habitat country programmes. For example, accessibility and affordability or security of tenure may be affected by UN-Habitat programmes in areas such as housing finance or land reform (among others). Consequently, the assessment might also take into consideration indicators 6,7 and 8 in Table 1; integration with other UN-Habitat programmes, attention to cross-cutting themes, and planning for sustainability.
- c. **Perspective 3: Vertical coordination.** The success of country housing programmes can be significantly enhanced by coordination with, and support from, UN-Habitat's regional and global offices. The support can be a combination of financial, technical, knowledge management, networking and advocacy, particularly through the organization of high-profile regional and global conferences.

The three perspectives complement each other. The first assesses how effectively a stand-alone housing programme has implemented the eight dimensions. The second builds on the first and also assesses how effectively the housing programme is integrated with other UN-Habitat and national and international partners' programmes. The third assesses how well UN-Habitat is supporting housing programmes at the country level. An integrated institutional assessment of the effectiveness of the design and implementation of housing programmes would combine all three perspectives.



Ongoing construction in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. After a devastating earthquake struck the country © Julius Mwelu/UN-Habitat

### 3.3 The Housing Approach Theory of Change

Housing strategies, policies, programmes and projects are developed within a dynamic and constantly changing urban, national and international context. Housing sector priorities, implementation and outcomes are affected by all of these contextual factors, and consequently a programme with a similar design may have significantly different outcomes and impacts in different country contexts. An assessment of the effectiveness of the UN-Habitat's Housing Approach must take all of these factors into consideration. The Theory of Change described below in figure 4 is based on a review and refinement of the various theories of change and related frameworks already developed by UN-Habitat.

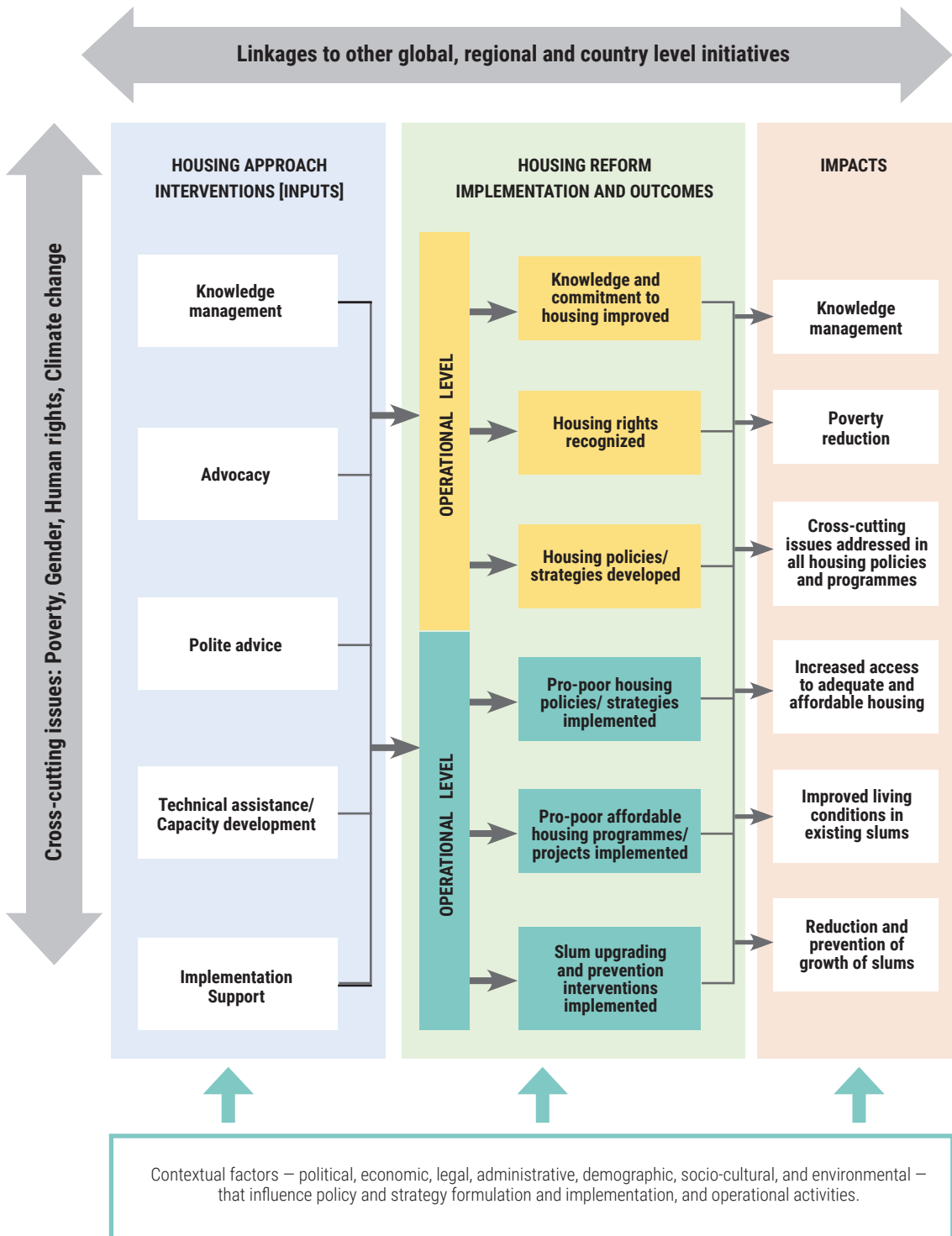
The Theory of Change describes a process that involves the following interactive stages:

- **Housing approach interventions and cross-cutting issues:** These are five main kinds of interventions, one or more of which are combined in all UN-Habitat housing approaches and programmes (knowledge management and advocacy at the global and regional levels; knowledge management at the country level; policy advice, technical assistance (and capacity development) and support to programme implementation at the country level. UN-Habitat also provides guidelines on how to integrate cross-cutting issues into the country programmes.
- **Housing reform implementation:** The interventions are intended to promote and facilitate housing reform implementation. This combines interventions at the **strategic level** (knowledge and commitment to housing improvement, recognition of housing rights and housing policies and strategies are developed); with interventions at the **operational level** (pro-poor housing policies and strategies are implemented, and slum upgrading and prevention interventions are implemented).
- **Outcomes and impacts:** Different sets of activities and outputs are intended to combine to produce a set of outcomes/impacts. While the agency can control to a large extent the delivery or production of outputs (such as support in the construction or

upgrading of housing units, provision of technical assistance and the sharing of knowledge products), the extent to which the intended outcomes and impacts are achieved will depend on a set of contextual factors (political, economic, demographic, natural and man-made crises) over which the agency has very little control. A more detailed version of the Theory of Change will include a set of assumptions about the processes through which outputs are expected to generate the intended outcome and impacts. Ideally the agency should conduct periodic reviews to assess the validity of the assumptions concerning these processes.

It is important to understand that the purpose of the Theory of Change is to articulate monitor complex and dynamic process that will operate differently in each country and which will be constantly changing as the national context evolves. The value of the Theory of Change depends on its being seen as an attempt to explain a complex process, and to be useful it must be constantly reviewed and assessed. How valid were the assumptions about factors influencing the achievement of outcomes and impacts? What are the critical contextual factors supporting or constraining the implementation of the housing approach in each country? Ideally, the Theory of Change should be reviewed and updated periodically during the implementation of the housing approach.

Figure 4: Housing Approach Theory of Change



## 4. PURPOSE AND CONTEXT OF THE EVALUATION

### Purpose, scope, timeline and organization

The evaluation was intended assess impact of the UN-Habitat Housing Approach and to provide a multi-level (global, regional and country) perspective on the challenges and opportunities for UN-Habitat in the complex, dynamic and rapidly changing urban context in developing countries. Housing is a central driver in economic and social development, while at the same time performance and outcomes are affected by a multitude of economic, political, socio-cultural, demographic, inter-regional differences and climate-related factors. The evaluation was designed to contribute to the major policy decisions that are being debated within UN-Habitat and more broadly in the urban development community. Not least of these is ensuring that housing policies are aligned with, and contribute to the SDGs particularly SDG 11.

The evaluation was conducted between July 2019 and June 2020 and covers the implementation and impacts of UN-Habitat's Housing Approaches during the period 2008-2019, and encompasses both the 2008-2013 Mid-Term Strategic and Institutional Plan (MTSIP) and the 2014-2019 Strategic Plan (SP).

The Evaluation Team comprised Simon Deprez (Evaluation Specialist) and Michael Majale (Housing Specialist) with technical support from Michael Bamberger (Development Evaluation Specialist).

“ **Housing is a central driver in economic and social development, while at the same time performance and outcomes are affected by a multitude of economic, political, socio-cultural, demographic, inter-regional differences and climate-related factors.** ”

### The key evaluation questions to be addressed by the evaluation

The Terms of Reference identified five key questions to be addressed by the evaluation:

1. To what extent can **identified changes in adequate and affordable housing and poverty reduction** in countries be attributed to UN-Habitat's Housing Approach, policy frameworks, programmes and capacity building?
2. To what extent has UN-Habitat influenced **political commitment to adequate and affordable housing** issues at global, regional and country levels and assisted selected countries to deliver on such commitments?
3. What has been UN-Habitat's impact on vulnerable poor groups, and has **how the Housing Approach created better opportunities to improve the living standards** of poor people and ensure their housing rights?
4. How has UN-Habitat's Housing Approach impacted **cross-cutting issues** such as gender, youth, and climate change?
5. What are the **lessons and recommendations** on how the Housing Approach and related work could be modified to increase impact?

The evaluation also reviewed the current systems used to evaluate the extent to which UN-Habitat's projects, programmes and policies are contributing to the achievement of its intended outputs, outcome and impacts and to its broader development objectives. Based on this analysis, recommendations are included on ways to strengthen the evaluation systems.

## Target audiences

While the evaluation findings will be of interest to a wide range of UN agencies, donors, academics and civil society organizations concerned with housing, poverty, urban development and human rights, the primary target audiences for this evaluation are:

- UN-Habitat Management and its governing bodies, specifically the Executive Board
- The UN-Habitat Evaluation Office: this is the first systematic evaluation of the Housing approach commissioned by the Evaluation Office, and it proposes guidelines to develop evaluation methodologies for future evaluations.
- UN-Habitat, and in particular, the new Land, Housing and Shelter Section; the Regional Offices and the Country Offices; relevant Head Office sections/units
- The Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) provided significant support to UN-Habitat work and they are the funder of this evaluation; and other key donors.

