Committee: Economic and Financial Committee

Issue: Assessing the funding and structure of human settlements programme

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INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, or also known as UN-HABITAT, is the UN's solution for the rising adverse outcomes of human urbanization. Since more than half of the human population lives currently in cities[1], it is of considerable significance that everyone can have access to proper shelter. This programme "aims to improve the living conditions in urban areas, especially in developing countries, through advanced research, revised policy, and financing housing and urban development."[2]

This framework focuses on aspects such as sustainability and the abolishment of inequality, through which it will be able to provide adequate shelter for all. Furthermore, the United Nations Human Settlement Programme tackles problems created indirectly by urbanization to secure citizens, which is why it aims to restrict pollution, disease, crime, poverty and homelessness. This programme, which was established in 1978 and is handled by the General Assembly[3], theoretically will create a safe and sustainable environment, consolidating an increase in employment rates and a decrease in pollution rates, while also completely eradicating homelessness, which is its main objective. With this programme, the UN hopes to help improve the living standards of homeless people and working-class people living in slums. The incentive of affordability in combination with sustainability is what they strive to achieve globally. By creating individual customized projects for each city in need,

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[1] Nations, United. "68% Of the World Population Projected to Live in Urban Areas by 2050, Says UN | UN DESA Department of Economic and Social Affairs." *United Nations*, United Nations, 16 May 2018, www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/2018-revision-of-world-urbanization-prospects.html.

[2] Seto, Karen. "Human Settlements, Infrastructure, and Spatial Planning." *Ipecac*, 2019, www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/ipcc_wg3_ar5_chapter12.pdf.

[3] Nations, United. "The Habitat Agenda Goals and Principles, Commitments and the Global Plan of Action." *Un.org*, 2018, www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/habitat_agenda.pdf.

the UN-Habitat aims to make urbanization positive for both the people involved, but for the environment as well.

However, while its intentions and initial goals are praise-worthy, the UN's most recent statement concerning the programme states that it does not work to its full capacity, while also contributing to the UN's development only to the minimum.[4] It recommends the internal strengthening of the programme, to reflect better outcomes, as it clearly states: "Recognizing that UN-Habitat has a focal role in addressing sustainable urbanization, but faces challenges that compromise its capacity to respond effectively, the Panel recommends that the priority must be to save, stabilize and then rapidly strengthen UN-Habitat to equip it for a renewed role based on the 2030 Agenda and the NUA."[5] Moreover, it is not the first time nations have tried to abolish the harmful effects of urbanization, like for example by giving housing subsidies; however, they were unsuccessful, leading critics to believe that this programme may be doomed as well. By assessing the funding and structure of human settlement programmes, each country needs to evaluate whether its financial capacity and social priorities can welcome such a programme and whether such an investment is worth the risk. Furthermore, because the programme has already been applied in some countries, the analysis of its results, in combination with the improvements the panel suggests and the reformed programme that will be applied in the 2030 agenda, need to be considered while making a decision.

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[4]"Statement on the Cabinet Meeting of 28 September 2016." *Statement on the Cabinet Meeting of 28 September 2016 | Government Communication and Information System (GCIS)*, 29 Sept. 2016, www.gcis.gov.za/newsroom/media-releases/statement-cabinet-meeting-28-september-2016.

[5]"UN-HABITAT United Nations Human Settlements Programmeme." *PeaceWomen*, 13 Feb. 2015, www.peacewomen.org/content/un-habitat-united-nations-human-settlements-programmeme.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Urbanization

The formation of cities, through the permanent concentration of large groups of people in a specific habitat, is called urbanization. It is the process through which the percentage of a population increases in a specific area. Urban areas are a new concept in human history, which mainly began in the industrial revolution. Based on data, in 2007 [6] it was the first time, when more people lived in urban areas, rather than rural. It is estimated that by 2050 approximately two-thirds[7] of the world's population will live in urban areas, thus contributing to the urbanization of even more communities.

