

# UNHABITAT

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme

## 1. Facts and figures

**Type of organisation:** Programme financed through voluntary contributions

**Established in:** 1976 (as the United Nations Human Settlements Centre)

**Headquarters:** Nairobi

**Number of country/regional offices:** 3 regional offices, 5 information and liaison offices, and 43 country and project offices

**Head of organisation:** UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director Joan Clos (Spain)

**Date of Governing Council Meeting in 2013:** 15–19 April

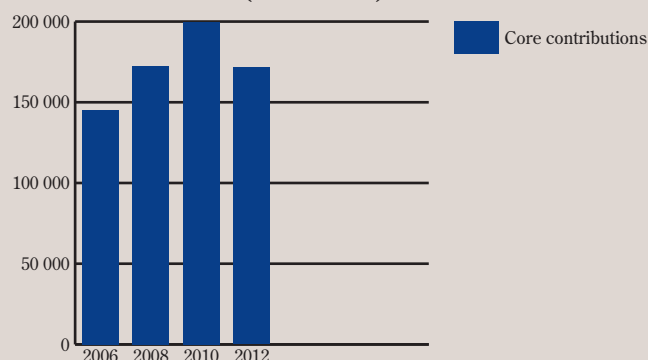
**Norway's representation in Council:** In practice permanent due to the lack of competition for the seat

**Number of Norwegian staff:** 3

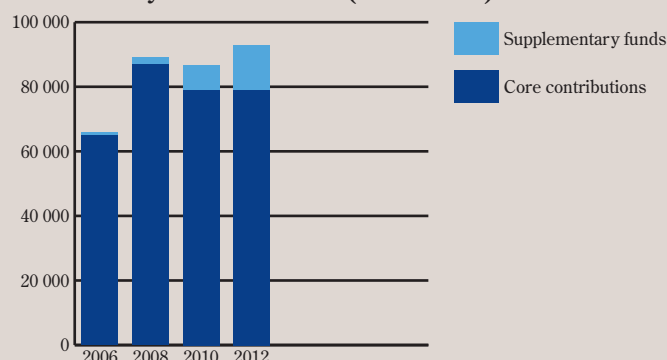
**Competent ministry:** Responsibility shared by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development

**Website:** [www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org)

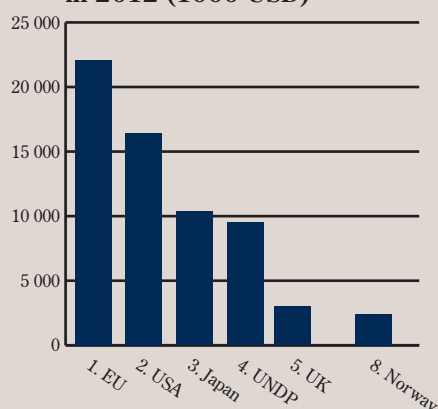
**Total revenues (1000 USD)**



**Norway's contributions (1000 NOK)**



**The five largest donors, and Norway, in 2012 (1000 USD)**



NORWEGIAN MINISTRY  
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## Mandate and areas of activity

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme's (UN-Habitat's) development goal is to promote sustainable development of human settlements in an urbanising world. Promoting decentralisation and local governance are important sub-goals, along with adequate shelter for all. Other important objectives are Millennium Development Goal 7, Target 11: to improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, and Target 10: to halve the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. UN-Habitat combines normative and operational functions.

The Strategy Plan for 2014–2019 gives priority to seven focus areas:

- Urban legislation, land and governance
- Urban planning and design
- Urban economy
- Urban basic services
- Housing and slum upgrading
- Risk reduction and rehabilitation
- Research and capacity development

Cross-cutting issues in the new Strategic Plan are gender equality, youth, partnership, climate change, capacity-building and human rights. The human rights approach is related to the right to land, housing and other property. The housing rights programme launched in 2002 in collaboration with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights is an important instrument. Several civil-society organisations are members. A gender-equality unit has been established, and since 2011 international human-settlement organisations have coordinated their activities in relation to UN-Women.

## Results achieved in 2012

UN-Habitat promotes broad-based sustainable urban development through projects and programmes in areas such as water and sanitation, financing for housing and infrastructure in slum areas, land issues, interventions related to gender equality, youth and development, and cities and climate change. Although over 20 million people in developing countries have moved out of slums every year in the last ten years, the absolute number of slum dwellers has increased. From an initial four cities in 2008, 30 cities in Africa, Asia, Oceania and Latin America that are particularly vulnerable to climate change and exposed to risk have now jointly developed a special climate-change action agenda. Through a range of pilot housing finance measures, dwellings have been provided for 250 families in Uganda, 2,800 in Tanzania, 900 in Nepal, 2,000

in Nicaragua and 30,000 in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. All of them are low- or middle-income households.