## UN-Habitat's current evaluation experience and approach

As part of UN-Habitat's reform processes, the Evaluation Unit was created in January 2012, and in January 2013 UN-Habitat's evaluation policy was defined. The policy is in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation and the widely accepted Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) principles for evaluation. Among other things, the Policy defines the purposes and types of evaluation, as well how the evaluations should be managed, planned, prioritized and disseminated. The policies are consistent with the approaches adopted by many other UN agencies.

In April 2018, the Evaluation Unit produced the UN-Habitat Evaluation Manual. This explains how the evaluation system is organized and managed, the types of evaluations that will be conducted, how findings will be used and the process of follow-up. The manual does not, however, discuss different evaluation

methodologies. In 2019, a total of eight evaluations, managed and supported by the Evaluation Unit were completed (including end-term project, mid-term, country programmes and broader regional programmes), and three more were in progress.

The present evaluation concurs with the findings of a 2015 Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) in-depth evaluation of UN-Habitat<sup>16</sup> that while regional and global initiatives and events are well documented, information on country level projects and programmes does not provide consistent complete, and comparable documentation on programme outputs. As a consequence, there is very little reliable information available to assess the extent to which UN-Habitat is achieving its broad development objectives and the intended outcomes and impacts of its country programmes.

The agency mainly draws on administrative data bases such as the Project Accrual and Accountability System (PAAS), the results-framework of the 2014-19 strategic plan, and project monitoring and completion reports to produce periodic updates on the agency performance (outputs). However, not all countries or projects use the PAAS, or the results-framework and many donor-funded projects use the donor's reporting system. Consequently, reports from different projects are not consistent, some information is missing, and other sources may not be reliable. Reports often include estimates about the number of households or communities affected by UN-Habitat interventions but in most cases the figures are based on assumptions that all households in the communities where projects have been implemented will have benefitted, and benefitted equally from the interventions. However, it is likely that not all households in the target population will benefit, or benefit equally, so there is a risk of significant over-estimation of the number of beneficiaries or the level and kinds of benefits received. Furthermore, in most cases UN-Habitat does not conduct any systematic follow-up (such as sustainability analysis) once a project has been implemented, to determine for how long benefits and services continue to be delivered, or infrastructure is maintained. To date, the Evaluation Unit has not conducted any rigorous impact evaluations.

So, while the data collection systems and the evaluation methods are well documented, many project and country level reporting systems do not comply with these systems. One of the main reasons for the lack of consistency and compliance is the lack of resources. Many country offices have very limited permanent staff and no-one available to complete the reporting requirements. The problem is compounded by the lack of resources (human and financial) at the regional and headquarters level to support the countries to overcome these challenges.

### Challenges facing the evaluation of urban development programmes

While there are wide variations in how different agencies evaluate their urban development programmes, and the level of resources they can invest in their evaluations, there are a number of challenges that most of urban development evaluations face. The present evaluation provides pointers on the following evaluation challenges:

- **Evaluating complexity:** while it is generally recognized that housing programmes operate in a complex environment, most current evaluations use simple, linear designs that are not well suited to assessing complexity. The present evaluation suggests some user-friendly, complexity evaluation approaches.
- **The challenge of attribution:** most housing programmes are designed and implemented

in collaboration with government, civil society or other international development agencies. Consequently, it is a challenge to determine the extent to which observed changes can be attributed to the programme being evaluated and not to other agencies or to economic and political changes in the environment in which the programme operates. In a few cases it is possible to use experimental evaluation designs (such as randomized control trials) where there is matched control group that does not receive the intervention, but this is rarely possible and only applies to the evaluation of relatively simple programmes with only a single intervention. The present evaluation suggests potential applications of contribution analysis and value-added analysis.

- **Evaluating sustainability:** due to costs, time constraints and the organizational difficulties of continuing to collect data after a programme closes, very few evaluations are able to track the degree to which project benefits continue to be delivered over time. Some user-friendly approaches are proposed.
- **Using big data to widen the range of data that can be collected for evaluations.** Evaluators have been slow, compared to other development agency departments to use the powerful new sources of big data that are becoming available. The evaluation will propose some of the new tools and techniques that could be applied in housing evaluations.



Village residents committee from Majengo going through the new maps after successful participatory design and mapping exercise in Kilifi, Kenya. 2016 © Julius Mwelu/ UN-Habitat

## 5. METHODOLOGY USED IN THE PRESENT EVALUATION

### The Evaluation Approach and Methodology

This was the first global evaluation commissioned UN-Habitat to assess its Housing Approach and consequently a new methodology had to be developed. The central challenge for the evaluation was to assess how effectively UN-Habitat, with its limited resources has been able to work with, and through partner institutions to contribute to a significant quantitative and qualitative impact on housing problems of this magnitude.

Ideally, the evaluation would have liked to produce quantitative estimates of the direct and indirect impact of UN-Habitat on this huge and increasing problem. However, an in-depth review of UN-Habitat's reporting systems and data sources, found that it would not be possible to aggregate the effects of all of UN-Habitat's interventions. Data was not collected consistently in all countries and projects, and it was not even possible to determine the total number of projects in some countries. Despite these limitations, the evaluation was able to identify quantitative outcome estimates in a few countries and these were used to estimate to the potential scale of UN-Habitat's direct and indirect impacts (Table 5).

### The stages of the evaluation

The evaluation used a design consisting of six stages, which is summarized in Figure 5.

#### Planning and evaluation design phase

**Stage 1: Defining and operationalizing the key evaluation questions.** It is essential that an evaluation is "demand driven" (responding to the key concerns of stakeholders) and not "supply" driven (adopting a preferred methodology before determining if it is appropriate). Consequently, meetings and interviews

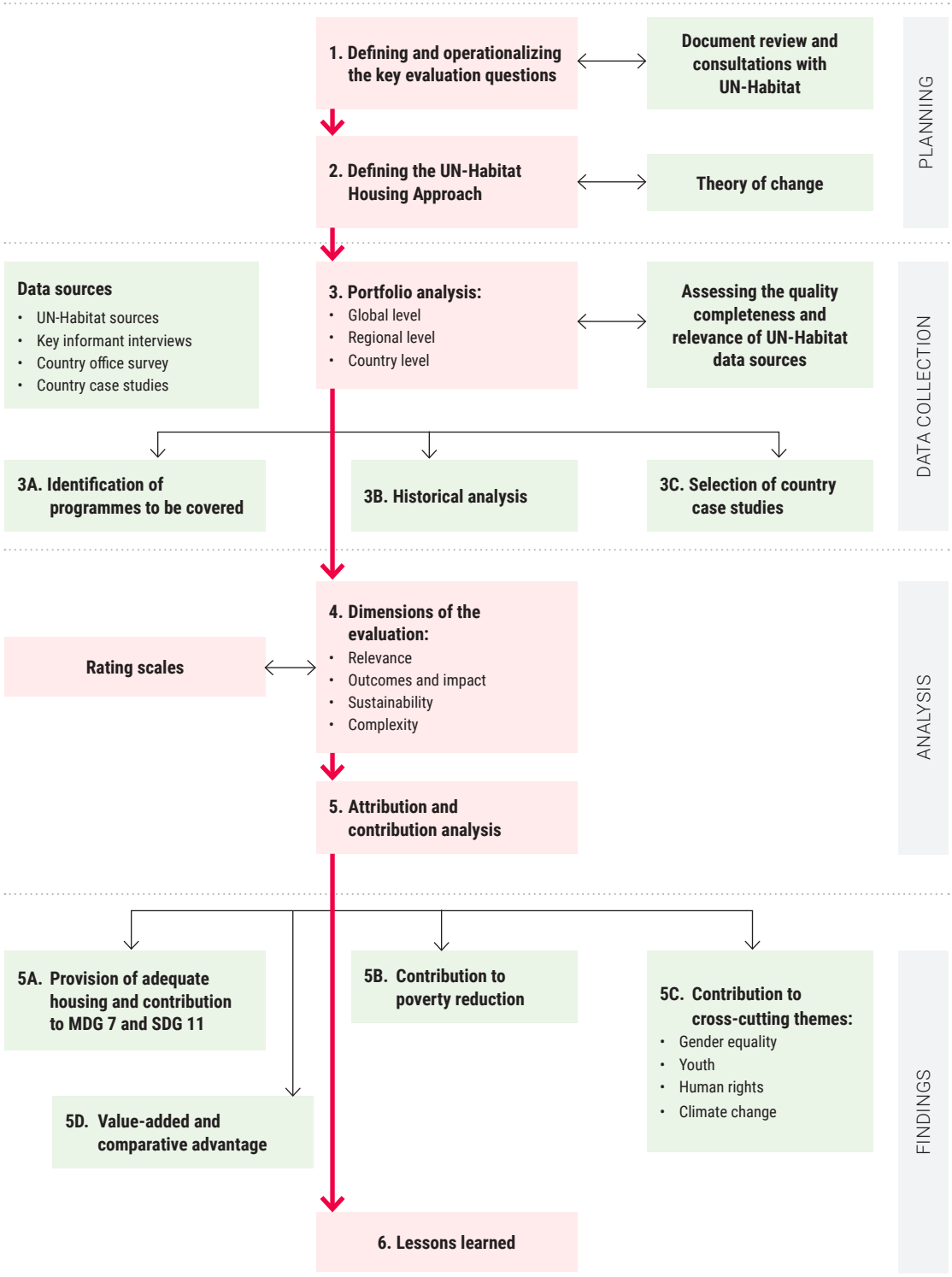
were conducted with stakeholders, and key publications were reviewed, to clarify the key questions to be addressed and to understand the key decisions to which the evaluation would contribute.

