Design of Global Network to Develop Pro-Poor Land Tools

UN-HABITAT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

UN-HABITAT is mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all. An important part of UN-HABITAT’s mandate involves contributing to secure tenure for the urban poor, urban land delivery for housing, and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

To fulfill this part of the agency’s mandate, UN-HABITAT proposes the establishment of a global network (hereafter referred to as the “Global Network” or the “Network”) to develop pro-poor land tools related to urban land and secure tenure. It is envisaged that this Network will improve land-related knowledge management, with a focus on urban land law, land tenure, land management and administration, and related gender impacts and issues. The Network would both undertake research and develop relevant tools for implementation that advance the Habitat Agenda.

UN-HABITAT will play a central role in coordinating the Network and land-related knowledge management at a global level, but designated experts and institutions outside the UN will undertake the tasks of conducting research and tool development, and of managing the other ongoing activities of the Network. It is the intention of UN-HABITAT that this Network will scale up over time, building the capacity required to support Member States, regional offices, civil society organizations, and other key stakeholders in advancing the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In particular, the activities of the Global Network will also support the work of UN-HABITAT’s Global Campaign for Secure Tenure in promoting the rights of the urban poor to access land in an affordable manner.

The idea of a Global Network on urban pro-poor land tools is consistent with the emerging interest of many donor agencies in urban development issues. It is intended through this Network to build and maintain capacity in this field, as well as to support tool development in the four main regions of the developing world: Asia, Africa, Latin America and the transitional economies.

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Background to National and Land Issues

Global Partnering Frameworks

The basic architecture of this project will be through a network. Networks are proliferating in the development field, from the World Bank through many other organizations. “Knowledge networks” are especially important for research which combines theoretical ideas and practice on the ground and at the grassroots. One example of a development-oriented network is the International Land Coalition, which currently includes some 180 organizations concerned with land rights for the rural poor around the world.

Overall, networks can operate from a centralized to a decentralized mode; they can work intensively or intermittently; they can accept a leader or an organizational director from a selected organization or they can vote on or select their own leader on a democratic or even rotating basis; and they may or may not be ready to change themes of work to which they have previously been committed. And the network has great potential geographical range. Networks operate from the top down and from the bottom up. They can (even must) have some central management structure, but they are well equipped to connect equally with grassroots organizations, or to work in regional or thematic clusters.
Networks have many advantages, one of which is their flexibility, another of which is the strong commitment of their members. A disadvantage is that they cannot easily be directed to move in a different direction if this is the wish of the donor.

UN-HABITAT and Networks

UN-HABITAT has been working with networks for some time now – both external networks like the Habitat International Coalition, as well as networks supporting internal functions of the agency.

Land and Urban Development

As the Habitat Agenda clearly indicates, land is at the heart of urban development, but until recently this important element has not fully been recognized. The creation of the proposed Global Network would be an excellent opportunity to promote the recognition of the centrality of the urban land question. Its success in the promotion of the development of pro-poor, gender-oriented urban land tools will depend on how several principal factors are reconciled (see report for fuller list):

- The formulation of a comprehensive sociolegal framework for urban land action and policy, which is flexible enough to be adapted to the regional, national, and local realities, differences, and needs;
- The identification of suitable tools corresponding to a wide range of inter-related objectives;
- The creation of an internal organisational format for the Global Network that addresses and responds satisfactorily to all such factors, especially by involving proper representation from all the main stakeholders;
- The inclusion of gender issues and analysis;
- The establishment in the Global Network of a sensible balance between discussion and action;
- The participation of local governments and the grassroots.

The proposed Global Network is also very important from the viewpoint of giving more consistency and efficacy, as well as providing integration, to the actions of UN-HABITAT itself, based on a more pronounced and vigorous focus on the centrality of the urban land question in ongoing policy debates and discussions. The work of the Global Network should be fundamentally pro-poor, gender oriented, and as such, the Global Network could contribute towards the materialization of the MDGs that have guided the overall action of UN-HABITAT.

In conceptual terms, in order to be identified as a network proposing pro-poor urban land tools, the abovementioned framework for urban land policy and action should clearly express its commitment to the promotion of social inclusion. This is to be done both through the overall general orientation of the Global Network and the development of specific tools. (A “tool” may be defined as the operational means of achieving general objectives in a specific context.)

