

UN-Habitat's Support to the Development of National Urban Policy



Selected key facts:

- Significant contribution to global discourse particularly on SDGs and Habitat III
- Knowledge and evidence based resources developed to support dialogue on NUP
- Technical materials developed to support countries
- Global Partnership on NUP established
- Active NUP portfolio in 26 countries with budget over USD2.5 million

1. WHY NATIONAL URBAN POLICY?

The urbanization process is one that is strongly interdisciplinary. In order to harness urbanization, mitigate its negative externalities, and promote good urbanization, there is need for a **coordinated approach and clear policy directions**. Building on the need for a coordinated approach, it is clear that urban policy and planning **must embrace a scope that reaches beyond the city core**. Managing urbanization in a sustainable and equitable manner means that planning and policy must now address wider-ranging questions, which will inevitably require **a broader approach to urban planning and policy and a higher level of vertical and horizontal coordination in the form of national level guidance**. This, in turn, implies the need for a coordinated approach and clear policy directions. **A National Urban Policy is a tool that can be used by government** in order to direct and control urbanization. With input from the regional and local levels, a coordinated effort from the national level government through a NUP provides **the best opportunity for the development of a coordinating and thorough nation-wide urban development plan**.

2. UN HABITAT AND NATIONAL URBAN POLICY

The work of UN Habitat in this area and the development of guidance on National Urban Policies (NUP) is rooted in the **Governing Council resolution HSP/GC/24/L.6** which “requests the Executive Director in consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives to develop a general guiding framework for the development, where appropriate of national urban policies, based on international good experiences, to further support member states when developing and improving their urban policies.”

In consultation with partners, UN Habitat is developing tools to aid countries with undertaking a National Urban Policy: **particularly with the** feasibility, diagnostic, formulation, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation stages of the process. The UN Habitat approach to NUP development is based on three pillars and five principles. The three pillars are: **participation, capacity development, and acupuncture projects**. The key principles underpinning NUP are that it be: **iterative and forward thinking, implementable, joined up, evidence based, and action oriented**.

Activities and engagement by UN Habitat in the NUP process include (but are not limited to): country assessments; advice on setting up of national processes and stakeholder participation; documentation of good practices to support national processes; advisory services, technical support to the formulation process, political economy assessment and analysis, analysis of urban planning policies and instruments; facilitation of local-national dialogue on reforms; policy review evaluation, design the policy monitoring framework, capacity development in policy processes, dissemination and capacity development on the urban policy across the full range of actors.

3. KEY 2015 NUP ACTIVITIES

I. NUP, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and HABITAT III

National Urban Policy has been identified as a **key tool to support the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda**. It has been identified as such due to its ability to provide structure and organization to the process of urbanization and, therefore, its value as a tool to capitalize on the opportunities of urbanization. **The recognition of National Urban Policy as a key tool for the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda is demonstrated through its selection as one of ten Habitat III Policy Units.** UN Habitat was **selected as one of the co-leading institutions of Policy Unit 3 on National Urban Policies**, along with OECD. The Policy Unit produced a Framework document and a Policy Paper (which is attached to this Briefing Note). The Policy Unit expert group also highlighted 10 Key Recommendations for the New Urban Agenda, which can be found on page 30 of the Policy Paper.

- II. With the adoption of SDG 11, to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable there is clear international recognition of the need for sustainable urban growth. A National Urban Policy touches on and is relevant to many of the SDGs. Most of the SDGs have clear urban dimensions. **Achieving many of the goals without addressing what happens in urban areas would be difficult.** In the policy paper of Policy Unit 3, the expert group recommended that:

“A National Urban Policy should constitute an important part of any serious attempt to implement the SDGs and should become a key instrument to measure the achievement of the SDGs.” (PU3 policy paper, pg.6)

III. NUP Country-level projects

UN Habitat is currently supporting **26 countries** with the development of their National Urban Policy. Please see the attached document, Overview of UN Habitat support for NUP, for more detailed information on UN Habitat engagement at country level. UN-Habitat has mobilized funds and currently has an active portfolio for NUP development with budget over USD2.5 million. These funds include contributions from countries such as Cameroon, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Zambia, and Angola and from other sources such as the Development Account for work on NUP in the Arab States and from development partners such as Cities Alliance for work on NUP in Liberia.



IV. The National Urban Policy Week

From December 14-18 2015, over **250 policy makers, government officials, development partners, and non-governmental actors working in areas of urban policy from more than 25 countries** met in Korea for a week of activities around National Urban Policies. The activities included: the International Conference on National Urban Policy, the pilot of the UN Habitat NUP Capacity Development and Learning materials (see below), and a Korean Field Tour.