#### Stage 2: Defining the UN-Habitat Housing Approach.

Despite the existence of a number of influential UN-Habitat publications on housing and urban development, it became clear that there was no definitive, and widely accepted definition of the Housing Approach. Consequently, the Evaluation Team synthesized a wide range of UN-Habitat sources, including the country case studies, to construct a Housing Approach Framework that could be used to provide consistent assessment criteria for the evaluation across countries and regions. Chapter 3 identifies 3 dimensions of the UN-Habitat activities that were combined to define the housing approach framework used in the evaluation. This combines a set of programme inputs which combine to produce strategic and operational outcomes. The three dimensions were:

- **Dimension 1:** Five programme **inputs** [advocacy, knowledge management, policy advice, technical assistance and capacity development, and supporting implementation of adequate housing and slum upgrading). *Three additional indicators were included, in order to assess the contribution of the housing approach to broader development objectives: integration of housing with other UN-Habitat programs, attention to cross cutting themes (gender, youth and climate change), and sustainability of the housing programs.*
- **Dimension 2: Strategic outcomes** which combine pro-poor housing policies, and poverty reduction and cross-cutting issues,
- **Dimension 3: Operational outcomes** comprising seven indicators of adequate standards of housing provision.

Figure 5: The evaluation design





While there is some overlap between the **strategic outcome criteria** used in dimension 2 and the **operational outcome criteria** used in dimension 3, it is useful to separate the two dimensions as each draws on different combinations of the UN-Habitat inputs. For example, while the *strategic outcomes* are largely achieved through advocacy and policy advice, often supported by UN-Habitat publications and statistical data (knowledge management), operational outcomes are based on technical assistance, capacity development and operational support to the implementation of adequate housing and slum upgrading programmes and projects.

These criteria were used to rate and compare housing programme performance at the country, regional and global levels (see Chapter 6). The evaluation recognizes that country programmes must adapt to national and regional contexts and priorities and to available resources, and it is not expected that all programmes should seek to achieve all of the housing approach criteria with the same level of resources and in the same way. The goal of the evaluation was to present an objective comparison of how the Housing Approach is applied in different contexts, so that UN-Habitat policy makers and partners can assess the findings and decide the policy implications.

The Housing Approach Framework is based on the Theory of Change (Figure 4) developed for this evaluation, and which explains the processes through which UN-Habitat seeks to achieve the intended outputs, outcomes and impacts.

## Data Collection phase

**Stage 3: A portfolio analysis framework** was developed to define the kinds of information to be collected at the global, regional and country levels<sup>17</sup>. The logic of the approach is to ensure that, as far as possible, the country case study countries are selected to be broadly representative of countries in the respective regions.

An important first step was to define the kinds of programmes to be included in the analysis. This proved to be challenging as many UN-Habitat projects that had important housing components were classified in the PAAS under a different programme category (e.g. emergency programmes and land regulation). Consequently, a challenge for the evaluation was to use judgment to ensure that important housing-related interventions were not excluded.

The theory of change was also used to inform the data collection strategy, and as far as possible, data was collected for each cell in Figure 4.

The following data sources were used and combined to permit the use of *triangulation* to increase reliability of the data. This proved to be important given limitations on data quality, consistency and availability:

- Desk review of UN-Habitat publications and data bases, particularly PAAS.
- Key informant interviews were conducted with representatives from UN-Habitat, partners and academics.
- A questionnaire was sent to 51 purposively selected country offices (COs) through the respective regional offices (ROs).
- Two in-country case studies (Mexico and Zambia) which involved interviews, project visits and reviews of country office programme/project documentation, which identified a number of project documents not available within UN-Habitat's formal reporting systems<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> For more detail on the Portfolio Analysis approach see the Methodology Note prepared for this evaluation

<sup>18</sup> A third planned visit to an Arab States country had to be cancelled due to security and logistical reasons.

## Analysis phase

**Stage 4: *The dimensions of the evaluation:*** The analysis was organized around four main themes:

- The *relevance* of different projects and programmes to the achievement of the outcomes and impacts defined in the theory of change and the housing approach framework
- Estimating the *housing approach outcomes and impacts* of country programmes and projects.
- Assessing the potential *sustainability* of projects and programmes.
- Assessing how well programmes and projects address the *complexity* of the country and regional environments within which they operate.

## Rating performance on the housing approach criteria

A goal of the evaluation was to assess and compare implementation and outcomes of the UN-Habitat housing approach at the country, regional and global levels. Comparisons were made for each of the four questions included in the Terms of Reference (see previous paragraph). Recognizing that each country is unique and that there are systematic differences between regions and sub-regions, the evaluation included detailed case studies on 10 countries in the 4 major regions in which UN-Habitat is working: Zambia, Mozambique, Somalia (Africa region); Egypt, Jordan, Iraq (Arab States region); Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Mongolia (Asia and the Pacific region); and Mexico (Latin America and the Caribbean region). These case studies were discussed in detail in the 4 regional reports (and the Zambia case study), which also discussed unique regional patterns deriving both from the characteristics of each country and the unique regional strategies developed UN-Habitat.

However, in order to make comparisons among regions it was necessary to develop a standard metric on which comparisons could be based. After reviewing

different methodological options, the evaluation team decided to develop a rating system similar to the widely used Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) evaluation system, which has been adapted and used by most UN agencies and regional development banks. This uses a set of 5-point scales in which a rating of "1" indicates the poorest or weakest assessment, "3" indicates an average (satisfactory) score and "5" indicates the highest or best score. The meaning of the rating varies according to the nature of the indicator/dimension being assessed. Table 3 provides two examples of how the scales were applied to illustrate the slight differences in the wording of the definitions. Each application of the scales was conducted independently by at least two members of the three-person team and scores were compared and adjustments were made if there were differences in the scores. It is fully recognized that some professional judgment is required to interpret the meaning of terms such as "significant" and "very significant" as most of the UN-Habitat reports, on which most of the ratings were based, did not include precise quantitative figures on, for example, how much the affordable housing stock had been increased, how much poverty had been reduced. In the relatively few cases where numerical data was available, it was incorporated into the ratings (see Table 6).

The evaluation team fully recognizes that these are *ordinal* scales (where each rating value is higher than the next, but it cannot be assumed that the intervals are equal), and not *interval* scales (where the intervals are equal). Consequently, it is not possible to use any statistical tools such as the calculations of means, standard deviations, etc. But it is generally agreed among researchers and evaluators that rating scales (non-parametric statistics) are often the best option for comparative analysis when rigorous quantitative analysis is not possible<sup>19</sup>. However, the ratings should be used together with the in-depth country and regional data presented in the different reports.

19 For a review of quantitative and qualitative methods for data analysis see Bamberger and Mabry (2020) RealWorld Evaluation Chapters 12,12 and 16.

**Table 3: The application of the ratings scales: two examples**

How the ratings were applied for two different sets of indicators (dimensions)

Rating <sup>3</sup>	Implementation of the 5 main UN-Habitat activities <sup>1</sup>	Objectives of poverty reduction and cross-cutting issues <sup>2</sup>
1	Very limited use of this activity and/or poorly implemented	No impact on supply of affordable housing, social inclusion of marginal groups, climate change, etc.
2	Limited use of this activity and/or weak implementation	Very limited impact supply of affordable housing, etc.
3	Significant use of this activity and satisfactory implementation	Significant impact on supply of affordable housing, etc.
4	Extensive use of this activity and effectively implemented	Very significant impact on supply of affordable housing, etc.
5	Very extensive use of this activity and very effectively implemented	Major impact on supply of affordable housing, etc.

**Notes:**

- The 5 activities: Advocacy, Policy advice, Knowledge management, Capacity development/ technical assistance and Implementation support. Each activity is rated separately
- The 5 objectives: Increased housing affordability, focusing on low-income groups; Improved access to affordable economic resources and services for low-income households; improved social inclusion and integration at city level; targeted programs for female-headed households, the elderly and youth; and climate-change housing strategies and programmes.
- In different parts of the report ratings were conducted at the country level (country case studies), regional level (regional reports) and global level (global report)

**Table 4: Ratings analysis included in Synthesis and Global Report**

Dimension	Where defined		Table where ratings presented [Synthesis report unless indicated]	
	Synthesis Report	Global Report	Summary rating	Detailed disaggregated rating
1. Program inputs/ activities [Dimension 1]	Table 1		Table 5	
2. Contribution to broader development goals	Table 1			Table 7
3. Strategic and Operational outcomes [Dimensions 2 and 3]	Table 2		Table 6	Table 7
4. Poverty reduction and cross-cutting issues	Table 8			Table 8
5. Adequacy of UN-Habitat M&E systems		Table 9		Table 9 [Global]
6. Process and outcome indicators of adequate housing		Table 10		Table 10 [Global]
7. Structural process and outcome indicators of poverty reduction		Table 11		Table 11 [Global]
8. Sustainability of programme achievements		Table 12		Table 12 [Global]

Table 4 lists all of the different kinds of ratings that were conducted and which are reported in Chapter 6 of the present report or in Chapter 6 of the Global Report. Both of these reports draw on more detailed analysis. included in the regional reports.

**Stage 5: Assessing programme outcomes and impacts:  
Attribution and contribution analysis:**

It was not possible to assess outcomes and impacts using conventional *experimental* (e.g. randomized control trials), or quasi-experimental (selection of comparison groups not affected by a particular project) for several reasons including: budget and time

constraints and lack of information needed to select comparison groups. However, the main reason for not using these designs was that most UN-Habitat projects and programmes are conducted in collaboration with one or more other agencies (e.g. government, donors, civil society) so that a conventional evaluation design would not be able to assess the relative contribution of UN-Habitat compared to other partners. The original plan was to use a *contribution analysis* framework, but this would have required the availability of more detailed documentation on the design, implementation and outcomes of each project than was available from UN-Habitat sources, or that could be collected. Consequently, most of the analysis was based on a somewhat less rigorous variation defined as *value-*

*added analysis.* This combines the theory of change, the rating scales and the other data sources to obtain the best judgmental estimate of UN-Habitat's contribution.

This approach was used to assess the 3 main areas of focus:

- Contribution to the provision of adequate housing and contribution to SDG-10.
- Contribution to poverty reduction
- Contribution to cross-cutting themes (gender equality, youth, human rights and climate change)

**Impact on Affordable Housing** was included in the broader analysis of the impact on adequate housing. However, due to limited data availability, many widely-used indicators such as those related to public housing assistance, homelessness, or proportion on income dedicated to housing expenditure could not be used.

