UN-Habitat Brief on

Migration and Cities

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IMPLEMENTING THE NEW URBAN AGENDA

01
Background

Migration is at the core of urbanization, and while today, cities are home to 54 per cent of the world's population, by the middle of this century (2050) this number is expected to rise to 66 per cent . This is a result of natural population growth and migration flows as cities are places where migrants hope to find a better lives and employment opportunities (pull-factors). Migration to cities occurs for a variety of push-factors, seeking refuge from natural and man-made disasters, fleeing violence and persecution or hoping for more dignified lives. With the increasing frequency of extreme weather events, flooding, heat and water stress and environmental degradation, migration flows are likely to intensify as climate events are expected to multiply threats.

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Types of migration

- Movement patterns (circular; rural-urban; chain)
- Decision making (voluntary/involuntary)
- Migrant categories:
  - Rural-urban migration
  - Migrant workers (seasonal, semi-permanent),
  - International migration;
  - Legal status of migrants: Refugees; Internally displaced persons (IDPs); Asylum seekers,
  - Drivers of Migration: climate change, economic reasons, conflict, lack of Human Rights,
  - Migrants at different points of their journey (departure; transition; arrival)

In its 2018 World Migration report, IOM refers to 244 million international migrants, equivalent to 3.3 per cent of the global population. Three quarters of the world's one billion migrants stay within their own country or region, with numbers of internal migrants estimated to be 763 million . It should be noted that in many developing countries and crisis situations data collection is a challenge, compounded by the fact that a high percentage of migrants with limited resources settle in informal settlements, where data collection is difficult.

Even though diverse in their motives, backgrounds and capacities, most migrants are attracted by urban areas hoping for improved livelihood opportunities, quality of life, better education or vocational training, safety and access to jobs and services. Over centuries, many cities have flourished and experienced economic, social and cultural boosts due to migration flows, turning them into hubs of diversity and innovation. Migration flows are reshaping cities, and cities can harness those migration flows for their economic, social and cultural benefits - improving local economies and development, innovation, prosperity, economic vibrancy and cosmopolitan diversity. Through remittances migrant communities can also benefit countries of origin.

However the rapid influx of people to cities, especially when caused by crisis, comes with challenges for governments, particularly local governments and those authorities with weak systems, governance structures, lack of financial means and capacities. Local governments often struggle with pressure on basic, administrative and social services, infrastructure, housing supply, health and education services and to facilitate decent livelihood. Resulting strains can exacerbate the vulnerabilities experienced by the urban poor in destination and host communities and force more people to live in informal settlements or inadequate housing, with associated environmental consequences. While metropolitan areas are the destination of many, migrants increasingly move to small and intermediate cities that have even less capacity and resources to manage an influx.

Local governments through their experience and knowledge of their cities and communities are well placed to integrate migrants into their planning efforts, lead the implementation of inclusive urban projects and properly harness the opportunities migration can bring. While national legislation may regulate cross-border migration, legislative frameworks that can unleash the benefits of migration to cities are needed (New Urban Agenda, para 28). These may involve frameworks for urban planning, financing and management, land allocation, housing supply, basic services and employment.

02

Global Frameworks relevant to migration and cities and UN-Habitat's mandate

UN-Habitat's work on migration is grounded in recent global frameworks, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015), the New Urban Agenda (2016) and the Global Compact for Migration, adopted by UN Member States in December 2018. While Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)10, target 10.7 calls on Member States to facilitate orderly, safe and responsible migration and mobility of people, SDG 11 provides targets that aim to increase inclusivity in access to housing and basic services, public space, mobility and other benefits of cities and human settlements for all.

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Entry points for UN-Habitat

- Tackling causes of migration (e.g. reducing impacts of climate change (including coastal areas; but also drought, flooding, other natural hazards); reducing conflict on land, water, other natural resources; poverty reduction and development gaps; spatial inequality including basic services; social services; financial and administrative services; employment opportunities; ....)
- Supporting countries/cities with addressing the challenges and opportunities generated by migration both in areas of origin and destination, and in particular related to access to adequate and affordable housing and services; urban and territorial planning; social cohesion; etc...)

