



PLAN ASSESSMENT TOOL

FOR RAPIDLY GROWING CITIES

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Foreword

Over the past 20 years, over 75 per cent of the world's cities have grown more unequal. Although the world has made significant progress in reducing poverty since 2000, inequality is rising in the cities of both the developing and developed world. Today, the gap between the rich and the poor in most countries is at its highest level in 30 years; the global top one per cent of earners have captured twice as much of that growth as the 50 per cent poorest.

With almost 70% of global GDP generated in cities, it is clear that sustainable and inclusive urbanization can have a positive catalytic impact on development at large. Yet, urbanization in the most rapidly growing parts of the world - Southern and Eastern Asia, as well as sub-Saharan Africa - is largely unplanned, fueling urban sprawl as well as the continuous growth of informal settlements with inadequate living conditions.

Well-planned urbanization, resulting in efficient and more equitable cities and towns, can help drive the sustainable development agenda towards social and cultural change, environmental protection and economic growth. This is acknowledged in the New Urban Agenda, adopted by UN member states at the Habitat III Conference in Quito in 2016.

City-scale plans are the most fundamental and powerful tools governments have to steer cities toward sustainable development. These plans represent the translation of strategies and visions into a comprehensive set of guidelines, norms and rules. They regulate public and private action in the process of urbanization, identifying priorities, catalytic projects, infrastructure and facilities, as well as regulating the day-to-day private development actions. The quality and implementability of such frameworks determine to a large extent the quality of the urban development process in cities and its outcomes.

The Plan Assessment Tool (PAT) has been developed by UN-Habitat to help identify strengths and weaknesses of city-scale plans in a structured, objective and systematic fashion. The tool assesses the ability of the plan to realize the objectives of sustainable development, its ease of use, coherence with the broader planning framework, and consistency for future implementation.

Well-planned and well-governed cities can address issues related to poverty, social exclusion and spatial inequality, enhance shared prosperity, protect the natural environment, and also be resilient in the face of crises. The Plan Assessment Tool will bring awareness about the basic principles that a city-scale plan must include to achieve these goals, as building blocks of a more sustainable, integrated and resilient city.

I am certain that this Tool will be immensely useful to urban practitioners, decision makers and urban planners, but also to citizens that want to learn more about their cities and sustainable planning. It will allow them to better assess the existing plans and identify pathways to improve the quality of urban planning towards prosperous and resilient communities and cities. The Tool will also help creating awareness about the challenges and actions needed for achieving more sustainable cities and will be a contribution towards the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals and implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif

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A section of Medellín town in Colombia © Julius Mwelu UN-Habitat



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the PAT

City governments globally rely on Master Plans to plan their cities. A plan is a collection of strategic policies that guide urban development in a sustainable form. While the traditional and static planning document is slowly making way for more dynamic plans on interactive media, the purpose of the plan remains unchanged — to plan, control, develop, and regulate growth of a city and its surrounding areas. The Plan provides a common framework for regulating public and private action in the process of urbanisation and lists priorities for catalytic projects, infrastructures, and facilities.

Plans are mostly prepared for 5-, 10-, or 20-year planning periods depending on the type and purpose of the plan. Once prepared, the plans are seldom assessed or monitored to check the validity of the plan over the years or its successful implementation. The Plan Assessment Tool is designed to reflect and assess the plan in its current state for its comprehensive coverage of topics, clarity in articulation, and ease of application and implementation. The assessment can reveal the strengths and weaknesses of the plan that have an impact on its influence over the development of the city and the development of future plans.

The tool upholds the values and objectives outlined in the New Urban Agenda and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The New Urban Agenda outlines the way planning of cities can help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. It lists the principles, guidelines and practices to implement actions on the ground that aim to reduce inequality, promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, improve health and increase the

1.1.1 UN-Habitat's Guiding Principles for Neighborhood and City Planning

In recent decades, the landscape of cities has changed significantly because of rapid urban population growth. A major feature of fast-growing cities is urban sprawl, which drives the occupation of large areas of land and is usually accompanied by many serious problems including inefficient land-use, high car dependency, low density and high segregation of uses. Coupled with land-use speculation, current models of city growth result in fragmented and inefficient urban space where the urban advantage is lost.

Cities of the future should build a different type of urban structure and space, where city life thrives and the most common problems of current urbanisation are addressed. UN-Habitat proposes an approach that summarizes and refines existing sustainable urban planning theories to help build a new and sustainable relationship between urban dwellers and urban space, and to increase the value of urban land. This approach is based on five principles that support three key features of sustainable neighbourhoods and cities: compact, integrated, and connected.

- Promote high density urban growth, alleviate urban sprawl and maximize land efficiency.
- Promote sustainable, diversified, socially equal and thriving communities in economically viable ways.
- Encourage walkable neighbourhoods and reduce car dependency.
- Optimise use of land and provide an interconnected network of streets which facilitate safe, efficient and pleasant walking, cycling and driving.

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