

**IMPLEMENTING
THE INTERNATIONAL GUIDELINES
ON URBAN AND TERRITORIAL PLANNING FOR
IMPROVED HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

Synthesis report

Expert Group Meeting and Side Event at the first UN-Habitat Assembly | Nairobi, Kenya,
24 and 27 May 2019

Expert Group Meeting “Implementing the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning for improved environment and well-being” and Side Event “Innovative Approaches to Planning for Health for All” Synthesis Report

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Executive Summary

This report synthesizes the outcomes from the Expert Group Meeting and the “Informal Dialogue” Side Event on urban health convened by UN-Habitat’s Regional and Metropolitan Planning Unit on occasion of the first UN-Habitat Assembly (27-31 May, 2019). The two events gathered over forty stakeholders from Member States, local government, academia, civil society organizations and UN Agencies with the aim to discuss innovative approaches to enhance urban and territorial planning for improved human health and wellbeing.

The events also outlined the importance of urban health for the new UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2020-2023, which addresses urban health through two of the four Domains of Change: **Domain of Change I – Reduced spatial inequality and poverty in communities across the urban-rural continuum**, realizes the importance of expanding access to basic services (including health services) across territories, to reduce spatial and health inequalities. **Domain of Change III – Strengthened climate action and improved urban environment**, promotes the development of clean air action plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address indoor and outdoor air pollution.

Urban health challenges, such as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases related to ambient (outdoor) air pollution, are merely the visible symptoms of underlying complex systems which are cross-sectoral, interconnected and uncertain of common concern. They happen at multiple levels and thus need to be addressed at the right scale, in time.

At the Expert Group Meeting (EGM), UN-Habitat presented its urban health initiatives, illustrating different entry points to tackle urban health issues: from air pollution and climate change mitigation plans, to housing and sanitation improvements to reduce vector-borne diseases, as well as urban and territorial planning systems to promote healthy lifestyles.

The discussions highlighted the following issues and opportunities of urban health organizations in **moving towards coordinated actions to include health considerations and actors in urban planning and development**:

- Complex urban health & sustainability challenges require new perspectives, gained from:
- “Collective intelligence”: **urban health communication** and the engagement of stakeholders in the **co-production of knowledge**.
- Applying a **systems approach**, which can help planners and health professionals understand the complex relations between urban environments and health determinants better and promote evidence-based solutions.
- More examples **that highlight** evidence on **urban health benefits are needed**: pilot projects (“proof of concept”) are important in validating urban health approaches, policies and tools and as an additional source for knowledge-gaining (“learning by doing”).
- **Context- and community-sensitive urban health initiatives** that promote local ideas and actors in solving existing problems, including in the informal sector, represent an alternative to large scale, top-down urban health projects. Applying the lessons learned of micro-scale and incremental approaches of housing to improve the health conditions of communities.
- **Innovative funding mechanisms**, such as public-private partnership models, community-based financial models or private funding mechanisms that are affordable are needed **for local scale and community-based urban health projects**.
- Innovative institutional and **funding mechanisms for interdisciplinary projects** are needed to promote systems approaches in urban health.

- Building **new partnerships between urban health actors across sectors and levels** and promoting effective collaboration by clarifying and defining roles and responsibilities for cooperation between academia, civil society organizations, international organizations and local governments.
- **Working with** (and not for) **local communities**: motivating the local community as a collective entity. Using **advocacy and education strategies** on urban health to ensure local buy-in by the community and maintenance of the results. Engaging local governments at an early stage in the development of normative products. Win-win partnerships with local actors are key for successful implementation and sustainability.

The events also gathered input on some of the urban health tools under development at UN-Habitat:

ON THE HEALTH-FOCUSED PLANNING SYSTEM ASSESSMENT:

- The value of a rapid health-focused planning system assessment which acts as an **icebreaker** to discuss the perceived quality of the outcomes and processes of a planning system for different stakeholders.
- More considerations about the **end-user and their use of the assessment** are needed while developing the assessment.
- The question of how to make the assessment

operational in multiple contexts (e.g. application in the informal sector) and for different stakeholder groups, including non-experts (e.g. citizens).