UN-Habitat's collection, analysis and publication of data have given rise to such in-demand reports as *Urban World: Climate Change: Are Cities Really to Blame?* and *The State of Arab Cities*. In order to enhance aggregation of country data at global level, UN-Habitat works to strengthen the capacity of national and local institutions. A growing number of Urban Observatories provide data for global reports, and in 2011 the global programme supported 237 national and local observatories. In 2011, 147 cities implemented measures in the field of governance, security, environment and crisis management with the help of UN-Habitat, an increase from 132 in 2010. Technical support in the field of housing policy was provided for 37 countries in 2011, compared with 33 in 2010. Another important area is land issues. For instance, UN-Habitat has provided funding for research and evaluation studies in Ethiopia, which have led the Government of Ethiopia and the World Bank to jointly upscale their land-certification programme from 24 million to 40 million land certificates, at a cost of NOK 1 billion.

UN-Habitat has gained the support of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for strengthening the international organisation's work with and for young people. A special position has been created for a UN Special Adviser for Youth. In 2013, the UN also adopted a youth strategy that applies to the entire organisation. To strengthen the voice of young people in the international organisation, Norway has advocated creating a Youth Forum patterned on the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. An action plan to promote gender equality was drawn up in 2010, and a special advisory group for gender equality was appointed with participants from international civil-society organisations, academia, UN Women and Member States, including Norway, which represents the donor countries.

These efforts to promote gender equality were evaluated in 2011. The evaluation has been followed up in partnership with the advisory group and UN Women. The Gender Unit has been placed under the Project Office to ensure that gender is mainstreamed into both operational and normative activities. Young people and gender equality were topics at UN-Habitat's Governing Council meeting in April 2013. Through the Opportunities Fund for Urban Youth-Led Development, UN-Habitat has provided financial support for 211 youth-led urban initiatives in more than 30 developing countries in the fields of employment, environment, education, health and gender equality.

A mid-term evaluation was carried out in 2012 of UN-Habitat's 2008 Cities and Climate Change Initiative (CCCI). Through this initiative, support is provided for small and medium-sized cities in developing countries to enable them to plan for adaptation to climate change and to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. The large number of cities that have applied for support demonstrated that there was a great need. Initially, however, progress was limited in relation to the four city-based pilot projects, and it took time to collect relevant experience that could be used to inform new measures. In the next phase, CCCI was upscaled and it now includes 48 regional or national networks.

As of September 2012, five countries had developed climate-relevant urban policies for implementation by local authorities. A total of 22 cities in 17 countries had received technical support from CCCI with the help of funding from Norway. Support was also provided by other donors for technical advice for a further 21 cities in six countries. CCCI has been particularly important for local authorities. However, the evaluation shows that more efforts are needed to ensure that the initiative is firmly anchored in national urban planning policy and thereby achieve sustainability. The evaluation also indicates clearly that more account must be taken of various local factors.

## 2. Assessments: Results, effectiveness and monitoring

### The organisation's results-related work

UN-Habitat's effectiveness was considered to be satisfactory in a Swedish review, while its internal effectiveness was rated as weak. This is partly ascribable to low capacity and partly to its relationship with UNEP's and UN-Habitat's joint administrative hub, the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON). UN-Habitat also scored low marks in a British evaluation of multilateral organisations (MAR). Since 2010, UN-Habitat has reorganised its own administration and defined new technical and political priorities. A system of results-based management was introduced in connection with the Strategic Plan for 2008–2013. A work schedule in the form of a results framework was completed in April 2009, with overarching goals, sub-goals, strategic targets for six focus areas and indicator targets. The Strategic Plan for 2014–2019 and the work programme and budget for 2014–2015, which were approved at the Governing Council Meeting in April 2013, are based on the results achieved.

The possibility of measuring the achievement of results varies, due to the fact that UN-Habitat's main approach is normative and many stakeholders and factors contribute to its performance. On account of limited resources, interventions are often small in relation to the overall challenges. In 2012, an independent Monitoring and Evaluation Unit (M&E Unit) was created under the Office of the Executive Director. The M&E Unit reports through the Executive Director to the Governing Council and the Committee of Permanent Representatives in Nairobi. External evaluations are carried out by independent consultants. Quality criteria for assessing studies have been established. The evaluation function has now been raised to a higher level of the system and has also been given a more systematic learning, information and control function, even though there is still potential for improvement. In the summer of 2013, the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) began work on an evaluation of UN-Habitat's relevance and effectiveness.