The **International Conference on National Urban Policy** was organized by UN Habitat, the Korea Research Institute for Human Settlements, and the Korea Institute of Civil Engineering and Building Technology. It was supported by the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport and by Incheon Metropolitan City.

The Conference attracted more than **250 participants from more than 25 countries**. There were representatives from more than 5 international organizations attending the Conference, including OECD, UNESCAP, UNDP, Cities Alliance, and GGGI. Vice Ministers from Afghanistan, Ministry of Urban Development, Iran, Ministry of Road and Urban Development, and Korea, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport were in attendance.

The **Korean Field Tour** was hosted by the Korean Land and Housing Corporation. Participants visited a number of Korean New Towns, including Pangyo, Dongtan, and Sejong. In Sejong, participants were welcomed to the Korean Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transport for a presentation on Korean New Towns by the Director of New Town Development Division, followed by a questions and answer period.



National Urban Policy week, South Korea

© Ministry of Land, infrastructure and transport, Republic of Korea

4. ONGOING ACTIVITIES

I. National Urban Policy Platform

As demonstrated by the prominent role of NUP in international dialogues, such as the SDGs and Habitat III, NUP can be a transformative force towards achieving sustainable development. In the spirit of collaboration and sharing of experiences and knowledge, the NUP Platform **brings together a diverse group of international organizations (such as UN Habitat, OECD, Cities Alliance, UNCRD, UNECA, UNECE) that bring along their respective networks, actors, approaches with various access points and value addition to the NUP process.** The Platform fosters partnership for learning at the global, regional and country levels and is comprised of a diverse group of organizations who are willing to share their knowledge, studies and expertise with other members. In doing so the Platform **creates a space for accessing information and experiences regarding NUP.** UN Habitat is also working with regional offices and on field projects to support NUP processes based on demand.

II. National Urban Policy Capacity Development and Learning Materials

UN Habitat has received a range of requests to support national governments to develop, implement and/or track progress of their NUPs. Therefore, it was deemed necessary to develop capacity development and learning materials to support member states with the development of their NUP processes.

The NUP Capacity Development and Learning materials **where piloted at the National Urban Policy Week in Incheon, Korea. The Pilot was attended by representatives from more than 17 countries.** The session strengthened the capacities of policy makers and other stakeholders in the processes of NUP. Participants enhanced their knowledge on urban policy when they interacted with tools, instruments and methods to formulate, implement, and monitor and evaluate national urban policy.

III. NUP Database, web platform, and community of practice

The UN Habitat National Urban Policy Database provides a **global overview of the state of urban policy at the national level.** The database gathers country-level data (when available) on the existence of relevant NUPs, dates of formulation and implementation, main themes of these policies, the leading ministries and main actors, and, when possible, links to the policy documents. The aims of the database is to **gather pertinent information in a central location and therefore make available a broad overview of the state of national urban policy globally** which, along with other NUP tools provided by UN Habitat, can assist in encouraging cross-country learning.

UN Habitat is currently working with partners to develop its knowledge management activities related to NUP, including (by not limited to) the development and administration of an online knowledge-sharing platform on National Urban Policy (forthcoming) and the facilitation of **online and in person peer-to-peer policy dialogues to encourage a National Urban Policy community of practice with practitioners (forthcoming).** The development of an online platform and a community of practice could serve as a centre point for specialization in urban policy and provide an excellent platform for policy research, analysis, and exchange. Moreover, it could serve as a forum for peer exchange and advice and facilitate the sharing of experience and insight among practitioners that are pursuing the development of National Urban Policies.

5. SELECTED FUTURE & UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

I. Release of NUP Regional Assessments and Case Studies

UN Habitat is undertaking case studies and regional assessments of National Urban Policy. Regional assessments and cases studies will be available for the North American and Western and Eastern European, Latin American, African, Arab States, and Asia and the Pacific regions. **Together, these reports will provide a global perspective on NUP.** The aim of both the regional reports and case studies are to **provide a foundation for understanding how and in what forms NUPs have emerged globally**, and to **highlight and cross-reference country-level experiences in undertaking the NUP process.** These tools will be available, therefore, to provide key insights that can inform both academic analysis and the approaches of practitioners and to facilitate inter-country learning.

Considered in these assessments is the alignment of the review and development of NUP process in selected countries with the guiding principles of the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning (IG-UTP). Doing so can **provide direction for review of NUPs by indicating adjustments in the planning system and associated urban legislation and regulations** required to achieve more compact, socially inclusive and institutionally integrated cities and territories that are well connected and resilient to climate change.. The IG-UTP were approved by the Governing Council of UN-Habitat in Resolution 25/6 of 23 April 2015 and are now a globally recognized framework to guide urban policy reforms.

