



UN-Habitat Regional Office for Arab States Overview 2021





Regional Office for Arab States Overview 2021

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

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Cover photo (Left top): UN-Habitat organizes the second Mosul Old City Citizens Consultation Forum to develop a consensus from stakeholders on the ownership and redevelopment of Mosul, Iraq's debilitated Al Maidan riverfront and to discuss its revival. Photo by UN-Habitat

Cover Photo (Left bottom): Reem, a girl from Souf camp for Palestinian refugees, participates in interactive activities organized by UN-Habitat and the Government of Jordan's Department of Palestinian Affairs. Photo by UN-Habitat

Cover photo (Top): Haya Promenade under Haya Joint Programme in Palestine. Photo by UN-Habitat

Cover photo: (Bottom): Osama returns to his house in Syrian neighborhood after the area was rehabilitated. Photo by UN-Habitat

Design and layout: Anas Wehady

Contents

1

Foreword

4

3

Regional
Summary

7

5

2021 in Brief

10

7

Partnerships and
Alliances

45

2

Key Urban Figures
in The Arab Region

5

4

Mainstreaming
Human Rights and
Social Inclusion

8

6

Networking
and Advocacy

43

1. Foreword

“In 2021, paving the way for the realization of the cities we need, UN-Habitat took a number of catalytic actions towards the achievement of the New Urban Agenda, our roadmap for sustainable urbanization.”

Many countries around the region submitted voluntary national reviews of their progress in achieving the New Urban Agenda. UN-Habitat provided guidance, tools and technical support to countries as they captured achievements, identified trends, challenges and opportunities. Six reports were submitted from the Arab World, with three more currently being finalized. The reports act as inputs informing the UN Secretary General's Quadrennial report to be presented in the High-Level Meeting on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda in 2022.

The region hosted UN-Habitat's global observance of World Cities Day in Luxor, Egypt on October 31st which called for action on climate change discussing some of the most pressing climate priorities regionally and globally and stressing on the importance of local action. The Arab region is one of the most vulnerable regions of the world to the negative effects of climate change and is now considered the planet's most water-scarce region.

In 2021, COVID-19 was also well into its second year. Cities emerged at the forefront of the pandemic accounting for over 90% of all infections. Together with its partners and donors, UN-Habitat was quick to respond with programming that ensured access to basic hygiene and services infrastructure. However, as we cautiously emerge from the pandemic, cities have also proven to be dynamic centers that play a transformative role in sustainable recovery. Our flagship report “Cities and Pandemics” analyzed 1700 cities in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and documented how compact, well-planned cities combining residential and commercial functions with public spaces and affordable housing can improve public health, the local economy and the environment.