**Impact on poverty reduction** was assessed through a selection of widely used indicators, and included selected SDG 1 indicators, and a series of adequate housing criteria acknowledged to contribute to poverty reduction. However, it was not possible to incorporate any comparison groups into the analysis, so it was not possible to rigorously assess the degree to which the reported changes in these criteria could be attributed to UN-Habitat.

### Stage 6: Lessons learned

All of the sources of analysis, and particular the regional reports and country case studies were combined with key informant interviews to identify the lessons learned from the evaluation. The lessons are summarized in Chapter 7 of this report and presented in more detailed in Chapter 6 of the Global Report and in the regional reports.

## Innovative elements of the evaluation methodology

The methodology incorporated some innovative elements, including complexity-responsive evaluation, an expanded portfolio analysis framework, an expanded theory of change and value-added analysis (an adaptation of contribution analysis tailored to the limited data availability). While the ability to fully apply some of these methodologies was limited by the time and data constraints in this evaluation, recommendations were developed (see Chapter 8) on how these methodologies could be applied in future UN-Habitat evaluations.

### Limitations of the Evaluation

The evaluation faced two major limitations in estimating the Housing Approach achievements and impacts: 1) Limited aggregation of quantitative data on the Housing Approach, and 2) Limited indicators to quantify impact on adequate housing. It is very difficult to estimate the scale and intensity of impact of the Housing Approach on adequate housing and poverty reduction. Most UN-Habitat monitoring data only cover structural indicators at the policy level, and do not capture the total numbers of people supported at the country, regional or global level.

In order to complement available UN-Habitat sources, a questionnaire was sent to 51 Country Offices (COs) through the respective Regional Offices (ROs). Responses were received from only fifteen (15) COs. While this number is too small to be able to generalize to all countries, it did include almost all of the countries included in the sample of 10 countries selected from the four regions for more in-depth analysis.

Limited data availability, time and resources did not permit the application of more rigorous evaluation designs such as counterfactual analysis and quasi-experimental designs. However, Chapter 8 recommends that UN-Habitat should gradually introduce more rigorous evaluations in a representative sample of countries.

## 6. THE EVALUATION FINDINGS

### 6.1 Data limitations for the estimation of outcomes and impacts

While UN-Habitat collects many kinds of data on its country projects and programmes and its regional and global policy, advocacy, activities and interventions, the quality, coverage and comparability of data collected at the country programme is not consistent. Consequently, it is not possible to compare and combine data from different projects or countries to obtain aggregate estimates of the numbers of people affected by UN-Habitat interventions. In general, the data is more complete and reliable for regional and global activities (such numbers of people attending conferences, the numbers of publications and how many people receive each one, or the number of cities covered by prosperous cities initiative. However, in most cases this data only covers outputs (products) and does not estimate the impacts of these products. On the other hand, the information is much less complete, consistent and comparable at the country programme level. Also, to date, no rigorous impact evaluations have been conducted.

One of the main reasons for the data limitations is resource constraints as many UN-Habitat country offices have very limited financial and staff resources, and fund-raising and project implementation receive priority over data collection, monitoring, and reporting. Also, for many donor-funded projects, UN-Habitat is required to follow the donor's reporting system. So, while the data collection systems have been defined and are in place, compliance with these requirements is not taken as a priority.

These factors, many of which are beyond the control of UN-Habitat, seriously constrained the scope and depth of the present evaluation. Performance indicators (outputs, outcomes and impacts) could not be systematically compared between projects, countries, regions and over time. There is also a potential under-representation of housing activities in the UN-Habitat reporting systems, as many programmes and projects that include housing-related objectives, expected accomplishments (EAs) and activities are reported under a different thematic classification or budget category in PAAS. Consequently, the housing activities are difficult to identify. This was clearly illustrated in the analysis of housing-related projects. Furthermore, the country case studies identified a number of housing activities that did not appear in PAAS and other reporting systems, and often the small size of country offices meant that resources were not available for effective programme monitoring and documentation.

It is also difficult to attribute observed changes effects to UN-Habitat because scale and temporality of the agency's programmes on one side and indicators on the other are often inconsistent. For example, with a few exceptions such as SDG-11, in many countries most SDGs are only tracked at the national level while most UN-Habitat programmes operate at the local level.

Table 5, which summarizes the available information on the five key dimensions of the housing approach, shows that while reasonably complete information is available on some outputs, UN-Habitat does not currently have the information needed to estimate its overall outcomes and impacts on affordable and adequate housing, particularly on its contribution to housing for low-income and vulnerable groups.

## 6.2 Responding to the questions in the terms of reference

### Question 1: To what extent can identified changes in adequate and affordable housing and poverty reduction be attributed to UN-Habitat's Housing Approach? [See Table 3]

UN-Habitat's major contribution to the housing sector at the global, regional and country level is widely acknowledged among housing stakeholders. It is seen as a leader in knowledge creation and dissemination on housing issues; as a consistent advocate for the right to adequate housing; as a promoter of transforming the lives of slum dwellers; and for its focus on the cross-cutting issues of gender equality, youth and climate change. UN-Habitat's critical role as a convener of global, regional and national events on housing and urban development is also widely appreciated; and its policy advice, technical assistance and capacity building support is likewise highly valued.

UN-Habitat's contribution to improved supply and quality of adequate and affordable housing is achieved through an integrated multi-level strategy that combines knowledge management, advocacy, policy advice, technical assistance and capacity development, and direct support to programme/project implementation. The interaction among these different components, which varies from region to region and one country to another, are represented in the Theory of Change (see Chapter 3). The evaluation findings are summarized below and in Table 5 and Table 6:

- **Knowledge Management:** UN-Habitat has produced numerous normative products, including flagship publications, report series, fact sheets, guides, tools,

etc. (e.g. over 100 thematic reports at global, regional and country level; 52 publications on housing rights; 30 national housing profiles). Many of the knowledge products have informed evidence advocacy.

- **Advocacy:** A number of significant outcomes and impacts have resulted from UN-Habitat's advocacy activities (e.g. World Urban Forums have drawn thousands of participants; 167 countries have adopted the New Urban Agenda; the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (PSUP) has reached out to 10.45 million people living in 39 ACP countries and 190 cities). The advocacy activities have frequently led to requests from national governments for policy advice and technical assistance and/or capacity building support.
- **Policy Advice:** Improved housing policy and strategy frameworks have been developed and adopted in many countries as a result of policy advice from UN-Habitat (e.g. 34 national housing policies; 21 national slum upgrading and prevention policies/ or strategies; 32 citywide slum upgrading and prevention strategies).
- **Technical Assistance and Capacity Building:** Many regional, national and local authorities and other HAPs have benefitted from UN-Habitat technical assistance and capacity building support to improve housing policies, strategies and programmes (e.g. League of Arab States to develop the *Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2030*; to assist Governments to develop 12 national and five local housing programmes; and 200 ministry, local government, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations and private sector members have been trained on the PSUP approach). In Ethiopia, 76 mayors, city managers and academics from 20 cities were trained on sustainable urbanization and housing policies.

**Table 5: Summary assessment of outputs and outcomes of the Housing Approach**

Dimension	Main figures available	Estimated outcomes
1. Policy advice <i>Source: Strategic plan results framework</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 34 national housing policies</li> <li>● 21 national slums upgrading and prevention policies or strategies</li> <li>● 32 citywide slums upgrading and prevention strategies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● These are mainly outputs, rather than outcomes</li> </ul>
2. Advocacy <i>Source: Global level activity reports</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 167 countries adopted the NUA</li> <li>● 51 ACP countries endorsed the tripartite declaration on Slums promoted by PSUP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Positive results on endorsement of global housing frameworks</li> <li>● Limited follow-up political commitment at country level</li> </ul>
3. Knowledge management <i>Source: Global level activity reports and PSUP reports</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 30 national housing sector profiles</li> <li>● 74 country neighbourhood scale profiles on slums</li> <li>● 100+ thematic reports at global, regional and country level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Broad and varied use and audiences for the publications</li> <li>● Some very important publications at country level</li> </ul>
4A. Technical support <i>Source: Global level activity reports</i>	12 national and 5 local housing programmes elaboration supported	Significantly higher number of national housing programmes implemented after UN-Habitat policy and technical support
4B. Capacity development <i>Source: Global level activity reports and PSUP reports</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● No available global level data on capacity building on housing</li> <li>● 200 ministry, local government, NGO, CBO and private sector trained on PSUP approach</li> </ul>	Significantly more housing stakeholders reached through direct capacity building support

**Note on data sources:**

The analysis was constrained by the limited data availability and the fact that it is often not possible to aggregate data from different sources. Data issues are discussed earlier in this chapter in Section 6A

*Source: Consultants based on compilation of available UN-Habitat publications and data bases.*

**Implementation:** UN-Habitat delivers operational implementation support at the country level through a combination of: i) pilot projects; ii) post-crisis recovery and reconstruction projects; iii) slum upgrading and prevention interventions; and iv) support to public housing programmes. Together these have resulted in very significant outputs, outcomes and impacts – although it is usually not possible to quantify them precisely. For example, Table 6 shows that in the Asia and Pacific Region, UN-Habitat was involved in programmes that constructed a total of one million

housing units through the “People’s Process”; secure tenure was achieved for over 800,000 slum dwellers, and improved living conditions were provided for over 500,000 slum dwellers through the PSUP. Also, in the Arab Region, UN-Habitat is supporting the Government of Bahrain to implement large-scale housing programmes to meet the needs of over 60,000 families and the construction of over 40,000 housing units and associated services; and it was involved in the planning, development and implementation of large refugee housing programmes.