Human Settlements

A broader definition, given by the Springer dictionary, would be that: "Human settlement is a *place* where *people* live. It refers to the totality of the human community with all the social, material, organizational, spiritual, and cultural elements that sustain it. Any form of human dwelling, from the smallest house to the largest city, where a group of people reside and pursue their life goals, can be understood as settlement." Human settlements have many forms and do not have a definite definition that describes them perfectly. However, it is here referred to as the ideal urban area with minimum criminal activity, increased employment rates, sustainability, and zero homelessness. [8]

Sustainability

"Sustainability can be defined as the processes and actions through which humankind avoids the depletion of natural resources". The depletion of natural resources is mainly caused by the way cities and urban areas are organized, therefore sustainability aims to solve this problem in order to keep an ecological balance so that society's quality of life

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[6] The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Urbanization." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 6 Sept. 2019, www.britannica.com/topic/urbanization.

[7] "68% Of the World Population Projected to Live in Urban Areas by 2050, Says UN | UN DESA Department of Economic and Social Affairs." *United Nations*, United Nations, www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/2018-revision-of-world-urbanization-prospects.html.

[8] Živković, Jelena. "Human Settlements and Climate Change." *SpringerLink*, Springer, Cham, 1 Jan. 1970, link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007%2F978-3-319-71063-1_88-1.

does not decrease. Basically, it is an attempt to continue the socio-economic development of humankind without necessarily compromising future generations. [9]

Housing Subsidies

Subsidized housing is a payment from the government to individuals that cannot afford housing themselves to ease their expenses. It reduces the costs and expenses of a house to prevent homelessness. Subsidies can be used in other sectors of the economy as well, such as in businesses or in agriculture to promote a particular good, or decrease food prices for the people living in poverty; however, in this context it is a way to help underpaid people have a secure shelter.[10]
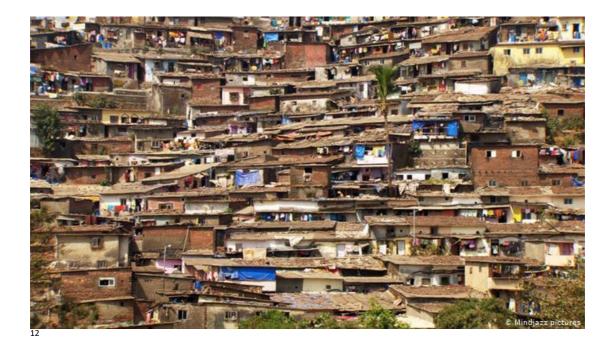
Slums

Because of the high density of population in urban areas, a significant number of people live in overcrowded areas, with high crime and unemployment rates. The low living standards there cause many problems, such as environmental problems and effects on the health of the residents. Slums occur due to poverty and are dangerous for every community. On average, one in eight people live in slums, meaning that around one billion people have to go through such harsh living conditions. They are one of the main problems caused by the rapid urbanization of the modern world and one of the main issues UN-Habitat needs to tackle.[11]

[9]Grant, Mitchell. "Sustainability." *Investopedia*, Investopedia, 5 Apr. 2020, www.investopedia.com/terms/s/sustainability.asp.

[10]"Sustainability - What Is It? Definition, Principles and Examples." *Youmatter*, youmatter.world/en/definition/definitions-sustainability-definition-examples-principles/.

[11] "Slum." *Merriam-Webster*, Merriam-Webster, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/slum.

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For example, one of the largest slums in the world is located in Neza, Mexico and has over a million residents. In this particular slum, one toilet could be shared by five families.[13]

Background Information

Issues that require solutions

The main reason the UN had to intervene and establish a programme like the UN-Habitat was because of the problems constant urbanization produced. This phenomenon, which began in ancient times, but only took the form it has today after the industrial revolution, has resulted in the overuse and the misallocation of resources, setting the foundations for more problems to occur. Because of the rapid increase in urban population, the people who move from rural areas to cities in search of a better life end up becoming casual labourers. As a result, the density of the population rises, and slums are created. This

[12] Lepeska, David. "A Turn to the Slums; a Call for Alms." *Devex*, Devex, 17 Mar. 2008, www.devex.com/news/a-turn-to-the-slums-a-call-for-alms-29211.

[13] "The World's Largest Slums: Dharavi, Kibera, Khayelitsha & Neza." *Habitat for Humanity GB*, 7 Sept. 2018, www.habitatforhumanity.org.uk/blog/2017/12/the-worlds-largest-slums-dharavi-kibera-khayelitsha-neza/.

means that a large group of the working class faces high crime and unemployment rates, low living standards and insecurity within its neighbourhoods.