In the Arab Region, the majority of national

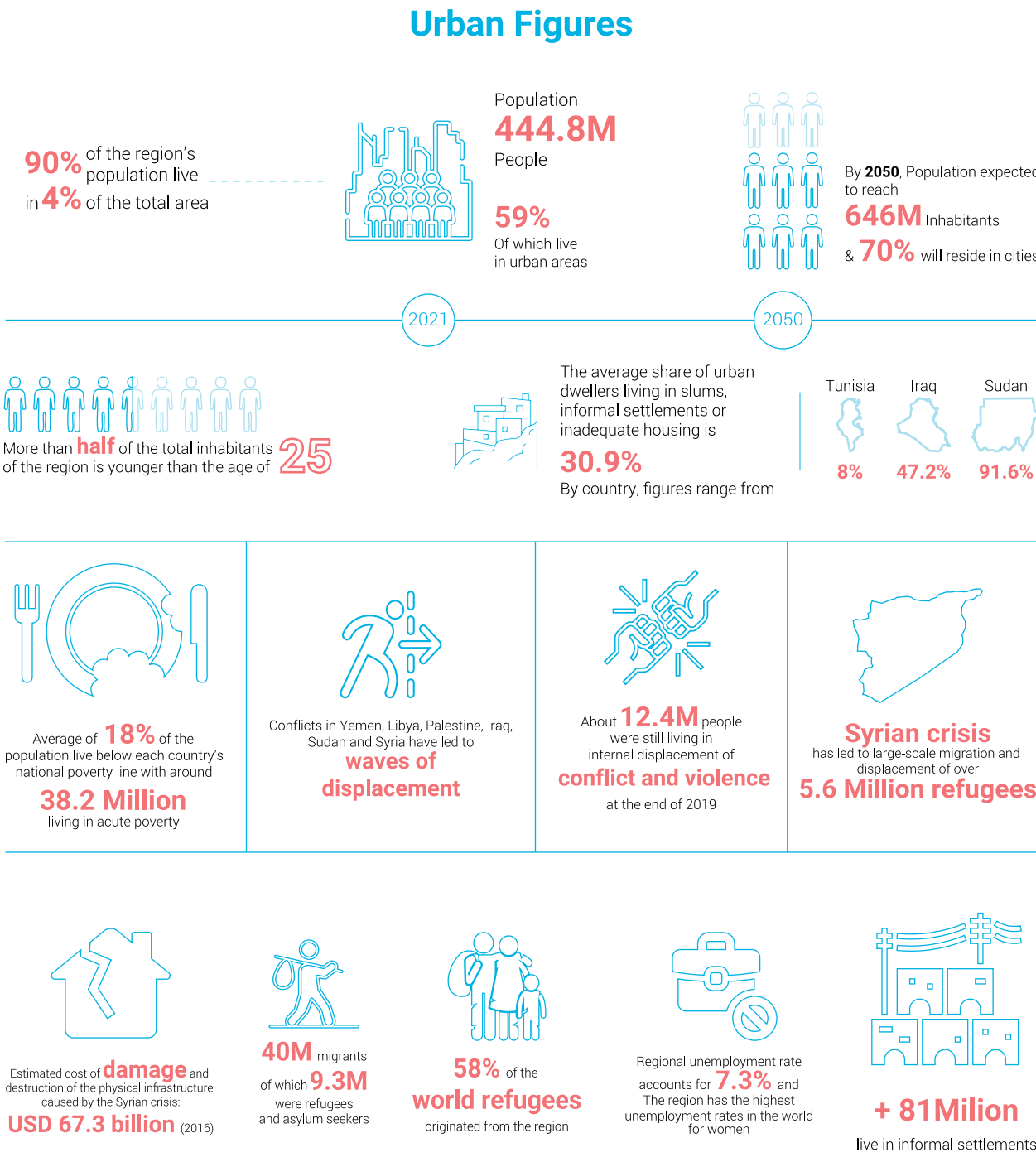
governments adopted the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in their national development plans, but the region was not on track to achieving its targets even before the outbreak of COVID-19. The pandemic only served to exacerbate the situation. Projections of the impact of COVID-19 estimated economies shrinking by as much as 13% in some conflict countries, driving the estimated number of population living in poverty up to 115 million, or one quarter of the Arab population.

Key to recovery in a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape is the active participation of local governments. Using the SDGs as a framework for recovery, cities can identify priority actions based on local needs and contexts to address inequalities.