- The suggestion to rethink or further elaborate the assessment to be **more user-friendly** and more focused on the quality of the planning system (e.g. statements addressing multiple issues at a time; unclear relation of indicators to statements, etc.).

ON THE TRAINING MANUAL:

- Considerations on the **complementarity** of the content of the manual with **existing resources** within UN-Habitat and beyond (e.g. World Health Organization (WHO) Training Manuals, HiaP-Approach) are necessary to ensure its usefulness and implementation.
- More considerations on how the manual will enhance capacities of planners and health professionals for collaboration and **how it will be used** by its end-users (e.g. in academia, local government, planning associations, etc.)
- The interest in a **multi-stakeholder development approach** of the Training Manual by the organizations present in the EGM highlighted the need to ensure an effective co-production process.

Background

Uncontrolled urbanization negatively affects human health and well-being of citizens, challenging the development of competitive, inclusive and liveable human settlements. As urbanization is one of the main drivers influencing the development of countries across the globe, a shift towards more sustainable

urban development practices is urgent and necessary to ensure the achievement of SDG 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities and SDG 3. Good Health and Well-being and other interrelated goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



Figure 1 Panelists speaking at the Informal Dialogue “Innovative Approaches for Planning and Health for All”.

As recognized in the “Health as the Pulse of the New Urban Agenda” report by the World Health Organization (WHO), key urban stakeholders must incorporate health as a central consideration in their decision-making processes. Governments at all levels, along with United Nations agencies and other important agents of change, **must move from a growing recognition of this task to coordinated actions including health considerations and actors in urban planning and development.**

UN-Habitat, in collaboration with WHO and other urban health organizations and with the support of the Government of Norway, is working on implementing the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning (IG-UTP) for improved health and well-being. This initiative aims to improve human health and well-being through urban and territorial

planning and design. In line with this objective, the **IG-UTP and Health programme** at UN-Habitat works across 4 areas: building an evidence base for the benefits of planning for health, developing normative tools, testing and implementing pilot projects and conducting capacity-building activities, and building partnerships with urban health organizations.

As part of these activities, UN-Habitat convened two events; one that took place prior and the other as part of the first UN-Habitat Assembly (27-31 May, 2019), held in Nairobi, Kenya, bringing together over forty stakeholders from Member States, local government, academia, civil society organizations and UN Agencies. During the events, urban health experts discussed innovative approaches to enhance planning and health activities.

On May 24, 2019 the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) for Peer-to-Peer learning and Capacity Development Implementing the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning for improved environment and well-being took place at the UN-Habitat Headquarters. The international experts gathered provided valuable inputs on the tools under development by UN-Habitat.

In alignment with the UN-Habitat Assembly's theme: Innovation for Better Quality of Life in Cities and Communities, the EGM was an opportunity to share and advance ongoing initiatives to undertake planning through the "lens" of health.

More specific objectives of the EGM included:

- Produce a health-focused planning system assessment,
- Develop an integrated Training Manual on planning and health, which will in turn provide concrete guidance and close the gap between health actors and planners, to coordinate and improve health and wellbeing through planning and design approaches.

Furthermore, the "Informal Dialogue" Side Event Innovative Approaches to Planning and Health for All, held on May 27, 2019 was an opportunity to discuss innovative approaches on how partnerships between planners and health professionals can contribute to the delivery of healthier cities for all and contribute to reduced spatial and health inequality in urban settlements.

More specific objectives of the event included:

- Discuss new tools and approaches to improve planning for health,
- Present evidence-gathering activities and multidisciplinary experiences and examples from around the world, where health considerations have been placed at the center of the planning process, yielding better health outcomes, as well as an improved urban environment.
- Discuss the role of civil society organizations, UN agencies and academia in supporting local and national governments in delivering healthier cities.

Relevance to UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan 2020 – 2023:

UN-Habitat's long-lasting mandate on urban health initiatives was strengthened by Governing Council Resolution 25/4 in 2015, requesting the agency "to consider health and well-being aspects, including the promotion of and access to health services, in developing policies on urban and territorial planning".