Furthermore, slums are commencing contributors in the cycle of poverty, because the living conditions are so deplorable that they lead to persistent illnesses within the community, which limits productivity and prevents minors from attending school properly. Their safety is also at stake, not only because of the extreme level of criminality, but also because their houses are poorly constructed, which could be fatal in the presence of a natural disaster.

Moreover, while the low living standards and extreme poverty are significant problems that need to be solved as soon as possible, they are not the only consequences constant urbanization has created. The environment has also suffered a blow, because of increasing air pollution and heatwaves, but also because of the poor air and water quality, which is a direct effect of urbanization. The Earth is already going through an environmental crisis, and with the increase in urban population (two-thirds of the world will live in cities by 2050)[14], this phenomenon will be exacerbated even more. In order to reduce some of the density in urban areas, more cities will have to be created leading to enormous environmental problems and a direct effect on global warming due to the CO_2 emissions caused by cars, factories and other everyday activities. The Human Settlements Programme has done extended research on the issue, and released its outcomes in 2003 with a 345-page long statement, presenting the challenge of the slums[15]. Furthermore, the UN started projects in 2012 that run to this day, which aim to tackle the problem of the constant urbanization of people from rural areas, leading to slums.

Funding

Human Settlements Programmes are funded by the UN and its donors to be able to create more projects around the world in cities that are in need. While they search for

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[14] National Geographic Society. "Urbanization." *National Geographic Society*, 10 Sept. 2019, www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/urbanization/.

[15] Habitat, UN. "The Challenge of Slums." *Https://Www.un.org/Ruleoflaw/Files/Challenge%20of%20Slums.Pdf*, 2017, www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/Challenge%20of%20Slums.pdf.

sustainable ways to make the lives of the people more convenient, some of the projects may seem expensive. For example, the UN-Habitat has spent over 20 million dollars on projects in the Syrian Arab Republic since 2013[16] and over six million dollars on projects in China since 2014[17]. Furthermore, many of these projects did not have the expected outcome, either by underperforming and not achieving the initial goal or by not being able to create any outcome at all. These factors have led to the underfunding of the UN-Habitat, especially in the more recent years, causing problems in the initial structure of the programme. Because the programme has shown weaknesses in its performance, many government contributions have been limited, like for example the UK withdrew its funding even more in 2011, while the UNGA has lowered its budget as well. In more recent projects, there have been fewer donors than in earlier years, while the European Commission has been reluctant to support new projects until the structure and efficiency of the programme improves. The reason behind such a decision is that there is incoherency within the organization of the UN-Habitat and the results it should produce are rarely met. To attract more funding and for the donors to trust it, the programme needs to focus on the improvement of the structure first, as its contributors demand.

Furthermore, surveys have shown that within all UN branches, UN-Habitat has one of the lowest staff morale indicators.[18] This issue is a setback for the UN-Habitat because, without the support of other organizations, it is unable to continue its projects. However, because of its poor performance as Habitat I, II and III, it is reasonable to seek a better allocation of donations. The programme was unable to perform to its full extent, while it also had internal problems that needed to be solved, like for example, its organization. Because of the many stakeholders and organizations involved in the cause, there is no coherent plan and no hierarchy to control the programme. In the most recent years, a High-Level Panel has been implemented to improve the situation with limited success, however. In order to attract more funding, the UN-Habitat has decided to reconstruct its structure by limiting the small local projects and focusing on abolishing its internal weaknesses, while also having a core aim (to improve public work) that will be implemented in all cities in need.

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[16] "Syrian Arab Republic: UN-Habitat." *UN*, unhabitat.org/syrian-arab-republic.

[17] "Syrian Arab Republic: UN-Habitat." *UN*, unhabitat.org/syrian-arab-republic.

[18] Stephen Thompson & 2 others. "UN-Habitat and the New Urban Agenda – One Year after Habitat III." *Institute of Development Studies*, 17 Sept. 2018, www.ids.ac.uk/opinions/un-habitat-and-the-new-urban-agenda-one-year-after-habitat-iii/.