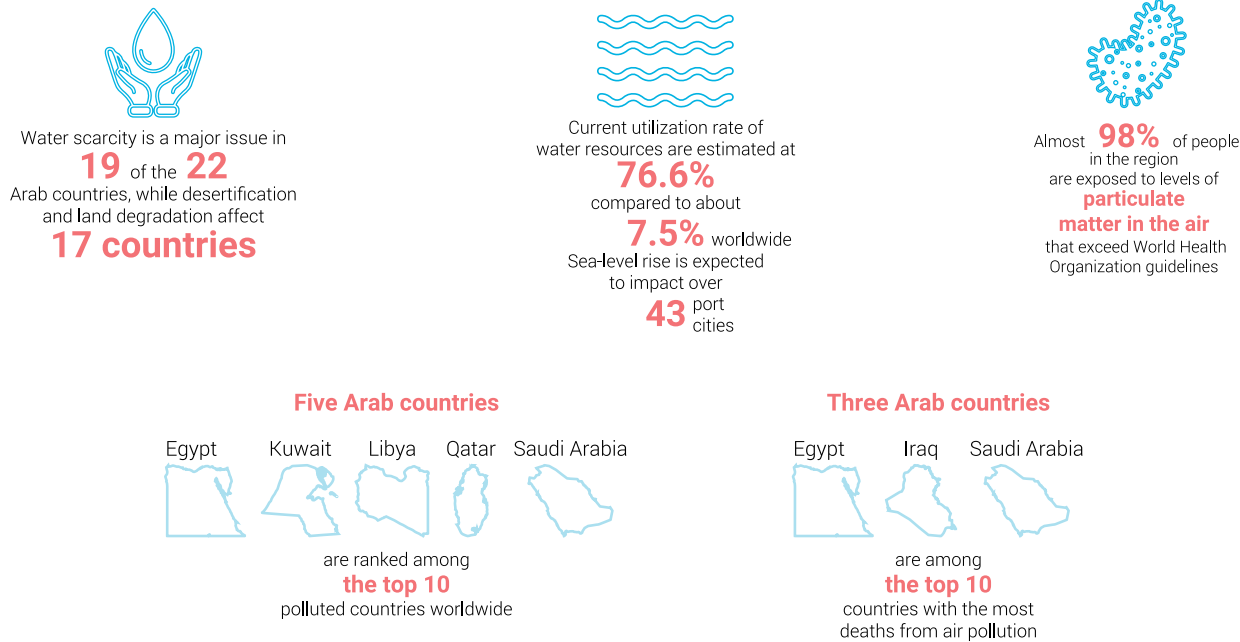
Over the course of the year, we expanded our commitment in the region by opening two new country offices in Morocco and Bahrain. We continue to work closely with governments and partners to achieve a better future through well-planned and well-managed urbanization as well as reach the cities we envision: prosperous, inclusive and resilient.

