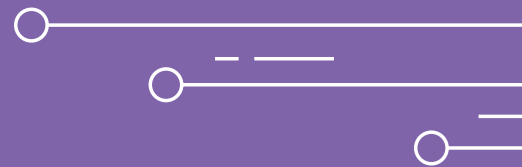


Current projects, initiatives and partnerships

January 2021



Why innovation matters

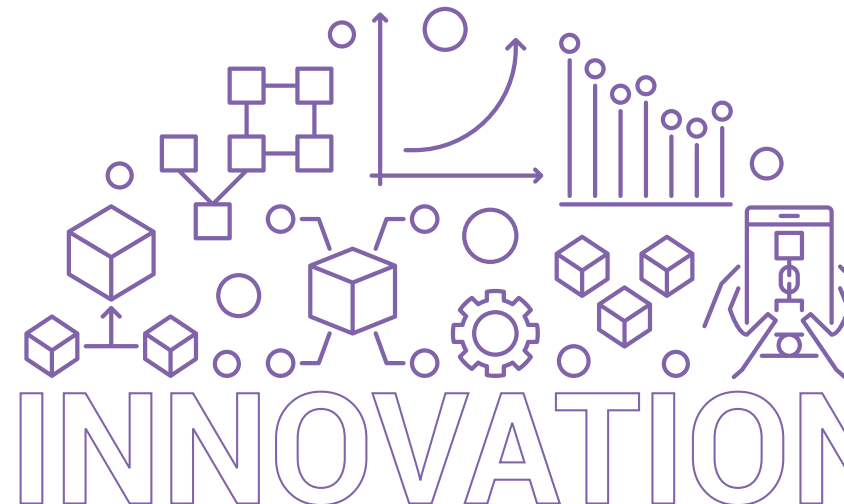
Innovation is now an essential problem-solving system for our everyday living and our capacity to tackle the most pressing challenges the world faces today. Most of these challenges, including those as a result of unplanned or unsustainable urbanization, occur simultaneously and are interconnected, meaning the next generation of innovators has a responsibility and opportunity to respond with innovative knowledge, tools and activities. Cities require low-cost, practical and tested solutions that build sustainable communities, healthy lives and economies that leverage creativity and digital transformation. Innovation is critical for UN-Habitat and partners to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals as part of the 2030 Agenda.

UN-Habitat's dynamic approach to innovation

Cities need an integrated, dynamic and nuanced understanding of innovation in order to inspire organizations and communities to develop imaginative, effective solutions to the biggest challenges. When applied in the right context, innovation can act as a catalyst for change, deliver impacts at scale, put people at the centre and build a better future for all.

UN-Habitat has developed a dynamic, integrated approach to innovation: For UN-Habitat, innovation means embracing new ideas, up-to-date means and fresh approaches to our work. It incorporates both digital and non-digital technologies as both work in tandem together. It can take shape as an approach, a process, a practical tool or an application. It is based on horizontal and collaborative working practices that consider a diverse range of views and considers the context in which the innovation is taking place.

Working closely with cities, regions and countries, our innovation programmes and projects support bold and progressive ideas and translate them into long-term changes in the countries and cities we work in, ensuring that no one and no place is left behind.



UN-Habitat offers a range of innovation tools and knowledge



Innovative approaches and methodologies

Tackling urban challenges with new ideas and knowledge or a new perspective, is a unique feature of UN-Habitat's approach to innovation. We develop, prototype, test, and learn from our experience, which makes our methods stronger and more relevant.

- [UN-Habitat Innovation Challenges](#)
- [Leading the first United Nations Innovation Technology Accelerator for Cities](#)
- [People-centered smart cities flagship](#)
- [Helping cities to use big data to deliver their SDG 11 commitments](#)



Technical guidance to governments

UN-Habitat brings a depth and breadth of sustainable urbanization knowledge when considering innovative solutions. We add value to our knowledge by providing the guidance and tools to promote innovative participatory approaches promoting the collection of new and deeper data and dynamic multi-sector partnerships.

- [Supporting governments with smart city planning and connecting National Urban Policies with smart city plans](#)
- [Innovative tools to understanding land rights, gather community level data and promote tenure security through the Global Land Tool Network \(GLTN\)](#)
- [Rwanda Smart City Masterplan](#)



Unique tools

UN-Habitat develops practical, tools to help national and local governments and other stakeholders have innovative and practical tools at hand to address their urban challenges, whether through tools that create dynamic and inclusive participatory processes or those that enable stakeholders and investors to agree on key projects and funding options to address an urban solution.

- [Promoting inclusive processes to resilience planning through the CityRAP tool](#)
- [Using digital technologies through Minecraft to develop interactive public space planning](#)
- [Developing a platform for women and girls to imagine their city: HerCity](#)
- [Designing digital platforms and apps \(e.g. KOBO Toolbox, SHERPA, Smart City App, social tenure domain model \(STDM\), etc.\)](#)



Research and knowledge creation

UN-Habitat has a strong track record of collecting data and understanding cities through the production of globally relevant reports such as the World Cities Report, which also reflect on the role of innovation in responding to urbanization challenges.