The NUA makes numerous references to migrants and refugees. Importantly para 28 emphasizes the necessity to support cities in developing solutions for migrants and highlights the positive impact of migration for social, economic and cultural development in cities, including "supporting local authorities in establishing frameworks that enable the positive contribution of migrants to cities and strengthened urban-rural linkages. Strengthening urban-rural linkages, urban planning and an integrated territorial development, land-use management and land tenure are highlighted as means to reduce inequalities and the development gap between urban and rural areas, which are still among the main drivers for migration.

UN-Habitat, as a focal point for achieving the "urban goals and targets" within the UN system, plays a key role in supporting the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, and through its Governing Council Resolution 26/2 is called upon to better support Member States facing challenges caused by the mass influx of migrants.

The Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration was adopted by UN Member States in December 2018 in Marrakech, Morocco. It calls on signatory Member States agree to foster "international cooperation among all relevant actors on migration, acknowledging that no State can address migration alone". The same phrase could be applied at city level. Para 23 calls on Member States to "empower migrants to become full members of our societies, highlight their positive contributions, and promote inclusion and social cohesion." This too has a strong urban dynamic since the majority of migrants choose to live in cities and human settlements. UN-Habitat is therefore ready to support the implementation of the Global Compact, by building on ongoing and prior work. While UN-Habitat has successfully implemented projects to build the capacity of various levels of governments to plan and create conditions to support the inclusion and integration of migrants into urban areas, its work in supporting sustainable urban development also contributes to reducing causes for migration in urban areas of all sizes.

With its expertise on urban development and rapid urban growth, UN-Habitat is well placed to support the newly established capacity-building mechanism of the United Nations on migration issues (para 43) and will substantively contribute to the "United Nations network on migration to ensure effective and coherent system-wide support to implementation, including the capacity-building mechanism" (para 45), by providing urban expertise and building on its strong partnerships within the UN family and development networks.