Erfan Ali
Regional Representative for Arab States
UN-Habitat

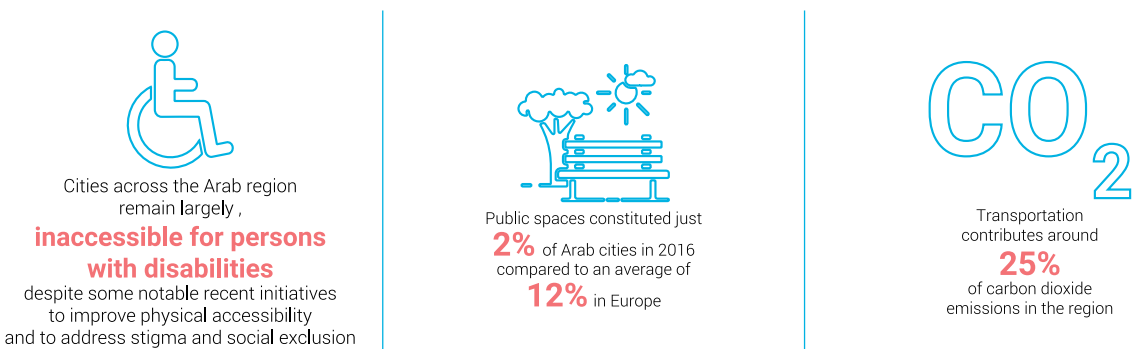
2. Key Urban Figures in The Arab Region



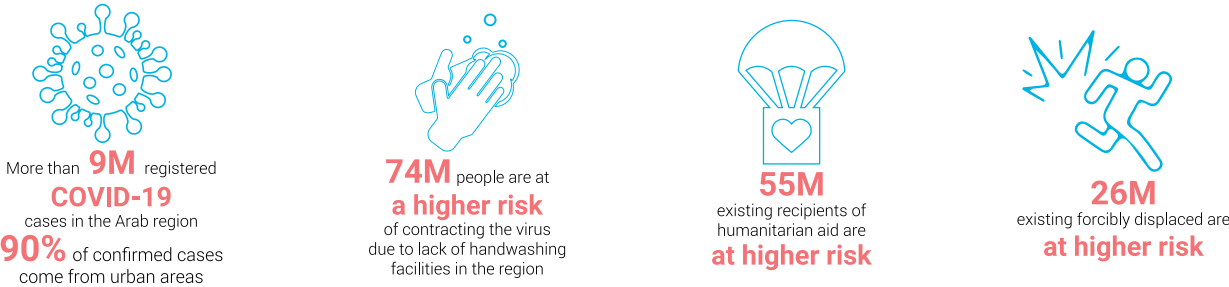
Environment and Climate Change



Public Spaces and Transport



COVID-19 Figures



3. Regional Summary



Sustainable urbanization is a driver of development, poverty reduction and peace. UN-Habitat is striving to utilize it to advance the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Arab region. This aligns with the overarching goal of UN-Habitat's Regional Strategic Plan for Arab States (2020-2023) to advance **"sustainable urbanization as a driver of development and peace and to improve living conditions for all in line with the SDGs."** The Strategic Plan was developed to present strategic priorities and focus areas of work and to lay out the roadmap for achieving four mutually reinforcing and integrated goals, or **"domains of change,"** in the Arab region.



Country Presence

UN-Habitat Regional Office for Arab States (ROAS) has current activity in **16 countries** and **13 operating** country offices

4. Mainstreaming Human Rights and Social Inclusion

Human Rights, including the rights to adequate housing, as well as safe water and sanitation, are included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights instruments. UN-Habitat is working toward more sustainable, safe, resilient and inclusive cities.

Ensuring Continuity of Care and Prevention in Response to COVID-19: The Rehabilitation of the National AIDS and Tuberculosis Centre in Lebanon

Completed in December, 2020, the renovation of the National AIDS and Tuberculosis Centre in Lebanon is an example of a comprehensive project that has contributed to the betterment of human rights. Much of it was destroyed following the Port of Beirut explosion in August, 2020. As a direct result of the renovations, the facility now has the capacity to accommodate 1,450 patients per month instead of 600. Updated equipment has improved social and health conditions for the examination of patients and offered decreased levels of exposure to the COVID-19 virus through several interventions.

UN-Habitat completely renovated the centre. Solar panels were installed to provide reliable and renewable energy, making it fully self-reliant on its own electricity, which is vital in Lebanon’s current situation. Improvements have been made to the public spaces around the centre to enhance connectivity to surrounding areas. Six hundred households living in Karantina received hygiene kits as part of this project, especially those who are considered vulnerable. These included female-headed households, women, girls, the elderly and people with disabilities. Public handwashing stations were also installed around the grounds. Hygiene kits and the handwashing stations ensure better protection for the community from COVID-19 transmission.

The centre’s rehabilitation ensures that at least 90 percent of HIV and tuberculosis (TB) patients will benefit from restored services and improved conditions, including women and youth, who can once again access health care, medications and awareness sessions. Free medication provided by the centre is critical for boosting HIV and TB patients’ immunity systems against COVID-19. The TB programme now also offers free PCR testing.

With support from UN-Habitat, the National AIDS and Tuberculosis Centre in Lebanon now provides a restored, multifunctional, green, public space that offers enhanced amenities and services to all, but particularly to vulnerable populations. This has been especially critical for patients and their families during the pandemic. The project aligns with UN-Habitat’s global guidance and messaging on COVID-19 and public spaces.

Breakdown of Beneficiaries

Rehabilitation and Outdoor Shading Structure

Direct: Four thousand people, including migrant workers, refugees and vulnerable Lebanese living with HIV/TB who are subjected to increased risk of COVID-19.

Indirect: Patients’ families, staff, Ministry of Public Health officials, NGO workers, approximately 20-50,000 migrant workers, refugees and the general population, since the centre’s programmes offer prevention and treatment for the whole country.