- [UN-Habitat's World Cities Report \(2020\), Chapter 6 "Innovation, Technology and the Value of Sustainable Urbanization"](#)
- [Future of Asian and Pacific Cities \(2019\), Chapter 3 "The Future of Smart and Inclusive Cities"](#)
- [Opportunities for Challenge-Driven Innovation in Emerging Economies](#)
- [Future Cities: New Economy and Shared City Prosperity driven by Technological Innovations \(2020\)](#)
- [Innovation for better quality of life in cities and communities, UN-Habitat Assembly \(2019\)](#)

Snapshot of the Innovation Unit's initiatives

Below is a snapshot of the Innovation Unit's initiatives which contribute to our mandate to (1) strengthen the innovation culture within the organization, and (2) work with partners to apply innovation as a tool to deliver sustainable cities and communities.






1. Normative products - in collaboration with our Urban Practices Division

						
Innovation Guidance Note	Note on SG's Digital Cooperation Roadmap	Blockchain policy recommendations paper	Innovations in social inclusion recommendations paper	Innovation in entrepreneurship recommendations paper	Innovations and technology in participatory budgeting	Urban climate innovation recommendations paper
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
						
UN-Habitat People Centred Smart Cities position paper	Methodology for UN-Habitat Innovation Challenges	Concept paper on challenge funds	Concept paper on youth and urban technologies	COVID-19, economic chapter for the special edition of the World Cities Report	INED papers and case studies on industrial policy and technologies	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	



2. Capacity building

		
Urban innovation series	Innovations learning series	Increased online engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Using apps and digital tools to effectively deliver UN-Habitat projects ■ Innovations in data collections ■ Mission-driven innovation policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Understanding more about innovation ■ Design thinking ■ Urban innovations ■ Smart city models ■ AI in urban development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Innovation topics discussed in UN-Habitat's podcast ■ Innovation webpage on UN-Habitat's corporate website ■ Social media updates, showcasing UN-Habitat's work on innovation ■ Regular news stories about ongoing projects
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



5. Where we work



Hamburg

United Nations
Innovation
Technology
Accelerator for Cities



Mexico City

Innovation
Pavilion



Toronto

Regent Park World
Urban Pavilion



Barcelona

Secondary office of
the Innovation Unit



Innovation Unit contacts

UN-Habitat's Innovation Unit team are available for technical advice and support.

Contact the following colleagues for more information:

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Isabel Wetzel, isabel.wetzel@un.org

Abdinassir Sagar, abdinassir.sagar@un.org

For general inquiries, do not hesitate to contact our Innovation Unit email address: unhabitat-innovation@un.org

Emerging topics we are exploring

In the context of UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan, the Innovation Unit's work plan and the priorities set with our partners, UN-Habitat continues to explore new, cutting-edge topics for further research, testing and programming. Some of the emerging topics are:

1



How frontier technologies such as AI and blockchain shape urban development

2



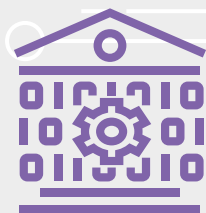
Exploring innovative, participatory methods and bridging the digital divide

3



Designing the UN-Habitat Innovation Challenge methodology, and running challenge prizes and accelerators for municipalities, communities, start-ups and other partners

4



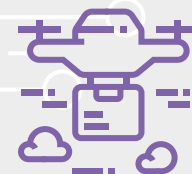
Digitizing local government services and civic participation

5

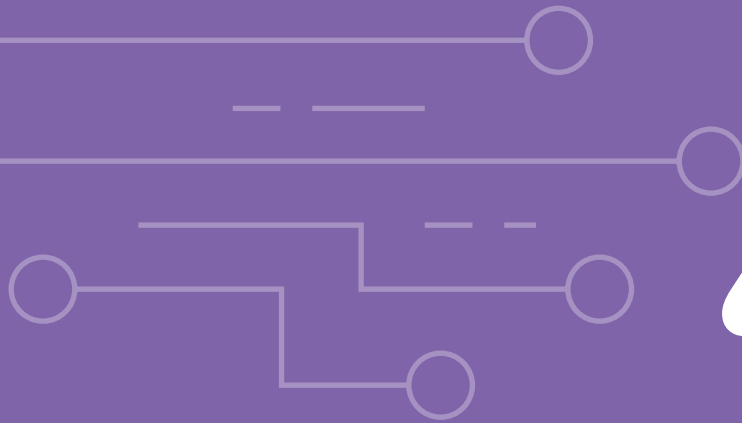


Future urban landscapes, including exploring tangible solutions around digital economies, circular cities, climate innovations and e-governance

6



Testing, prototyping and piloting innovative ideas through city testbeds



“The next generation of innovators has a responsibility to respond to urban challenges with innovative knowledge, tools and solutions.



**UN-HABITAT
INNOVATION**

**A better quality of life for all
in an urbanizing world**

Regular updates on UN-Habitat's work are available on
www.unhabitat.org



**UN-HABITAT
INNOVATION**

The text 'UN-HABITAT INNOVATION' is rendered in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The letters are filled with intricate line-art icons representing urban planning, architecture, and infrastructure, such as buildings, roads, and tools.

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME
P.O. Box 30030, Nairobi 00100, Kenya
www.unhabitat.org

UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

The logo consists of the text 'UN HABITAT' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The 'U' and 'N' are connected. To the right of the text is the United Nations emblem, a blue globe with a white map of the world. Below the main text is the tagline 'FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE' in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font.