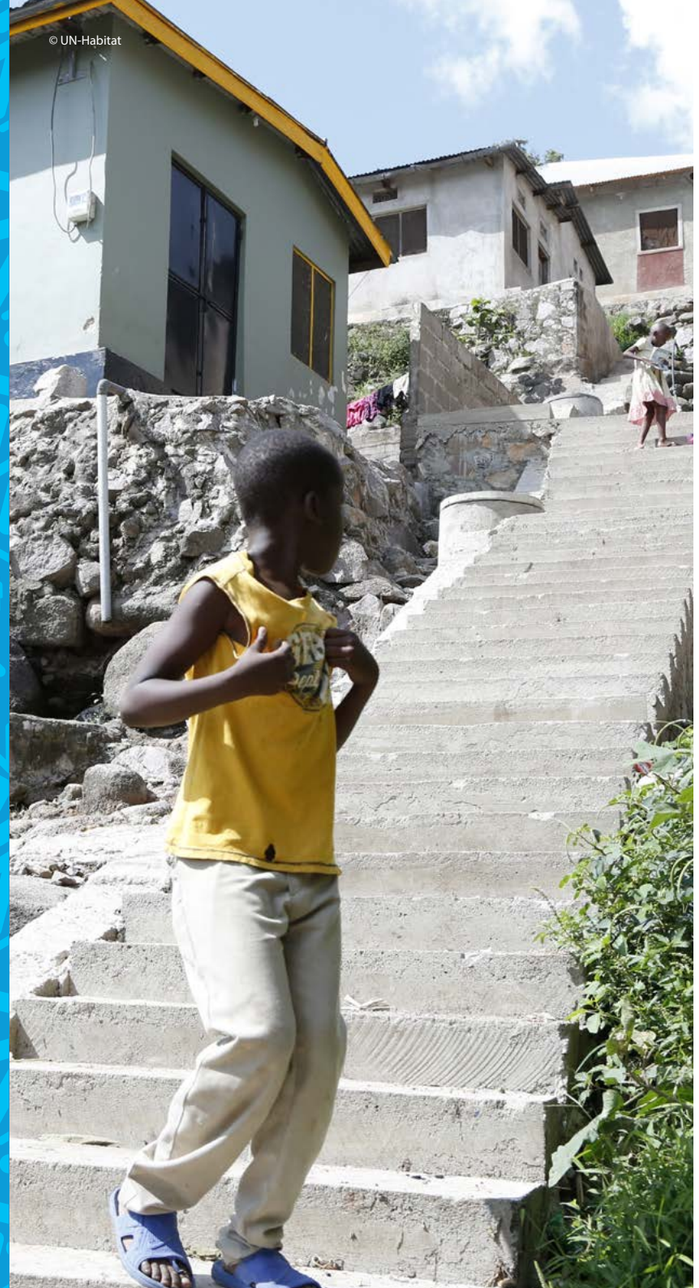
UN-Habitat's strategic plan 2020-2025

With its Strategic Plan 2020-2025 , UN-Habitat, in addition to the agency's work for sustainable urbanization, emphasizes social cohesion and inclusive planning and promotes resilience of cities and human settlements to all kinds of shocks, including the causes for migration due to conflict and climate change. It also promotes housing, land and property rights and the inclusion of migrant and displaced populations in urban areas. In preparation for the implementation of this strategic plan, UN-Habitat seeks to strengthen partnerships with actors engaged in supporting the implementation of the Global Compact, building on existing cooperation with UN agencies, development partners, civil society, academia and the private sector.

03

UN-Habitat's scope of work (migration portfolio): Tools and approaches

UN-Habitat is the UN Agency mandated to promote environmentally and socially sustainable human settlements and adequate housing for all. Migration needs to be seen as a cross-cutting theme, and strategies, plans and policies need to be developed in an integrated approach, across sectors and in cooperation with all relevant stakeholders. UN-Habitat's work contributes to reducing the push-factors for migration through integrated urban policies, planning, governance and financing models for urban development that accommodates population growth in a well-planned manner, making cities connected and socially inclusive. UN-Habitat's work also contributes to reducing the causes for migration through improving climate change and disaster resilience of human settlements and promoting integrated territorial development that strengthens urban-rural linkages and thus enhances both rural and urban economies, in line with Objective 2 of the Global Compact for Migration: "Minimize the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave'.



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In crisis contexts, as forced displacement into urban areas is increasingly protracted, UN-Habitat supports local authorities to overcome both chronic and acute vulnerabilities through mitigating strains on public services and housing supply and fostering the social cohesion of displaced and host communities, with particular attention to women, children, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities, To this end UN-Habitat provides multisectoral, spatial analysis that considers the absorption capacity of cities, including the functionality of basic services, adequacy of housing markets and the push and pull factors of displacement. This analysis supports rapid decision making and identifies priority interventions. UN-Habitat also helps build capacity and provides technical assistance in the design and implementation of local interventions to improve basic services support affordable housing and enhance inclusive governance arrangements that fosters social cohesion.

Addressing Housing, Land and Property (HLP) rights early on in crisis situations is often critical to allow for early voluntary return, local integration, or voluntary relocation. UN-Habitat supports local authorities to apply a continuum approach that fast tracks HLP rights. In cases when camp-like environments are inevitable, working with UN and development actors, UN-Habitat supports sustainable approaches by contributing its expertise on planning camps as future urban extensions with adequate urban planning standards and suitable tenure arrangements for later transformation into neighbourhoods.