**Table 6: Examples of UN-Habitat shelter implementation programmes in Africa, the Arab States and Asia/Pacific which when aggregated have a significant quantitative impact**

Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Somalia: 5,500 houses constructed, providing improved living standards for 36,000 beneficiaries.</li> <li>● Mozambique: Technical assistance to reconstruction of 300 houses affected by cyclone in two districts.</li> <li>● South Sudan: up to 600 houses and minimum urban services provided for returnee families.</li> <li>● South Sudan: 12,000 vulnerable residents in Wau provided with access to safe piped water supply, sanitation, and means of livelihood.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Iraq: over 3,500 war-damaged houses and related basic infrastructure in key liberated areas.</li> <li>● Syria: The living conditions of 228,700 individuals, including refugees, were improved.</li> <li>● Syria: 657 families received secure land tenure by 2014.</li> <li>● Syria: Gender sensitive durable shelter units housed 642 individuals in two sites.</li> <li>● Egypt: Clean water provision for 180,000 vulnerable inhabitants in Upper Egypt.</li> <li>● Egypt: 115,000 vulnerable inhabitants with access to water and sanitation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 1 million housing units constructed through the 'People's Process'.</li> <li>● 500,000 people have benefitted from the improved living conditions through the PSUP</li> <li>● 98,225 slum dwellers have benefitted from improved water and sanitation.</li> <li>● In aggregate some 800,000 families have improved security of tenure through the PSUP.</li> <li>● Pakistan: 23,000 households supported in 2012 post-flood reconstruction.</li> </ul>

Source: UN-Habitat reports

Additionally, slum upgrading projects implemented under UN-Habitat's PSUP that have mainly focused on increasing tenure security and access to improved water and sanitation, have also positively impacted the lives of thousands of slum dwellers. However, in many cases available documentation does not permit a precise assessment of the significance or nature of UN-Habitat's involvement.

Furthermore, adequate and affordable housing requires improvements on seven dimensions (see Table 2), and most project data only refers to a single dimension (such as access to water or secure tenure), so it is not possible to assess the overall impact on housing conditions. However, in most cases they did contribute to the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing. Table 6 indicates UN-Habitat's role in contributing to outputs and outcomes for large numbers of beneficiaries through the cumulative effects of multiple relatively small implementation projects in Asia, the Arab States and Africa. However, it is not possible to aggregate the project numbers by country as UN-Habitat had different roles in different projects. Furthermore, the available documentation also makes it difficult to determine the scope and focus of UN-Habitat's role in different projects and hence to assess the scale of their influence.

## Question 2: To what extent has UN-Habitat influenced political commitment to adequate housing at global, regional and country levels?

Global advocacy events and conferences and related activities have raised awareness and knowledge of many governments about adequate housing issues and have motivated the endorsement of several global and regional declarations and frameworks (e.g. the Global Housing Strategy to the Year 2025 (GHS 2025), NUA, Kigali Declaration, etc.). In some countries the UN-Habitat Housing Approach has proven to have significant impacts on the adoption of housing and slum upgrading and prevention policies consistent with global housing frameworks, which are acknowledged as a pre-condition for the achievement of adequate housing rights and development of pro-poor housing programmes. However, in others UN-Habitat did not have sufficient resources or high-level influence for follow-through on the sensitization and commitments generated by the conferences and other advocacy events.

The participation of national authorities in global and regional events (e.g. Habitat III Conference,



WUFs, PSUP Tripartite Conferences) has fostered follow-up discussions of adequate housing and slum upgrading issues at country level, and has in several cases influenced the positioning of country housing stakeholders (e.g. the multi-stakeholder National Habitat Committee (NHC) in Zambia). The case studies show that this influence evolves slowly over time, and some country-level impacts identified are attributed to the involvement of key stakeholders and staff at Habitat events (e.g., Mexico City Human Rights declaration).

There is convincing evidence that the Housing Approach has significantly contributed to the creation of enabling policy frameworks for the development of housing strategies and programmes. For example, UN-Habitat has strengthened Cameroon's capacity on slum upgrading, enabling the Government to launch projects in about 5 cities on 1,700 hectares for a total population of 250,000. However, the agency has limited influence on the adoption and implementation of these frameworks (e.g. the Housing Policy and Strategy for Mozambique) and the assessment of the long-term impacts of the policies that have been adopted is a complex process.

### **Support to housing programmes implementation**

The Housing Approach has provided direct and indirect support to numerous pilot projects (e.g. rental subsidy scheme in Somalia; construction of climate resilient houses in Rwanda; women's housing projects in Iraq). While these projects are an important operational part of the Housing Approach, the number of people directly benefiting from the implementation of pilot projects is often quite limited (typically a few dozen households). The case studies showed that in many cases the potential demonstration effect of the pilot projects has been reduced due to the absence of systematic monitoring and documentation of lessons learned and potential impacts. If these interventions are well-designed and monitored, they can make a valuable contribution as an advocacy tool, as they can demonstrate and promote innovative approaches and influence policy and regulatory reforms.

In most countries UN-Habitat has only a limited direct influence on the implementation of national housing programmes through the Housing Approach. However, skills and capacities introduced by UN-Habitat can have a significant impact on the improvement of housing

policies and strategies, especially at the first steps of the housing reforms process. In this regard the Housing Approach supports the quality of the new housing framework, but there is still little evidence of the impact on housing rights.

### **Knowledge management as a tool for advocacy and policy reform**

Knowledge products (including analytical reports, housing profiles and guides) have been a key source of information for many stakeholders, helping to build knowledge and know-how on housing issues, especially relating to low-income, vulnerable and marginalized populations. These normative products have mainly been used to promote knowledge and evidenced-based advocacy to support political commitment to housing reforms. While it is difficult to assess how these products have contributed to the achievement of adequate housing rights, they have certainly encouraged further actions by different stakeholders. Evidence of this impact is strong, especially on the advocacy influence of the global frameworks and events. Indeed, recent housing policies of several countries (e.g. Egypt, Zambia) have been influenced by the GHS 2025.

### **Question 3: To what extent has UN-Habitat created better opportunities to improve the living standards of poor people and ensure their housing rights?**

There is evidence that UN-Habitat housing interventions contribute to improved living conditions on multiple dimensions of poverty. The most significant contributions are usually direct housing interventions such as in the case of post-disaster intervention, refugee settlements and improvement in slums. UN-Habitat is a recognized leader in these areas with extensive on-the-ground experience, especially through the triple nexus of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding (HDP) efforts.

The slum upgrading interventions produce significant impacts on access to adequate housing for low-income urban populations, even in cases where shelter improvement is not always the central objective. Globally, through the PSUP, over 500,000 people have benefited from improved living conditions. Water and sanitation

improvements alone have benefitted 98,225 slum dwellers; and an additional 800,000 have improved security of tenure.

Most direct impacts on improvement of living conditions have been achieved in Africa through the PSUP, as well as the Asia and Pacific region, where the regional People's Process approach enabled the construction of more than 1 million housing units, especially in the contexts of post disaster interventions, such as response to the 2010 floods in Pakistan (32,000 households supported). The greatest impact is likely to be achieved at the process level by the adoption of pro-poor housing policies, however these frameworks often fail to address the poorest. There are a number of contributing factors. Probably the most important issue is affordability, but in many countries, there are other issues such as the focus of low-income housing policies and programmes on the formal sector. In other countries there may be pressures to move informal settlements from prime urban land, or some of the most vulnerable groups (e.g. women, youth, IDPs, refugee returnees) may be excluded due to lack of documentation. Also, many housing programmes can have unintended negative consequences for the poorest and most vulnerable groups. For example, slum upgrading projects that provide access to water and sanitation and other services, will increase the value of land and many poor families may leave the project, either because they are offered an attractive amount of cash (but which is far below the market value of the land), they are forced to leave due to threats or violence, or because of gentrification (higher-income groups moving into low-income neighbourhoods, increasing the demand for housing and driving up prices).

However, despite these challenges, In terms of outcomes, UN-Habitat housing interventions clearly contribute to poverty reduction, especially on access to basic services, security of tenure and, increasingly, improved livelihoods (in many cases through training and skills upgrading of youth).

#### Question 4: How have cross-cutting issues such as gender, youth and climate change been impacted by UN-Habitat's Housing Approach?

Gender, Youth and climate change are mainstreamed and referenced in most concept notes and many project documents. Many key reports and knowledge products developed at country, regional or global level address the link between housing and these cross-cutting issues, and a few Regional and Country Offices have developed specific expertise on some of the cross-cutting issues (Climate0change induced natural disaster risk reduction (DRR) and urban resilience in Southern Africa; Climate Change in South Asia; Gender-sensitive durable shelter support in Iraq), but there is little evidence that UN-Habitat has been a consistent and global leader on most of these issues. At global level, UN-Habitat was earlier recognized for its expertise of the housing issues related to indigenous populations, but this leadership has declined over the past few years with the decrease of forced eviction monitoring and advocacy interventions after the dissolution of the Advisory Group on Forced Evictions (AGFE) that gathered scarce information, from the field and from the affected people.

### 6.3 Relevance and sustainability

#### Relevance of the housing approach [see Global Report Chapter 6.A for more detail]

The evaluation concluded that while UN-Habitat's housing approach has evolved over the years, it still remains highly relevant to urban development as access to adequate housing for all in an urbanizing world continues to be a major challenge – for developing countries in particular.

#### Sustainability of the housing policies and operational interventions [see Global Report Chapter 6 for more detail]

The analysis found that the way in which knowledge management and capacity development have been implemented are conducive the sustainability of these interventions. However, UN-Habitat has much less control over the long-term political and financial

commitment required to ensure the sustainability of the housing approach. However, there is only limited documentation available on the sustainability of operational implementations. These are more difficult to sustain as they are influenced by a broad range of macro-level factors and policy changes over which UN-Habitat has very little influence.

## 6.4 Regional differences

The evaluation focused on four regions, each with different socio-economic conditions, cultural and political traditions; and consequently, UN-Habitat strategies are adapted to these different conditions. The evaluation recognizes the unique characteristics of each region, as well as sub-regions, and describes how UN-Habitat programmes and policies are adapted to these regional differences. Given the data limitations (discussed earlier), the comparative analysis at the regional level is mainly based on 5 point scales for rating UN-Habitat performance on the 3 sets of criteria of the housing approach discussed in Chapter 3 (programme inputs, strategic outputs and operational outputs), complemented by key informant interviews and available administrative reports and publications. The ratings draw on the 10 country case studies on: Zambia, Mozambique and Somalia (Africa Region); Iraq, Jordan and Egypt (Arab States); Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Mongolia (Asia and the Pacific); and Mexico (Latin America). The cases were complemented by key informant interviews and available regional and country level data. For logistical reasons it was only possible to conduct a case study in one country in Latin America, namely Mexico. While this was the most intensive of the country case studies, because two members of the evaluation team were able to spend a total of more than 3 weeks in-country, Mexico, which is a higher middle-income country cannot be considered representative of the whole region (which also includes many very poor countries). Consequently, while the analysis for the other 3 regions can be considered broadly representative of different countries, for Latin America the tables indicate that the analysis only refers to Mexico<sup>20</sup>.