Addressing the relation between health and sustainable urbanization has been also captured in the recently approved UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2020-2023 through two of the four Domains of Change: **Domain of Change I – Reduced spatial inequality and poverty in communities across the urban-rural continuum**, realizes the importance of expanding access to basic services such as clean drinking water, sanitation, housing, transportation and health services, as well as to safe and secure public space. Leveraging access to basic services can not only contribute to reduce spatial inequality but also to improve health equity, two mayor causes for poverty. In addition, **Domain of Change III – Strengthened climate action and improved urban environment**, focuses on improved resilience, adaptation and mitigation actions for the development of sustainable cities and the improvement of the health of human and natural systems in cities. This Domain of Change promotes the development of clean air action plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address indoor and outdoor air pollution.

Domains of Change
in relation to health:

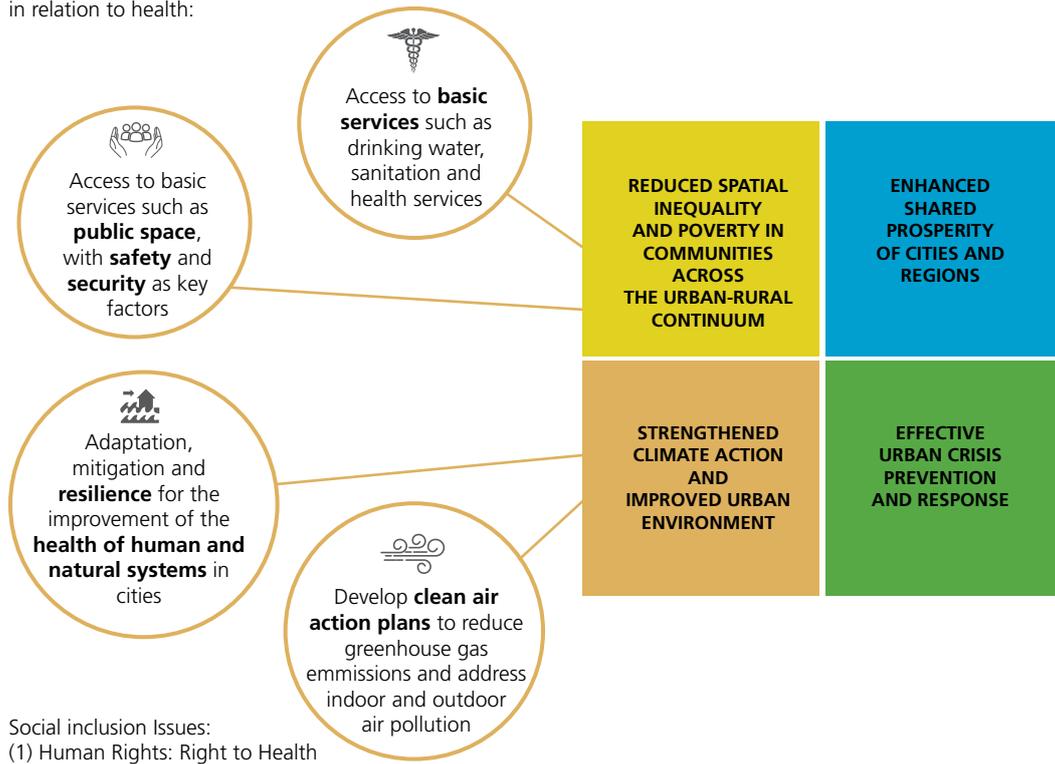


Figure 2 Health in the Strategic Plan 2020-2023 of UN-Habitat.

Global tools that have been developed as part of UN-Habitat's work on urban health and whose application was discussed during the events include the Guidance Document in Planning for Health (UN-

Habitat and WHO), [the International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning \(IG-UTP\) Compendium on Inspiring Practices: Health Edition](#) (UN-Habitat) and the [WHO Housing and Health Guidelines](#).

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