Migration and cities: How UN-Habitat works

UN-Habitat contributes to relevant UN networks, such as the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the UN Migration Network and provides urban advisory services to Humanitarian and Resident Coordinators. The agency has an important convening and catalytic role in mobilizing and bringing together local governments, built environment professionals and the research community with humanitarian and development actors. Key characteristics of UN-Habitat's approaches and experience, relevant to supporting the integration of migrants in cities, including in crisis settings, comprise of:

- integrated, inclusive, multi-stakeholder and multi-level approaches to planning and policy development;
- experience in working across administrative boundaries and different spatial planning scales;
- strong partnerships with mayors, city networks, UN agencies and development partners; including the direct engagement at the community level to enable local communities to lead development of solutions;
- linking humanitarian and development approaches to crisis response within broader UN collaboration;
- urban spatial data analysis, translating the complexity of urban challenges to inform the preparation of prioritized interventions;
- technical competence in urban planning and design, local governance, housing, basic services and urban financing for building institutional capacities of national and local authorities to increase the resilience of rural and emerging urban human settlements and infrastructure systems; and,
- well established collaboration with UN agencies such as IOM, UNHCR, UNDP, UNESCO, UNEP, FAO and WFP, and development partners (OECD, EU, World Bank, UCLG, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD and Cities Alliance).

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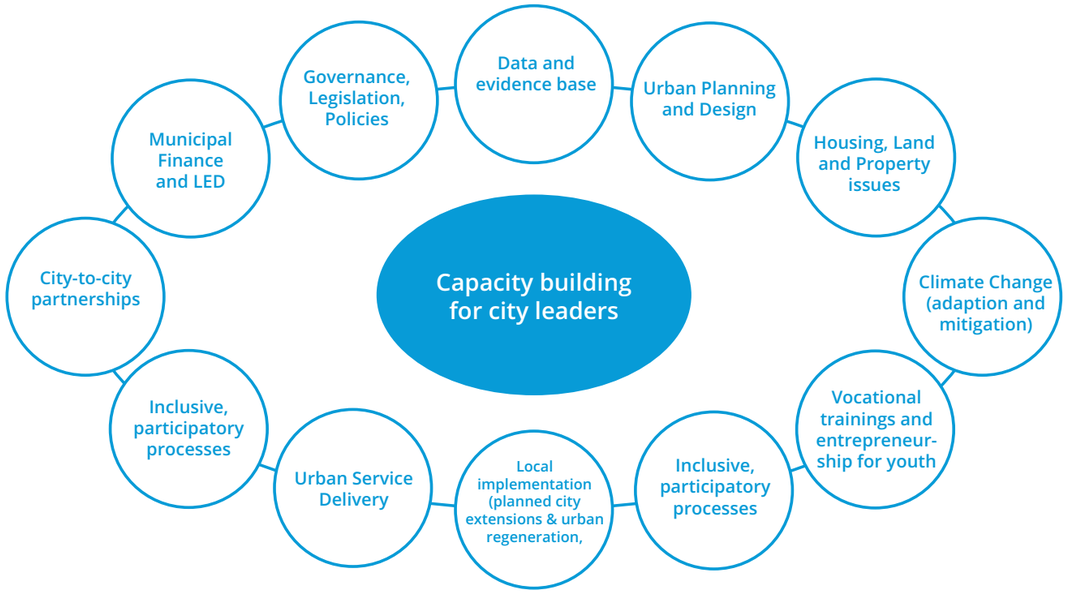

Within this collaborative and technical framework, UN-Habitat supports countries and cities of transition and destination including through:

- Research on urbanization and migration, fostering collaboration between local and international research institutes and academia;
- Capacity building for local authorities for integrating migrants, including peer-to-peer (city-to-city) learning activities;
- Development of "city profiles" focusing on migration issues;
- Support inclusive policy development that mainstreams the issue of urban migration at regional, cities, community levels;
- Technical Advisory services to review and adapt national, subnational and local urban policies, strategies and action plans related to service provision, social cohesion and integration, housing and land;
- Enhancing the dialogue between relevant stakeholders e.g. national, regional and local authorities from different sectors - local communities, private sector and civil society for better integrating migrant communities in cities;
- Supporting transit cities and regions with an integrated territorial approach to harness opportunities and cope with challenges of migrants' movements through the territory.
- Engaging with diaspora communities for integration of newly arrivals as well as on strategies for investments (e.g. remittances);
- Developing sustainable strategies for returnees and how to ensure re-integration in society.