Most of the comparative regional analysis is based on 5-point rating scales, similar to the widely used OECD/DAC evaluation framework. The rating methodology is described in Chapter 5.C. Due to space considerations, it is only possible to provide a brief summary of regional differences in the Synthesis report. Table 4 indicates where more detailed analysis on the regional differences can be found in the Global and regional reports.

### Regional comparisons of the implementation of the housing approach

Table 7 shows that when the five key dimensions of the housing approach are combined, Africa and the Arab States both score "more than satisfactory", while Asia is "satisfactory", and Latin America is "less than satisfactory". A similar pattern is found for treatment of the 5 cross-cutting issues. Both Africa and the Arab States achieve a good implementation rating on advocacy and policy advice, but only satisfactory on the other 3 dimensions (knowledge management, technical assistance/ capacity development and implementation support). UN-Habitat's important role in convening regional and international conferences is highly valued and considered an important source of policy advice. Particularly in the Arab States, UN-Habitat has made an important contribution in the formulation of urban policies and housing strategies, in part because the rapid urbanization is relatively recent and UN-Habitat was able to share its experience from other regions with a longer experience with rapid urban growth and its consequences for shelter programmes.

Africa and Latin America, have slightly lower ratings on cross-cutting issues. While most of these issues are mentioned in concept notes and other project documents, they have generally not been effectively addressed through implementation. Youth have received less attention compared with the other cross-cutting issues of gender equality, human rights and climate change — but this appears to be being addressed in Africa and the Arab States.

20 It should be noted that due to the non-availability of key informants from other countries in the region, and the lack of comparative data, the analysis was mainly based on the Mexico case study.

**Table 7: Regional comparisons on the implementation of the housing approach**

	Ratings				
	Global	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Latin America
Average score for the 5 key dimensions <sup>1</sup>	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.0	2.4
Average score for the 5 cross-cutting issues <sup>2</sup>	2.9	2.8	3.0	3.0	2.3
Average score all 8 dimensions	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.1	2.5
Ratings: 1 = very low implementation, 2 = low, 3 = satisfactory, 4 = good implementation, 5 = very good implementation					

**Notes:**

1 **Key dimensions:** advocacy, policy advice, knowledge management, technical assistance and capacity development, and implementation support

2 **Cross cutting issues:** gender, youth, human rights and climate change

Source: *Evaluation Consultants*

When regions are compared on all eight dimensions (including integration and coordination with other UN-Habitat programmes and partner agencies; cross-cutting issues and promoting programme and policy sustainability), there is only a small difference between Africa, the Arab States and Asia and the Pacific, with each one receiving a “more than satisfactory” rating. However, Mexico received a significantly lower overall rating of “less than satisfactory”. The Mexico programme has a very small permanent staff and budget, and many of the activities are demand driven, responding to requests from national and municipal agencies, and there is no defined country programme strategy.

A more detailed breakdown is given in Table 9, which presents separate analysis for each of the eight dimensions of adequate housing.

### Regional comparisons of the achievements and impacts of the housing approach at the strategic and operational levels

Table 10 compares the regions in terms of their effectiveness in achieving the strategic and operational level adequate housing indicators. With respect to the strategic indicators there are no significant differences between Africa, the Arab States and Asia and the Pacific, all of which rate “more than satisfactory”. In contrast, Mexico rates very low. With respect to operational achievements, Asia and the Pacific is rated more than satisfactory, while Africa and the Arab States are “slightly less than satisfactory”, and Latin America is rated “poor”.

A more detailed breakdown is given in Table 11 which presents separate analysis for the achievement of each of the 10 strategic criteria of adequate housing.

With respect to the operational criteria Asia again has the highest score being rated more than satisfactory, while Asia and the Arab States are very slightly less than satisfactory. Latin America/Mexico again has the lowest rating being “slightly better than poor”. The results confirm that Asia has always had a strong record in the implementation of the “Peoples’ Process” approach, which focuses on participatory, bottom-up slum and informal settlement improvement. Asia also has extensive experience with post-disaster reconstruction. Both Africa and the Arab States also have extensive experience with resettlement programmes for conflict-affected regions. However, all 3 regions have less experience with large-scale urban planning.

In Latin America, UN-Habitat has less experience at the operational level in recent activities, due in part to budget constraints which have meant that it was limited to small-scale pilot projects. Many of these made useful contributions to reducing the huge stock of unoccupied housing but did not have any significant follow-up or documentation and consequently only limited impact with respect to city and national housing policies.

**Table 8: Regional differences in achievement and impacts of strategic and operational levels of the Housing Approach**

	Ratings				
	Global	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Latin America
Average rating for all strategic level adequate housing criteria <sup>1</sup>	3.5	3.2	3.2	3.2	1.6
Average rating for strategic indicators of poverty reduction and cross-cutting issues <sup>2</sup>	3.3	3.0	2.8	3.0	1.9
Average rating for strategic level adequate housing indicators	3.4	3.1	3.0	3.1	1.7
Average rating for achievement and impacts of all operational adequate housing criteria <sup>3</sup>	2.9	2.9	2.9	3.3	2.3

Ratings: 1 = very low implementation, 2 = low, 3 = satisfactory, 4 = good implementation, 5 = very good implementation

**Notes:**

- Strategic level adequate housing approach indicators:** 1) increased access to adequate housing; 2) Diversification of adequate housing solutions; 3) Support for advocacy groups; 4) Adequate housing for crisis affected groups; and 5) Improved living conditions in existing slums and informal settlements.
- Strategic level poverty reduction and cross-cutting issues indicators:** 1) Increased housing affordability; 2) Improved access to economic resources, affordable goods and services for low-income populations; 3) Improved social inclusion and integration at city level; 4) Targeted programmes for female headed households; 5) Climate change responsive housing strategies.
- Operational level adequate housing approach indicators:** 1) security of tenure; 2) availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure; 3) affordability; 4) habitability; 5) Accessibility; 6) location; and 7) cultural adequacy.

Source: Consultants

A more detailed breakdown is given in Table 9, which presents separate analysis for the achievement of each of the seven operational criteria of adequate housing.

**Table 9: Regional differences in the achievement of the dimensions of adequate housing**

	Global	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Latin America
1. Advocacy	4	4	4	3	2
2. Policy	3	4	4	3	3
3. Knowledge management	4	3	3	4	4
4. Technical assistance/ Capacity development	3	3	3	2	2
5. Implementation support	3	3	3	3	1
<b>Average score for the 5 key dimensions</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>2.4</b>
6. Integration and coordination					
6a <b>Integration</b> with other UN-Habitat country programmes	3	3	3	3	3
6b. <b>Consistency</b> with policies of country partners	3	3	3	3	2
<b>7. Addressing cross-cutting issues: average score for all cross-cutting issues</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>2.3</b>
a. Youth	2.5	2	3	2	2
b. Gender	3	3	3	3	2.5
c. Climate change	3	3	3	3.5	2
d. Human rights	3	3	3	3	2
8. Sustainability	2.5	3	3	3	2.5
<b>Overall Average</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>2.5</b>

Achievement Ratings: 1 = very low; 2 = low; 3 = average; 4 = high; 5 = very high

Source: Prepared by consultants based on 10 country case studies, key informant interviews and UN-Habitat and other regional publications.



Ongoing construction of proposed Majengo Empowerment Centre in Kilifi, Kenya 2016 © Julius Mwelu/ UN-Habitat

### More detailed regional comparisons of implementation and strategic and operational outcomes

With respect to achievement of the different dimensions of adequate housing, Table 9 shows that for all regions implementation support and technical assistance/ capacity development tend to be the weakest, while all regions achieve a satisfactory score on policy advocacy and knowledge management.

With respect to the achievement of strategic objectives, Table 10 shows that all regions except Mexico achieve

at least a satisfactory score on increasing access to adequate housing, and on contributing to adequate housing for crisis affected groups. These 3 regions also achieve at least satisfactory scores for contributing to improved conditions in existing slums and informal settlements.

Finally, Table 11 compares regional achievements with respect to operational objectives of adequate housing. Africa, the Arab States and Asia all achieve at least a satisfactory score contributing to the availability of service, materials, facilities and infrastructure; habitability, and accessibility. Mexico scores lower on most of these criteria.

**Table 10: Regional differences in the achievement of strategic objectives of adequate housing**

	Global	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Latin America
<b>Adequate housing</b>					
1. Increased access to adequate housing	3	4	4	3	2
2. Diversification of adequate housing solutions	4	2	3	3	1
3. Support for advocacy groups	3	3	3	2	3
4. Adequate housing for crisis affected groups	4	3	3	5	1
5. Improved livin/g conditions in existing slums and informal settlements	3.5	4	3	3	1
<b>Average for adequate housing</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>1.6</b>
<b>Poverty reduction and cross-cutting issues</b>					
6. Increased housing affordability for all focusing on low-income groups	4.5	3	3	2	2
7. Improved access to economic resources, affordable goods and services for low-income households	3	3	2	4	2
8. Improved social inclusion and integration at city level	2.5	3	3	4	2
9. Targeted programs for female-headed households, the elderly and youth	3	3	3	3	2
10. Climate change responsive housing strategies and programmes	2.5	3	3	2	1.5
Average for poverty and cross-cutting themes	3.3	3	2.8	3	1.9
<b>Total Average</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>1.7</b>

Notes on ratings and country coverage: See Table 7

**Table 11: Regional differences in the achievement/ impacts of the operational objectives of adequate housing**

	Global	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Latin America
1. Security of tenure	3.5	4	3	2	2
2. Availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure	3	3	3	4	2.5
3. Affordability	2	2	2	2	2
4. Habitability	3.5	3	4	4	2.5
5. Accessibility	3	3	3	3	2.5
6. Location	2.5	3	2	4	2
7. Cultural adequacy	2.5	2	3	4	2.5
<b>Average</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>2.3</b>

Notes on ratings and country coverage: See Table 7

## 7. LESSONS LEARNED

The evaluation, through the global and regional reports and country case studies, key informant interviews and survey of UN-Habitat country offices, has identified several important lessons.

