





Informal Settlements in the **Arab Region**

"Towards Arab Cities without Informal Areas" Analysis and Prospects February 2020

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FOREWORD





UN HABITAT FOREWORD

Inequality and poverty are growing to formulate one of the main challenges facing global development. In the Arab region, this is magnified by the ongoing social and political unrest in some countries. Climate change, water shortages and food security are also threatening stability and sustainable development in the region.

According to the analysis presented in this report, such a complex situation resulted in emergence and growth of informal and poor settlements around and inside many of the main Arab cities and economic hubs. People migrating to these areas simply seek safety, job, access to opportunities and improved quality of living.

The new urban agenda (NUA 2016) recognized the complexity of informal and degraded settlements, their links to poverty, inequality, and social exclusion. It recommended availing resources and commitment to creating an enabling environment that reduces the vulnerability of informal settlements socially, economically and physically, and enhances urban security.

This report accordingly highlights the key challenges, successful experiences and lessons learned, and required resources to enable supporting national and local governments progress towards these integrated objectives. The main conclusion of the report includes priority action areas that needs to integrate innovatively to effectively address this complex challenge.

The analysis of various cases in this report ensures the need to integrate efforts and resources to influence sustainable upgrading of informal settlements in the Arab region. This echoes the United Nations efforts towards integration of the sustainable development goals, and leaving no one and no place behind. Approaching informal settlements upgrading entails supporting improved access to basic services (education, health, clean water and improved sanitation services), decent work and economic growth, reducing inequalities, climate action, and specifically Goal 11 "to make cities and human settlements inclusive Safe, resilient and sustainable", in addition to the key importance of partnerships to achieve these goals, i.e. Goal 17.

The strategic plan of UN-Habitat 2020-2023 reflects the goals of the Organization in advancing sustainable urbanization processes as an engine for development and peace to improve living conditions for all, is based on four main domains of change, with a specific focus on reducing spatial inequality and poverty.

This report, conducted in partnership with the Islamic Development Bank, represents the first step towards operationalizing the regional programme "Towards Arab Cities without Informal areas". reaffirming UN-Habitat's commitment to work with partners to promote programmes and initiatives that contribute to sustainable and inclusive urban development in cities and human settlements.

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rfan ALI

Director, Regional Office Arab States UN HABITAT

IsDB FOREWORD

Despite significant progress made to date, the proliferation of slums and informal settlements has been a continued challenge in the Arab region, perpetuated by several factors including, but not limited to, high cost of land, limited access to credit, population movements and displacements, lengthy land transactions and tenure registration procedures.

Since the adoption of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, the IsDB has taken several initiatives to support its member countries in their efforts to achieve the SDGs. The relevant target of Goal 11, which is to ensure access to safe and affordable housing by 2030, is measured through the indicator "the proportion of the urban population living in slums or informal settlements".

The IsDB supports the implementation of its transformative agenda according to the needs and priorities of its member countries, through a collaborative approach, and in partnership with bilateral and multilateral development financing institutions, the private sector and the civil society.

This book, *Informal Settlements in the Arab region: "Towards Arab Cities without Informal Areas"* | *Analysis and Prospects*, is the result of a successful partnership between the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), UNHabitat Regional Office of Arab States (ROAS) and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA). It is also the result of an innovative and inclusive approach for tackling informal settlements in the Arab region with a direct participation of the countries themselves in identifying their housing challenges and the best solutions to address them.

This partnership between IsDB, UN-Habitat ROAS and UN-ESCWA and the inclusive approach being adopted, can help to identity bankable projects and programmes which, if implemented with the commitment of the concerned members countries, will solve in a sustainable way, the challenges posed by slums and informal settlements in the Arab region.

Amadou Thierno DIALLO

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