Its donors and other UN branches that work for the Sustainable Development Works are hoping for a more coherent and coordinated plan to support. The special contributions for specific causes, therefore, have been significantly limited to focus on the improvement of the branch as a whole. Thus, the main issue they have to face is whether UN-Habitat is worth the extensive funding, and, if so, how it will be able to improve living conditions in cities to such an extent, to prevent the limitation of its funding in the future. The projects that were established before the decision to focus on internal problems will continue to take place until the money funded for them runs out. After that, instead of funding them further, they will pause and continue when the UN-Habitat becomes structurally ready to support them again.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

India

India has been unanimously voted the president of the UN-Habitat's panel, while also being one of the countries where six of its projects take place. It has one of the largest urban populations in the world, with an estimated 1.3 billion people living there. However, the total value of the project is under half a million dollars. India's donors include Germany and the United Nations Trust Fund. The main problem it faces is the constant increase in population in addition to the unfortunate circumstances and living standards the residents have to face. The projects focus on the limitation of poverty, while also creating a more environmentally-friendly waste management system and a more efficient urban governance. From 2014 until 2019 six projects had been completed.[19]

Syria

While Syria is a significantly smaller country than India, with a population of 18.2 million, the cost of the projects there cost almost 21 million dollars. As the country is going through a crisis and its priorities are more severe, the need for aid, especially in urban areas where shelters are destroyed, is larger. With the help of its donors, which include Germany, Norway, Switzerland and UNICEF, Syria completed 21 projects from 2014 until 2019. They mostly focus on the rehabilitation of the housing and infrastructure of the area to provide

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[19] "India: UN-Habitat." *UN*, unhabitat.org/india.

safety to the residents. In the last two years, UN-Habitat has helped bring 19,400 children back to school. [20]

Angola

In Angola's case, UN-Habitat is a newly applied programme, which only began its projects in 2019. Despite its significant problems and limitations in sectors such as the educational and the social sector, because of the poor living conditions, the Human Settlements Programme has only invested 130,000 dollars. This is firstly because its only funder is UNICEF, while also because in recent years a significant decrease in UN-Habitat's project funding has been observed. This does not only hurt nations in need, but the United Nations as well, since their development is at stake.[21]

Germany

Germany is one of the UN-Habitat's major donors although no particular project takes place in this nation. Not only is it a member of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee, but also one of Habitat III-the most improved version of the programme-main funders. Germany has contributed to the cause as an aiding mechanism by funding and supporting the cause. [22]

UN-Habitat

The UN-Habitat (or Human Settlements Programme) as mentioned before is the UN's effort to improve living conditions in urban areas, while also creating a sustainable system that does not distort the 'health' of the environment. Their motto is "a better quality of life for all in an urbanizing world". More than 196 countries are a part of it, while it is also founded by many UN agents. The UN-Habitat is a branch that the General Assembly handles and, as it is a relatively new programme, it is yet to gain a stable form, which is why Habitat II and Habitat III have been created- improved versions of the same idea. The new Habitat and its projects will take place in 2030.[23]

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[20] "Syrian Arab Republic: UN-Habitat." *UN*, unhabitat.org/syrian-arab-republic.

[21] "Angola: UN-Habitat." *UN*, unhabitat.org/angola.

[22] "Germany." *Habitat III*, habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda/preparatory-process/national-participation/germany/.

[23] "United Nations Human Settlements Programmeme - United Nations and the Rule of Law." *United Nations*, United Nations, www.un.org/ruleoflaw/un-and-the-rule-of-law/united-nations-human-settlements-programmeme/.

UNICEF

UNICEF and UN-Habitat work together on projects because both branches focus on similar sectors of the community. Their most recent cooperation was the Neighborhood Profiles, which is an aiding tool for disadvantaged areas of Lebanon. Based on data-gatherings and the profiling of the area, their goal is to create a safer environment for a nation in crisis. Furthermore, they work together in other projects as well, like the protection of the youth in Sub-Saharan Areas in Africa, due to the fact that it is the only region where the youth population will have a positive increase until 2050. They analyze current conditions, firstly to maintain them in the region, but also to apply them to other areas of the world, where they are needed.[24]

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
1966	The Habitat-Agenda is formed in Istanbul, Turkey which promotes socially and economically sustainable cities throughout all the countries that are a part of the UN
1978	The establishment of the programme and the General Assembly's control over the project
2015	The completion of the first goal of the programme, the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which aimed to improve water access and sanitation worldwide
2018	The current executive director, Maimunah Mohd Sharif, is appointed to continue the project
2019	The first assembly of the UN-Habitat takes place with more than 196 member states being a part of it.
2020	The year when one of the programme's project will come to an end, and more specifically the United Nation Millennium Declaration target's on improving the living standards of 100 million people worldwide.
2030	The improved new project about Human Settlements starts in 2030 with the same goal as the previous one; however, with a different approach.