### 7.1 Capitalizing on UN-Habitat's acknowledged strengths in areas of comparative advantage

UN-Habitat is widely recognized to have a number of areas of comparative advantage. It is important to fully capitalize on these strengths, taking into account regional and country variations and specific contexts:

1. Recognized as having a mandate within the UN system on housing and urban development.
2. Recognized expertise and achievements in the field of housing, including slum upgrading and affordable housing. These have enabled it to offer high quality technical assistance and capacity building support to national and local governments.
3. A recognized source of policy advice and promotor of innovative housing issues.
4. Convening power to organize regional and global conferences on topics relating to housing. Some of these conferences have played a vital advocacy and policy influencing role in the formulation and updating of key housing global frameworks (e.g. NUA, GHS).
5. A leader in knowledge management on housing and related areas. UN-Habitat has published many key publications or housing related topics which are widely consulted by policy makers.
6. A leading authority and promotor of housing rights and pro-poor housing policies and strategies, with extensive experience working in slums and informal settlements.
7. Expertise in post-disaster recovery and reconstruction. In contrast to many agencies that only focus on short-term emergency relief, UN-Habitat is able to take the wider view embodied in the "relief to development" continuum combined with its urban expertise.
8. Post-crisis responses are contexts where UN-Habitat is able to achieve greater numerical impact in terms of improving the living conditions of vulnerable and marginalized groups. This represents a significant contribution to promoting housing rights for poor and vulnerable groups.
9. UN-Habitat's long-term presence in a region and particular countries helps build relations and trust with key partners, strengthens credibility and enables it to operationalize and implement the Housing Approach accordingly.

### 7.2 Essential to strengthen monitoring, information and reporting systems

1. While the policies, systems and procedures for data collection and reporting on all of UN-Habitat's activities have been defined, compliance and coordination is weak, particularly at the project level in many country offices. There are major gaps in how UN-Habitat collects information on its programmes and how the information is analysed and used. The agency is currently not able to assess its overall performance on even the most basic indicators.
2. Information on activities is not collected in a standard way — despite the existence of templates and reporting formats in the PAAS — so that it is not possible to compare activities in different countries and regions, or over time, or to aggregate data from different activities in order to estimate total activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts at the country and regional levels or over time.



3. Many statements are made concerning the outcomes and impacts of its programmes (such as the number of households who have benefitted from its programmes), but without objective and verifiable evidence to support many of the claims.
4. Many programmes are not reported in the PAAS and many offices do not consider monitoring and reporting a priority.
5. Due to resource constraints many offices do not have staff dedicated to monitoring and reporting and consequently many potentially important activities (e.g. pilot projects) are not well documented and the lessons and findings are not widely disseminated.
6. The current PAAS reporting system classifies activities according to the assigned budget category. Consequently, many activities that make important contributions to promoting adequate housing are difficult to identify, and the level of housing-related activities in countries can be significantly underestimated.

### 7.3 Documenting and strengthening impacts

1. UN-Habitat requires a systematic evaluation programme, because clear documentation of what has been achieved is an essential element of its knowledge management, advocacy and technical assistance strategies. Many important results are not fully documented due to lack of monitoring and follow-up. This is a real missed opportunity to demonstrate the full impact of UN-Habitat's work.
2. With the exception of important conflict and post-conflict, and disaster-related shelter programmes, UN-Habitat's quantitative impact on housing in terms of number of people supported is usually quite low due to a limited number of implementation programmes and their small size. Consequently, many of these projects should be considered as pilot demonstration projects to be used as advocacy and technical assistance/capacity building tools to support scaling-up by governments and international partners. This requires prioritization of documentation and dissemination of findings.
3. UN-Habitat influence on housing stakeholders and frameworks normally develops slowly over long periods of time. UN-Habitat must have a longer-term strategic vision to capitalize on this process.
4. Success of housing reforms need enabling environments or sometimes shocks to the existing system (e.g. change of regime, crisis). The continuous presence of UN-Habitat in a particular country is also needed to take advantage of these opportunities.
5. National housing policies rarely address fully the needs of the poorest, and there is no evidence that housing for the poor can be addressed exclusively through formal housing programmes. Most poor households do not have access to formal banking, or to social welfare systems. It must be recognized that shelter programmes for the poorest and most vulnerable groups is a low priority for many countries. In fact, in many cities where housing is seen as an engine of economic growth, there are strong pressure to relocate informal settlements away from prime urban land to the urban periphery
6. A commitment to housing and services for the poorest and most vulnerable groups requires a renewed commitment to building alliances with civil society. It is widely perceived that UN-Habitat's long-term collaboration with civil society has declined as agency priorities have changed.
7. There is often a discrepancy between government commitment at global level and the housing frameworks they develop and adopt in country.
8. UN-Habitat is one housing actor among others, who are also influencing the realization of adequate housing rights. Their actions may, or may not, complement UN-Habitat. In the same way some stakeholders are more advanced and active than UN-Habitat on technical issues or advocacy (civil society). Partnerships could play an important role in realization of adequate housing rights.

## 7.4 The challenges of ensuring sustainability

1. A weak point in many development programmes, including UN-Habitat, concerns strategies to strengthen sustainability. Funding for many UN-Habitat activities only covers project implementation, and frequently there is no financial or organizational commitment to ensure that programmes continue to deliver services and benefits, or to ensure that infrastructure is maintained. It is usually assumed that government or development partners will replicate and expand the programme – but frequently there is no clearly defined strategy to ensure this happens.
2. A priority must be to strengthen organizational and financial strategies to ensure that successful programmes are sustained and to promote scaling-up.
3. Sustainability is also required at the strategic and policy levels, and this should be incorporated into country programmes. This also requires political commitment, over which UN-Habitat has limited influence.
4. The key conditions that UN-Habitat has promoted to foster the implementation of housing reforms, namely increased knowledge and capacities, have good prospects for sustainability and will continue to impact on the improvement of housing frameworks.
5. The sustainability of housing operational interventions is poorly documented. The analysis has shown that adequate housing criteria are a relevant framework to promote and assess the sustainability of intervention impacts on adequate housing and poverty reduction. The larger the number of the seven adequate housing criteria that are provided and ensured, the more and longer will the beneficiaries enjoy the outcomes and impact of adequate housing.
6. While recognizing the organizational and financial constraints on the capacity of UN-Habitat to ensure the sustainability of Housing Approach interventions UN-Habitat should take steps to enhance sustainability prospects. including a strategy to promote sustainability and scale-up of all pilot projects.

## 7.5 Summary of Key Challenges

The following are areas where UN-Habitat faces challenges.

1. While UN-Habitat has proved successful at encouraging governments to make commitments at international conferences and other advocacy events, they have been less successful in getting governments to implement the commitments once they return home.
2. UN-Habitat is considered to have been less successful in providing support to public housing programmes. A number of key informants reported that some national housing programmes felt that UN-Habitat had not been able to provide them with direct support or to lobby governments on their behalf, and that UN-Habitat was perceived as not having the capacity to implement large-scale housing programmes.
3. UN-Habitat technical assistance services are often considered to be expensive, which has two consequences: 1) many government agencies, particularly local government cannot afford to pay for the services, and 2) they are not competitive in many countries, e.g., in Latin America, with their own well qualified local consultants.
4. UN-Habitat is perceived as having moved away from its earlier role as a vigorous promoter of adequate housing (including advocacy role on housing rights). It is perceived that the focus has moved from housing to broader issues of urban development, and from an advocacy to a facilitating role.
5. UN-Habitat's well-established linkages to civil society have been weakened in recent years. It is perceived that the traditional strong working relationships with civil society now receive lower priority as UN-Habitat now focuses more on broader urban development issues and engagement at the national and local government level.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 8.1 Policy and strategic level

#### 1. Restore the prominence of housing within UN-Habitat.

*Once the central focus of UN-Habitat's portfolio, the role of housing has declined and should be restored. This requires strengthening linkages with other UN-Habitat programmes and with national and international partners.*

#### 2. Strengthen the coherence of the housing approach.

*This requires a greater focus on the broader national and international development context within which housing policies, strategies and programmes operate.*

#### 3. Leverage UN-Habitat's recognized strengths.

*Given its limited resources, compared to the magnitude of the global demand for affordable and adequate housing, UN-Habitat must leverage its recognized areas of strength (see Chapter 7A) to encourage national and international partners to replicate and scale-up the policies and programmes it is developing*

#### 4. Strengthen UN-Habitat's information base.

*While UN-Habitat collects extensive information in documents such as its annual reports, it covers many different kinds of activities. Thus, although Tables 3 and 4 illustrate the kinds of quantification that is possible for particular kinds of projects (e.g. post-disaster shelter projects), it is difficult to aggregate different kinds of data to assess overall impact of the Housing Approach. Also, most of the data is at the level of outputs (such as the number of housing units constructed or upgraded), and the information is much more limited with respect to the extent to which the outputs have contributed to the achievement of intended outcomes. Strengthening the information base is critical to allow UN-Habitat and its partners to understand the direct and indirect quantitative impacts of its different activities on the magnitude of the shelter and poverty challenges it is addressing.*

**Two areas must be prioritized.** First, to mobilize additional resources to fully operationalize the management information systems that have already been formulated (PAAS, RBM, project reporting systems), to ensure consistent, high quality information that is comparable between programmes within a country, between countries and regions, and over time. This will provide information on the effective use of **inputs** and their transformation into **outputs**. Second, to build on the evaluation framework (defined in the 2013 Evaluation Policy and operationalized in the 2018 Evaluation Manual) by developing methodologies to provide credible estimates of **outcomes** and **impacts** at the country, regional and global levels.

#### 5. Continue strengthening knowledge management.

*Knowledge management has been one of the most effective tools for advocacy, technical assistance and capacity development. Current programmes should be strengthened through a greater focus on dissemination and promotion of information use. Evidence-based policy advice is a component of knowledge management that should be strengthened, which will draw on the strengthened information base (see previous point).*

#### 6. Focus more systematically on improving the living standards of poor and vulnerable populations.

*Guidelines are required for locating the poor and vulnerable groups within the multi-dimensional nature of poverty and for understanding the socio-economic, political, legal, demographic and climate-change constraints on moving out of poverty. More precise strategies must be developed for targeting the poor and ensuring they receive the intended services and benefits. More rigorous tools are also required to evaluate the quantitative and qualitative impacts of all interventions on the poor and to estimate how many individuals or families receive which benefits. All programmes with a poverty reduction component should draw on UN-Habitat's extensive experience with the participatory "People's Process" approach.*

7. **Strategies to enhance sustainability.** Currently, the potential benefits and impacts of many UN-Habitat interventions are significantly reduced because of a lack of planning and budgeting for sustainability.