Public Space

Direct: Seven thousand local residents—including children and people with disabilities—and hospital visitors will benefit from the updated sidewalks and safe play areas.

Hygiene Kits Distribution

Direct: Five hundred and fifty-two households and 2,500 people from the host and refugee communities in Karantina were provided with lifesaving personal hygiene protection kits.

Syrian Women Help With Urban Recovery Planning in Community Workshop

In collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund, UN-HABITAT in Syria organized a community consultation workshop to engage women in participatory urban recovery planning. Representing different backgrounds and educational levels, women from all over the Daraa Governorate attended. Daraa is one of the fourteen provinces in the south-west of the country and is currently experiencing a humanitarian crisis. The women discussed their challenges and needs and shared opinions about which locations should be included in the Safer Access Project in light of their needs. Sharing their deep local knowledge, the women helped to prioritize five pivotal urban and rural locations that will be important for the UN-Habitat team to consider when they implement the project.

Resident of Karantina, Beirut picks up hygiene kit under UN-Habitat’s project to rehabilitate the National HIV and TB Centre. Photo by UN-Habitat, 2021



5. 2021 in Brief

In 2021, UN-Habitat worked collaboratively with other United Nations partners, local and national governments, NGOs and host funding partners to improve the lives of many vulnerable populations across the Arab region. Work to address the ongoing challenges of the pandemic that begun in 2020 as part of the COVID-19 Response Plan continued across many countries. Awareness-raising sessions for city residents and training opportunities for community leaders were offered to help mitigate the transmission of the virus. The introduction of sanitation and hygiene stations in public spaces—from parks to refugee camps—occurred in almost every country.

Support for basic services in poor urban communities continued apace. Using mapping and data collection tools, many regions and neighborhoods were targeted for help. Homes, facilities and public spaces were rehabilitated. The pressing issue of water-scarcity was also broadly addressed through the implementation of several water-saving and waste management strategies. In all cases, UN-Habitat strove to engage the voices of all stakeholders to ensure the long-term investment of local populations in each project and the most effective outcomes. Some of this work is highlighted in the regional initiatives and country projects below.

COVID-19 response initiatives and projects

In Iraq

In the city of Heet, 60 houses were rehabilitated, 262 households (representing 1,434 individuals) benefitted from water network extensions and seven health facilities were upgraded with a focus on water and sanitation, including Heet General Hospital. In total, 319,406 beneficiaries were impacted by the interventions. With funding from the Japanese government and in partnership with Peace Winds Japan (PWJ), UN-Habitat launched vocational training for 200 unemployed returnees, including 80 females in Dkory and Tal Banat villages in Sinjar.

UN-Habitat also partnered with PWJ to increase access to employment opportunities and to conduct an awareness-raising campaign in response to the COVID-19 crisis,

targeting more than 1,200 beneficiaries in Tal Banat. As part of the Headway Programme, implemented in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme and funded by the European Union, UN-Habitat distributed **290 WASH/cleaning kits to targeted beneficiary families in selected vulnerable neighbourhoods in Erbil and Mosul to help raise awareness about the importance of good hygiene habits in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.** The kits included a leaflet promoting water-saving strategies and practicing hygiene with less water to counter the ongoing water scarcity in Iraq.

In Palestine

Efforts to address COVID-19 challenges in the Bethlehem Governorate directly targeted 60,000 Palestinians—of which 20,000 were refugees—and indirectly reached 217,400 people, 49 per cent of which were female and 33 per cent were youth. A further two million people were reached via social media.

The interventions supported solid waste management efforts in Bethlehem to ensure continuity of the provision of these basic services amid the pandemic. More specifically, about 1,882 tons of waste were collected, transported and disposed of in the Al Menya landfill from three refugee camps. Other efforts included an awareness-raising campaign to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the disinfection of public spaces and the installation of handwashing units. Physical sanitation and hygiene units that minimized the need to touch the surface of the unit were considered as design alternatives.