[24] "Statement on the Cabinet Meeting of 28 September 2016." *Statement on the Cabinet Meeting of 28 September 2016 | Government Communication and Information System (GCIS)*, 29 Sept. 2016, www.gcis.gov.za/newsroom/media-releases/statement-cabinet-meeting-28-september-2016.

UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

1.   "On 20 December 2018, the General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution A/RES/73/239 decided to dissolve the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and to replace it with a United Nations Habitat Assembly of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat Assembly). UN-Habitat Assembly is a universal body composed of the 193 member states of the United Nations and convenes every four years (A/RES/73/239)."

2.   The Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, Vancouver, Canada, 31 May to 11 June 1976. This resolution established Habitat I, the first version of the UN-Habitat programme, which aimed for a sustainable and safe shelter for all

3.   The Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the Habitat Agenda, 7 August 1996, the declaration of Habitat II. An improvement on the initial Habitat I resolution was made and an expansion on the funding and the project allocation as well.

4.   The Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium. New York City, 16 August 2001. The latest version of the Human Settlements Programme was agreed upon. It has projects running up until 2030; however, the funding is significantly less and the decrease will continue within the next years, too. Its symbol is A/RES/S-25/2

5.   Strengthening UN-Habitat's mandate: Resolution 56/206. A/RES/56/206. New York, 21 February 2002. The UN Human Settlements Programme transforms into the UN-Habitat, while the Human Settlements Programme becomes the Governing Council of the Commission, which mainly has a judicial role. It also declares its direct cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission, while declaring its main focus as a sustainable and safe environment for all.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

There have been some previous attempts to eliminate the byproducts of vast urbanization. For example, some cities have tried to apply stricter law enforcement in order to achieve greater sustainability. However, this solution only provides a partially efficient outcome, since the other problems of urbanisation, like homelessness, remain unresolved. Furthermore, other cities have attempted to imply population controls or the provision of essential services. These are more difficult tasks to achieve, especially in larger cities, or

economically weaker regions. By creating more jobs and providing cheaper housing, cities have also tried to give opportunities to the less fortunate. While such an idea helps the public in the short run, after a period of time minimum wage may decrease, making it impossible to live off this money. Furthermore, cheaper housing may also lead to the creation of slums.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Two main issues need to be solved. The first one is the limitation of the problems caused by rapid urbanization and the second one is the improvement of the UN-Habitat's organization to become more efficient so it can receive more funding.

For the Human Settlements Programme to be successful and achieve its goal, and complete its projects, coordinated efforts need to be made. The lack of coherency it faces at the moment limits its prospects. Consequently, the UN-Habitat, along with the High-Level Panel and donors, needs to reconstruct the organization to prevent disruptions amongst them, as previously observed.

Furthermore, for the programmes to work, funding is absolutely necessary. Thus, the decision of whether it is worth it or not to support the projects it promotes needs to conclude the next steps towards the improvement of the programme to be finalized. In order to get more funding, it either needs to rise to the panel's expectations and resolve the coherency problems it currently faces, or the new projects should be more affordable so that such extensive funding would not be needed. However, while the second option is valid, if the UN-Habitat continues to work in such a disorganized manner, other problems will arise as well. So, to resolve the funding problem, it first needs to resolve the internal problems it faces.

Lastly, since from its history as Habitat I, II and III, it has been concluded that independently it is not as sufficient as it could be, more cooperation with other NGOs or UN branches could help the programme improve. UN-Water, for example, has some similar aims as the UN-Habitat, meaning that cooperation would be beneficial. Furthermore, UNICEF has also similar aims as UN-Habitat's Youth Programmes, which means that they could work together towards better results.

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