II. State of National Urban Policy Report

Once case studies and regional reports are completed in the North American and Western and Eastern European, Latin American, African, Arab States, and Asia and the Pacific regions, findings will be analyzed and compiled into a final report. This Global State of National Urban Policy Report **will provide a global perspective on NUP.** The Report will serve as a reference material for Habitat III.

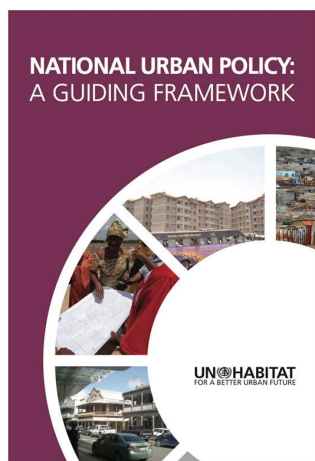
III. Urban policy at sub-national level

While NUP is seen primarily as a tool for national governments, there is an increasing demand from **sub-national governments to engage in urban policy processes and to contribute to the development of their country's urban agenda**, both through active participation during the development of a NUP and through the development of complimentary sub-national urban policies. In order to produce cities which are productive, prosperous, and sustainable, urban policy must be developed on **a firm foundation of effective multi-level governance** which will involve firstly, the active involvement of sub-national governments in NUP development and secondly, the **production of related urban policies at the sub-national levels.** UN Habitat has begun the development of tools to support sub-national governments with the development of their Sub-National Urban Policy (SUP).

SUPPORTING MATERIALS: EXISTING RESOURCES ON NATIONAL URBAN POLICY

Please find below a selection of resources developed to support normative and operational work on NUP:

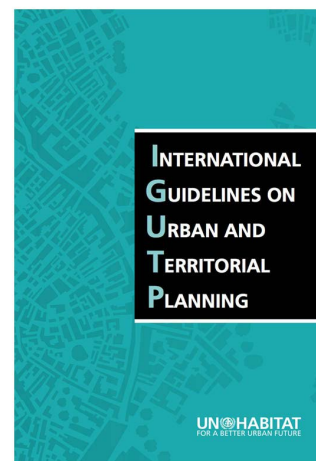
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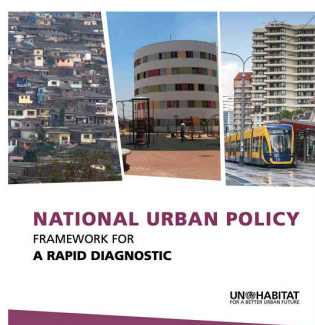
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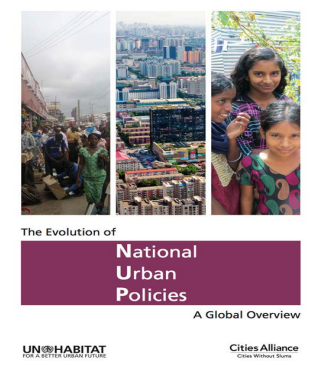
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1. The National Urban Policy Guiding Framework

<http://www.urbangateway.org/icnup/sites/default/files/NUP%20Guiding%20Framework.pdf>

2. Habitat III, Policy Unit 3, Policy Paper on National Urban Policy

<https://www.habitat3.org/bitcache/ba191ad5b396e736bd24005451e1d46459561a1b?vid=572972&disposition=inline&op=view>

3. The International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning

<http://unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/International%20Guidelines%20-%20-%20Compendium%20Inspiring%20Practices.pdf>

4. The National Urban Policy Framework for a Rapid Diagnostic

http://www.urbangateway.org/icnup/sites/default/files/NUP_Framework_for_a_Rapid_Diagnostic.pdf

5. The International Conference on National Urban Policy

<http://www.urbangateway.org/icnup/>

6. The Evolution of National Urban Policies

<http://unhabitat.org/books/the-evolution-of-national-urban-policies/#>

Contact Us:

The Regional and Metropolitan Planning Unit (RMPU) provides tools and services to particularly serve regional and metropolitan areas and the development of urban policy and spatial development at the national scale. The Unit would welcome the opportunity to work with you. We would be pleased to be involved in dialogue regarding the development of compact, integrated, connected, and socially inclusive cities and learn more about the work of partners in metropolitan, regional, and national authorities. In order to work with us or to get more information on our tools and services, the RMPU can be contacted at:

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