The project also contributed to the preparation of the first report outlining Palestine's work to implement Sustainable Development Goal number 11 which aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

In Sudan

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, UN-Habitat implemented a number of interventions in collaboration with Khartoum State Ministry of Social Development Foundation as IP, under Alwaleed Philanthropies/SIDA fund, targeting urban displacement and homeless populations in informal settlements in the Jabal Awlia locality, just south of Khartoum.

Three hundred shelter units were rehabilitated and extended, benefitting 300 vulnerable households (approximately 1,800 people) by reducing overcrowding and mitigating spread of the virus. These included female-headed households and households with a family member living with a disability. Three trainings were provided on flood-resistant building technology using stabilized soil blocks, in order to better address flooding and pandemic challenges. Sixty-six people participated in the trainings and this resulted in the building of two additional shelter units using the stabilized soil blocks.

In addition, four awareness workshops were conducted, targeting more than 240 beneficiaries in the local community, including women and children at risk of infection. A campaign of 15 radio awareness broadcasts

about COVID-19 was broadcast twice daily for a month from December, 2020 to January, 2021, accompanied by the dissemination of 500 informational flyers to families. Thirty mobile handwashing facilities were added in 23 girls' schools and seven boys' schools in the Jabal Awlia locality and essential COVID-19 supplies (soap, facemask, hand sanitizer) were given to six social care centers with a total of 1,121 beneficiaries. Two training and capacity-building workshops on monitoring and evaluating construction work were provided to 10 NGOs to ensure the delivery of housing units, enhance local capacities and scale up and sustain project intervention.

In Syria

Four projects were implemented in 2021 to limit the spread of COVID-19 in Homs in the Talbiseh, Ar-Rastan and Al-Waar neighborhood, in Hama in the Suran and Fayhaa neighborhood and in the Arbin, Jaramana, Harasta, Duma, Al-Zabadani, Al-Tal, Saida Zeinab areas of Damascus. Three projects were funded by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Sudan and one was funded by Alwaleed Philanthropies—together they targeted six municipalities in rural Damascus. Six hundred and thirteen thousand persons living in densely populated, poor areas with huge needs directly benefitted from the four projects.

The activities included removal of more than 14,000 cubic metres of solid waste and debris; provision of 225 solid waste containers; 55 masks and gloves; 166 portable sterilization spray devices; 13,150 litres of sterilization solutions; the deployment of 80 solid waste workers; rehabilitation of wastewater networks and house connections and the rehabilitation of water supply systems and water pipelines in multiple locations, including: 20 locations in Duma (500M); 12 locations in Harasta; six locations in Al-Zabadani; 200m in Saida Zeinab (Lahlwh & Bahdliah street); 100 LM in Jaramana; and 125LM in al Tal. UN-Habitat also supported municipalities in mapping needs and conducted awareness sessions and hygiene campaigns in Homs and in rural Damascus and supported assessment of municipal capacities in terms of contingency planning and responding to emergencies.

In Tunisia

Identifying the homeless population as one of the most vulnerable groups during the COVID-19 pandemic, the project enhanced a homeless centre's reception capacity and rehabilitated living areas, including rooms, sanitary blocks, windows, and outdoor landscaping. This work directly benefitted more than 1000 homeless men and women, including elderly people and children and indirectly impacted a further 3000 homeless people.

UN-Habitat also supported the government in mapping the needs of the homeless, addressed forced evictions, reviewed the housing sector strategy, assessed the need for health and basic services in slums, developed a Leave No One Behind mobile application to provide information, support and services to the most vulnerable and provided guidance for public transport for the homeless. UN-Habitat also provided policy support and rapid operational solutions to address forced evictions and improve the protection of the homeless and coordinated operational support to address the needs of vulnerable groups in urban areas. The Mediterranean City-to-City Migration (MC2CM) project was established in the Municipality of La Marsa, which identified and addressed the needs of local governance of urban migration, leading to the launch of

a study on the impact of COVID-19 on the migrant population through cultural activities. In parallel, an architectural competition was organized for innovative, low-cost and quickly-buildable housing solutions for low-income households, ready for use by the Ministry of Equipment, Housing and Territorial Planning. The competition targeted 95 students from which five winning projects were selected. During the competition, 20 volunteer teachers and six Tunisian entrepreneurs and experts worked with participating students. Another conference was held with BEITY, a non-profit association fighting for women rights, to present a study on social evictions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Lebanon