### Planning and budgeting systems

The two-year work programme and budget cover funding for UN-Habitat's operations and implementation of a plan approved by the Governing Council. Budget work is carried

out in accordance with results-based principles. Among other things, a web-based budgeting tool is used to link financial resources with expected results. Results reporting and evaluation findings are increasingly used to inform changes in priorities and working methods. Management, employees and advisors are regularly assessed on the basis of the results achieved. UN-Habitat had a Strategic Plan for 2008–2013, and in April 2013 the Governing Council Meeting approved a new Strategic Plan for 2014–2019 and a new two-year work programme and budget (2014–2015). The fact that the Governing Council does not consider the substantial earmarked items in the budget is a serious deficiency. There is also a need to reform governance mechanisms. However, this requires the consensus of the Member States, which has not yet been achieved.

### Oversight and anti-corruption

UN-Habitat joined the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) in November 2011. The internal audit function is carried out by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) in accordance with UN guidelines. OIOS reports to the UN Secretary-General, who appoints its head. In accordance with guidelines, external audits are conducted by the UN Board of Auditors. The UK National Audit Office is currently serving as external auditor. Audit declarations and reports are submitted to UN-Habitat's Governing Council and sent to the UN General Assembly. OIOS has a biannual system for tracking implementation of auditors' comments and recommendations. The implementation rate is 90 per cent. Since 2007, OIOS has carried out 15 audits. A restructuring process was initiated in 2011 to combine normative and operational work on projects. The Project Accrual Accounting System (PAAS) has been adopted. UN-Habitat has an anti-corruption policy in which all new employees receive training. The organisation has several mechanisms for preventing and identifying fraud and corruption. Findings and recommendations are reported to UN-Habitat's management on a biannual basis. Follow-up action is reported biannually to the UN General Assembly through the UN Secretary-General.

### Institution-building and national ownership

At country level, UN-Habitat's 30 country programmes are

developed in collaboration with government authorities, civil society and the private sector. National ownership is a prerequisite for participation in the UN's Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). Habitat Programme Managers in UNDP offices build lines of communication to authorities in 40 countries. UN-Habitat emphasises the importance of co-ordinating the activities of development stakeholders in local and national structures. Institutional development is carried out by disseminating planning expertise, new standards, norms and policy instruments such as taxation and income generation. However, questions may be raised as to the sus-

tainability of and possibility for upscaling in connection with institutional development. Governance-related efforts seek to benefit poor and vulnerable groups. The focus has moved from training individuals to changing institutions' transaction systems.

### **Willingness to learn and change**

The reforms carried out in the past few years testify to the organisation's willingness to change, but a great deal of work remains to be done and Member States must agree on reforms. It is particularly important to reach agreement on governance mechanisms in relation to the overall budget.

## **3. Norway's policy towards UNHABITAT**

In 2050, two-thirds of the world's population will live in cities and 3 billion people will live in slums. Poverty is becoming increasingly urbanised. The cities and urban areas in the world use 75 per cent of all energy and generate 75 per cent of all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Some 60 per cent of the urban population in developing countries have been victims of violence. Women and children are a particularly vulnerable group. In many cities, young people experience marginalisation. Already today, two-thirds of all conflicts and wars are fought in cities. UN-Habitat is important because it is the only representative, intergovernmental organisation that addresses human settlement and development issues.

Norway has backed UN-Habitat's reorientation in the last couple of years towards greater emphasis on support for reforms in urban governance, planning and finance and, less directly, on upgrading of slums and urban services. UN-Habitat's work on land and property issues through the growing Global Land Tool Network (GLTN), which is supported by Norway, is a successful example of how UN-Habitat contributes to focusing attention on one of the foremost drivers of urban poverty. Norway also supports UN-Habitat's Cities and Climate Change Initiative. In partnership with the World Bank's Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Sustainable Urban Development and the Cities Alliance, UN-Habitat has developed an urban climate-change research network with a view to promoting more effective services in sectors such as water and

sanitation, energy and transport in order to reduce energy consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from cities.

Norway has led and contributed financially to the process of revitalising UN-Habitat since the early 2000s. The organisation was upgraded to full status as a UN programme in 2001. Support for the Medium-Term Strategic Plans for 2008–2013 and 2014–2019 has continued to drive this institutional effort. Norway has contributed to making the World Urban Forum a biennial meeting place for thousands of participants representing government authorities, civil society and research communities. Norway plays a key role in strengthening UN-Habitat's donor coordination. A system of joint annual meetings (Sweden, Norway and Spain) was introduced in 2010. Decentralisation and local democracy are basic prerequisites for sustainable development and Norway's efforts have helped to ensure the adoption of guidelines to that effect. The process of implementing the guidelines has begun in Latin America and elsewhere. Women living in slums are the poorest of the poor, yet women here are often more independent and have more opportunities for social organisation. To exploit this possibility, Norway supports UN-Habitat's efforts to promote gender equality. Norway has pointed to the potential for change in urban youth and helped to ensure that UN-Habitat now plays a leading role in this field in the UN. Norway would like to see greater coordination of the UN's youth work.

Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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