## 8.2 Management and Planning

1. **Review the major challenges facing the Housing Approach.** *Chapter 7.5 identified a set of six major organizational and implementation challenges facing the housing approach. UN-Habitat management workshops to discuss the challenges and decide how they should be addressed are recommended.*
2. **Articulate a framework and guidance notes for the Housing Approach.** *These should explain its purpose, the requirements for its application in country programmes, and how performance will be assessed.*
3. **Strengthen UN-Habitat's information base** [see point 8.1 (4)]. *A review should be commissioned of the PAAS and other reporting systems to assess the quality, consistency, and completeness of the data in terms of the information requirements of managers and policymakers and for annual reports and other publications. The review should recommend any changes that are required in the current systems and identify any other kinds of information that should be added.*
4. **Review programme strategies to strengthen outcomes and impacts.** *Periodic reviews should be commissioned of how major programmes and projects are designed and implemented and how well outcomes are achieved. Recommendations should then be made on how to improve performance.*
5. **A stronger focus on improving the lives of poor and vulnerable groups with guidance on how impacts can be strengthened and evaluated** [see point 8.1 (6)].
6. **Strengthen sustainability.** *All (appropriate) activities should include plans to ensure sustainability and scaling-up. The plan should include a monitoring and reporting plan, and a strategy for enhancing*

*the dissemination of findings. Sustainability can be multi-dimensional and where appropriate plans should address infrastructure, economic, institutional, political, socio-cultural and environmental sustainability. Resources should also be included for implementation monitoring and evaluation, and preparation of an end-of-project report.*

7. **Incorporate the Theory of Change as an essential planning and management tool.** *The Theory of Change should be a dynamic tool that is reviewed by project teams and updated periodically. Training workshops, together with appropriate guidance notes may be required to introduce the Theory of Change.*

## 8.3 Regional level

1. **Alignment of country housing programmes with the region.** *Ensure alignment between UN-Habitat country-level housing programmes with national and regional development priorities and with regional and global frameworks and partners priorities. Country offices and national partners should be made aware of resources and support available from the regional office. Programmes should also understand the regional development context within which programmes operate. Strengthen country participation in regional activities should also be strengthened.*
2. **Capitalize on the unique aspects of each regional programme.** *Understand and capitalize on the unique strengths of each regional programme and adapt the housing approach to these contexts. Seek ways to strengthen cooperation and to draw on the unique regional experiences.*
3. **Continue support to knowledge management and strengthen dissemination at the regional and country levels.** *Ensure effective knowledge dissemination strategies within the constraints and communication traditions of each region. Address the digital divide and ensure that knowledge products are available to remoter and less digitally resourced groups – including community-level organizations.*

4. **Focus on poor and vulnerable groups.** *Engage more with pro-poor housing stakeholders and draw on UN-Habitat's extensive experience with participatory "people's process" approaches. Ensure that all housing programs incorporate adequate pro-poor components and implementation strategies.*
5. **Provide guidelines on implementing the housing approach in-line with other development areas.**

## 8.4 Country Programmes

1. **Multi-year country programmes.** *Each country should have a multi-year country programme which is reviewed and updated annually, and which is evaluated every few years. These should be incorporated into the RBM framework already being used for the 2014-19 development plan. While some countries already have such a programme it is not standard practice and is not always implemented in the same way.*
2. **Strengthen country programme documentation and reporting.** *More complete, consistent and higher quality reporting is required for all projects and programmes [see also point B.4].*
3. **Planning for sustainability.** *All (relevant) projects and programmes should include a strategy to track and maximize sustainability [see also point B.7].*
4. **Strengthen linkages to regional offices and UN-Habitat Headquarters (Nairobi).**
5. **Strengthen the delivery of impacts.** *Maximize the influence of global and regional activities and resources (conferences, publications, expertise, information and data) at the country level. Mobile the support of regional and offices and Headquarters to encourage governments to follow-through on commitments made at international conferences.*

## 8.5 Monitoring and evaluation

1. **Mobilize additional resources to strengthen and fully implement the current Evaluation Framework** (defined in the 2012 evaluation policy and operationalized in the 2018 evaluation manual). *This framework is fully consistent with UN agency evaluation practice. A priority concern must be to develop and test cost-effective but comprehensive and methodologically-sound tools and techniques for the collection and analysis of the information required for the many different kinds of evaluations of outputs, outcomes and impacts that are required. UN-Habitat currently does not have a credible way to assess the cumulative quantitative impact of its overall programme and the individual interventions.*
2. **A follow-up to the earlier review of UN evaluation practice should be commissioned** to study current thinking of UN Evaluation Unit, Headquarters, and regional and country offices, on best practice for the organization and implementation of programme evaluation the approaches and experiences of the evaluation offices of other UN agencies (such as UNDP, FAO and UNICEF) and the World Bank and regional development banks. *An important point to review will be the different methodologies currently used (or recommended) to estimate outcomes and impacts, and this should go beyond UN agencies to explore current thinking of academics, non-profits and evaluation consultants.*
3. **Develop a multi-year evaluation strategy.** *Design, test and progressively implement an evaluation strategy that ensures that all country programmes and individual housing interventions are periodically evaluated; and develop guidelines for the implementation of the evaluation strategy.*
4. **Develop separate methodologies for evaluating each of the key components of the Housing Approach.** *Review the indicators proposed in chapter 3 for assessing each of the 8 components. Also, consider the advantages and limitations of the OECD-DAC type rating systems described in Chapter 6.*

- 5. Consider using big data to broaden the kinds of data available for programme/project monitoring and evaluation, and to provide real-time feedback on programme implementation.** *Some of the potentially useful kinds of big data include for the UN-Habitat evaluations include: **satellite images and drones** (already used by UN-Habitat and housing agencies but mainly for research and planning but not for evaluation), **social media** (Twitter, Facebook etc) and radio call-in programmes (information on attitudes and organizational participation, feedback on attitudes to programmes, and early identification of problems); **phone call-centre data** (assessing integration of refugees); and **mobile phone data** (multiple applications).*
- 6. Developing and testing cutting edge evaluation methodologies.** *Some of the important new evaluation methodologies that UN-Habitat might consider including are contribution analysis, complexity-responsive evaluation and systems analysis, and sustainability evaluation.*
- 7. One or more workshops should be organized with evaluation experts to review the proposed evaluation strategies.**

## 8.6 Review of findings from the ratings

The present Synthesis Report and the Global Report include a total of 8 tables applying the rating system developed for the evaluation to assess UN-Habitat's Housing Approach performance on a set of indicators (see Table 4). These both assess overall performance and also compare performance of the four regional programmes. It is recommended that UN-Habitat should review these tables and discuss the significance

of the differences and what, if any actions are required to address the differences that are considered important. Some of the questions that should be addressed include:

- a. Why are all regions rated lower on addressing cross-cutting issues than they are on their 5 main areas of activity? (Synthesis Report Table 7 and Table 9)
- b. Why are the ratings for global activities relating to the achievement of strategic objectives for adequate housing than the score for all regions (Synthesis Report Table 10)? Note that global activities involve things like global conferences, statistical reports and guidance and policy notes, which are different from regional activities.
- c. Why does ROAP rate higher than other regions on the achievements of the operational objectives of adequate housing (Synthesis Report Table 11)? Is this related to the long experience with participatory methods (the people approach) and greater consistency with long-term local strategies for slum upgrading?
- d. Why is Mexico (ROLAC) rated significantly lower than other regions on many dimensions of implementation and outcomes (Synthesis Report Tables 7,8 and 9)? Does this suggest that the assessment criteria must be adjusted because a different approach is used because Mexico and many countries in the region are middle income?
- e. Why does the assessment of current and expected impact of the housing approach give a higher rating on structural and outcome indicators than on process (implementation) indicators (Global Report Table 10)? Does this suggest that in most countries UN-Habitat does not have the experience, resources or mandate to become actively involved in the implementation of large-scale housing and slum upgrading programmes?
- f. Why were the sustainability ratings lower for technical support and implementation lower than for advocacy, knowledge management, policy advice and capacity development (Global Report Table 12)?

## ANNEXES

### Annex 1: Other Reports Produced for this Evaluation

- 1. Methodology Note No. 1: Using Portfolio Analysis in the "Evaluation of UN-Habitat's Housing Approach to Adequate and Affordable Housing and Poverty Reduction". April 2020.** Michael Bamberger.
- 2. Methodology Note No. 2: Applying a complexity Framework in the Evaluation of UN-Habitat's Affordable Housing Programmes. April 2020.** Michael Bamberger
- 3. Evaluation of the impact of UN-Habitat's Housing Approach on Adequate and Affordable Housing. Final Report. May 2020.** Simon Deprez, Michael Majale and Michael Bamberger
- 4. Introduction to the Methodology Notes on the Evaluation of UN-Habitat's Approach to Adequate and Affordable Housing and Poverty Reduction May 2020.** Michael Bamberger
- 5. Evaluation of the impact of UN-Habitat's Housing Approach on Adequate and Affordable Housing: Arab States Region Report.** Michael Majale
- 6. Evaluation of the impact of UN-Habitat's Housing Approach on Adequate and Affordable Housing: Latin America and the Caribbean Region Report.** Simon Deprez and Michael Bamberger
- 7. Evaluation of the impact of UN-Habitat's Housing Approach on Adequate and Affordable Housing: Africa Region Report.** Michael Majale
- 8. Evaluation of the impact of UN-Habitat's Housing Approach on Adequate and Affordable Housing. Asia and the Pacific Region Report.** Simon Deprez.
- 9. Evaluation of the impact of UN-Habitat's Housing Approach on Adequate and Affordable Housing. Zambia Country Report.** Michael Majale

## ANNEXES

### Annex 2: References

- African Planning Association and UN-Habitat (2013) *The State of Planning in Africa: An Overview*. Nairobi: United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). <https://unhabitat.org/the-state-of-planning-in-africa-an-overview>.
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