The Municipality of Beirut, Lebanon, partnered with UN-Habitat to purchase and operate its first Municipal Mobile Health Clinic to provide free and non-discriminatory COVID-19 testing and vaccines to any individual unable to access basic medical services, including migrants and refugees in marginalized neighbourhoods. Following a comparative study, the vulnerable areas of Hayy Tamlis and Sabra were selected as the principal target areas for intervention. Municipal Social Cell gathered information about the health issues and needs in the neighbourhoods and conducted awareness-raising sessions on COVID-19 preventative methods. The Mobile Health Clinic provided

PCR tests for 296 persons in December, 2021. Fifteen handwashing stations were also established in private facilities in Beirut.

With funding from the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Lebanon, UN-Habitat provided 220 families in Sabra with lifesaving personal hygiene protection kits which enabled approximately 1,066 residents to adopt proper hygiene practices for two months, reducing the pressures caused by the constantly increasing living costs and household-related expenditures. With a United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund grant to support vulnerable households affected by the 2020 Beirut Port blast, 816 households received informative sessions on COVID-19 preventative measures.

In Jordan

UN-Habitat designed a public space in the Ghor Al Safi neighbourhood as part of the United Nations COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi Partner Trust Fund, whose aim is to empower local women of all socio-economic backgrounds to have a safe and inclusive public space, including a market and community centre. Using consultation sessions and tools, UN-Habitat invited the community to engage in imagining the design, implementation and maintenance of the space to ensure it would be gender-sensitive, inclusive and safe.

Additionally, in response to the risks faced by the refugee population during the pandemic, a project aiming at enhancing the safety and resilience of Palestinian Refugees through improving access to water and sanitation facilities in public spaces was established. The project, funded by the UN-Habitat Global Public Space Programme, targeted the public spaces of Souf and Al-Shahid camps. Considering the limited resources in Jordan for conducting widespread COVID-19 testing, UN-Habitat collaborated with the Royal Scientific Society to address the presence of COVID-19 in the wastewater as a way to identify potential cases. Funding for this project was provided by the United Nations' Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance.

COVID-19 awareness-raising session, Sudan.
Photo by UN-Habitat



5. 2021 Highlights



Domain of Change 1

Reduced spatial inequality and poverty in communities across the urban-rural continuum

Regional Initiatives and Projects

UN-Habitat consolidates its experience in the areas of basic services, housing and slum upgrading, land, urban mobility, public space and the effective growth and regeneration of settlements, which contributes to reduced spatial inequality and poverty in the Arab Region. As part of the regional programme, **“Towards Arab Cities Without Informal Settlements”** launched in Abu Dhabi in 2020, UN-Habitat provided technical support to 12 Arab cities. Technical support aimed to help them prioritize development projects to reduce vulnerability and generate more than 70,000 job opportunities.

A regional consultation workshop was held under the theme “Building Back Better in the Arab Region: Supporting Spatial Equality: Urban Regeneration and Informal Settlements”. The workshop aimed to encourage the use of city planning and management tools to advance sustainable local recovery and development in the region. Using materials from the drafting of the “Iraq Housing Reconstruction and Housing

In Egypt

UN-Habitat developed a programme in partnership with the Urban Development Fund (UDF) in Egypt to identify a new approach to urban upgrading and development in Egypt. The study results were endorsed by the Minister of Housing. With community participation, the programme identified potential development opportunities in deteriorating areas as a way to further the Sustainable Development Goals in cities. The new methodology was piloted in four Egyptian cities prior to national replication. The UDF’s digital urban monitoring unit aided in gathering data to further knowledge-based management and decision making to advance the project’s priorities.

The Sharm El-Sheikh Strategic Plan for Urban Development was endorsed in 2021 with the goal of improving quality of life in the city through green and economic initiatives. This included recommending financing mechanisms to support city leaders. These private and public projects drew from pre-feasibility studies and explored several funding sources. The government also endorsed strategic plans for Kafr El Batiekh, Gamasa, Nasr El Noba and Tamy El amdid, providing new opportunities for urban expansion and regeneration to enable these cities to play a more effective role within their regions.

UN-Habitat continued to support innovation in the water, sanitation, and hygiene sector. The activities

maintenance were translated into Arabic and are being disseminated to key stakeholders.

Advancements in sanitation work include the setup of a new containerized sewage treatment unit in Damietta on the Nile Delta serving 5,000 inhabitants without access to sanitation services. This decentralized sewage treatment approach may be replicated in other small communities in Egypt to improve surface water quality and the livelihoods of many more Egyptians.

In Saudi Arabia

UN-Habitat mobilized university students, female-led non-profit organizations and local experts through a series of workshops and activities designed to reimagine new culturally-appropriate and gender-sensitive housing and neighborhoods in the future development plans of Saudi cities.

In Tunisia

A contest for innovative ideas was launched for architecture students under the theme, “A Roof for Dignity: Designing an economic and decent habitat for the homeless in Tunis.” UN-Habitat launched the rehabilitation work of homeless centers in three cities: Tunis, Sousse and Sfax to provide the homeless with adequate shelter, access to basic hygiene facilities and socio-psychological support.

In Syria

Aiming to advance Municipal Technical Support Offices and under the “Urban Recovery Framework” project, several thematic papers were developed. Four participatory plans were developed in Daraa, Aleppo, Deir Ezor and Homs; seven urban recovery projects were introduced in Aleppo, which included the rehabilitation of a microbus station, rehabilitation of roads, solid waste management, monitoring of air pollution, treatment of medical waste; and improved access to cadastral services for returnees to Aleppo. All these activities boosted recovery in the Qadi Askar and Al-Surian neighborhoods.

In Daraa, UN-Habitat joined with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency to support the restoration of basic services and rehabilitation of wastewater connections in a Palestinian camp, which encouraged returnees. In Deir Ezzor, UN-Habitat supported the restoration of roads, a bridge and a microbus station. Under the joint programme to support urban rural resilience in Daraa and Deir Ezzor, mapping was used to conduct assessments of roads and utilities, markets, cultural heritage sites and open spaces.

In Iraq

UN-Habitat continues its efforts to promote sustainable urban recovery and resilience by rehabilitating war-damaged infrastructure and facilities in Iraq. With European Union funding for local area development, UN-Habitat completed the rehabilitation of four water treatment plants—the Al Maliha plant in Baiji, the Salah al Din, Al Jubair plant in Yathrib Sub-District and two plants in Al Baker in the city of Heet in Anbar. The team also completed the rehabilitation of a community hall in Mosul and initiated work on a kindergarten in Telafar. In the Al Anbar Governorate, the local development team completed the rehabilitation of 130 war-damaged houses in Heet and involved the community in the participatory design of a new park that was subsequently inaugurated in May.

In the rural town of Yathrib in Salah al Din, the team designed and constructed 21 houses for vulnerable returnees whose homes had been completely destroyed. WASH upgrades were implemented in seven health facilities in Heet, including Heet General Hospital which has a catchment population of 130,000 people. Intensive capacity building trainings were held for technical staff and engineers from water directorates and municipalities on the effective maintenance and operation of water networks in Erbil, Mosul, Duhok, Sumel and Sinjar. Up-to-date knowledge on the most effective maintenance procedures of water networks and pumping stations was provided in the trainings. UN-Habitat also completed the implementation of five small-scale WASH projects with a focus on the rehabilitation of

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