Among other projected outcomes, the Global Network will help to position UN-HABITAT as a leading institution in land debates, and as an international advocate for pro-poor land policy, tools, issues and priorities. When the subject of urban land is raised, however, the scope of the discussion often tends to be limited by ideological considerations and their attendant policy prescriptions and social implications.

The Network needs to be based on a socio-legal framework which should not only involve land management and administration, but should also include other fundamental dimensions. Within this broad framework, land-related issues may be combined and organised into five main intertwined dimensions, namely:
- Land rights;
- Land management and administration;
- The making of urban land laws;
- The enforcement of urban land laws;
- Informality in the access to urban land and housing.

Within UN-HABITAT, the Land and Tenure Section (within the Global Division) will be the main platform for the management of the Network. But other UN HABITAT divisions, units and programmes should be encouraged to connect to its activities.

At another level, governments at all levels need to lead the way, always working together with civil society and, whenever suitable or possible, with international agencies and other land-related institutions. National governments in a number of countries – such as Brazil, Colombia, Namibia and South Africa, to name a few – have already been playing a significant role in land tools development. Aside from governments there are other organizations such as academic institutions, regional and multilateral development banks, NGOs and individual consultants that need to be consulted closely. Care must be taken to provide proper incentives and organizational opportunities so that leading institutions will wish to cooperate with the Global Network.

**Network Configuration**

The study has proposed a number of administrative and organizational units, located both in an international research institution and at UN-HABITAT. At the research institution there will be an Administrative Director, along with a Network Manager and an Information Manager. The research institution unit will be advised by an Expert Group, headed by a prominent chairperson. The Network Coordinator will be located UN-HABITAT, assisted by a secretary/junior administrator. The Coordinator will be supported by a local Steering Committee.

The Network itself will be made up of two major levels: an international level called the International Advisory Council; and at the regional levels in the four main developing areas, Regional Councils, each headed by a Regional Coordinator. Potential partners for the Network need to be carefully selected from international groups, donors and agencies dealing with land rights, land use and development planning, and land taxation. There are many of these potential partners, including UN agencies, aid agencies, development banks, prominent academic institutions, NGOs, and land-related institutions. At the regional level, institutions and local groups must be found that have been genuinely engaged with the grassroots. It will be important, in the selection process, to insist on gender-sensitive and pro-poor organizations.

Why would these groups wish to participate in this Network? For international agencies, the reasons might include improving their understanding of the very important land issue, and to identify new local and grassroots organizations and individuals active in this field. At the local and regional level, there should be a strong interest in learning about comparative issues in tool development, and in obtaining support for their own efforts from the international community. Member states should have similar reasons for participating.

**Strategic Development and Scaling Up**

In terms of the scaling up of the Network, it is proposed to begin with the major appointments in the management system, and then to appoint a Task Force to consult widely over which groups and individuals should be members. All this would go on with the support of the Expert Group linked to the research institution. Once the major network organs (the International Advisory Council and the Regional Councils) are established, the Network should commission the development of a strategic plan for the first
five years. Meanwhile, the research institution should begin to recruit two post-graduate students per year to work as interns within the Network (one woman and one man; and one student from the north and one from the south). The Network should be running at full capacity – organizing regular meetings, producing documents, and making tool assignments – by the beginning of the fourth year. The budget and strategic phasing of the Network in this proposal covers a 10-year period.

**Gender Priorities**

One of the major objectives of this Network is to address issues of gender inequality with respect to land rights. While there are considerable variations from place to place, women as a group are widely marginalized by the existing normative structures and administrative institutions with respect to land, property and inheritance. Women are over-represented both in the informal sector, and among the urban and rural poor. UN-HABITAT has taken some important steps to mainstream gender equality, but it is important to point out that the consequences of otherwise apparently gender-neutral development or events can be biased against women in many different ways. Partly for this reason, the Network must be vigilant with respect to the equal treatment of men and women, and must actively promote the participation of women in its various councils and activities. This includes promoting women in decision-making roles and ensuring women-centred processes. At the centre of these efforts are the tools. These must be explicitly gendered. And as part of the regular monitoring process, the work of the whole Network should be evaluated for the degree to which gender is successfully incorporated into the overall work programme. To help mainstream gender in the Network, and to ensure the centrality of gender considerations in tool development, a Network gender focused staff member is proposed.

**ICTs in the Global Network**

As the Network expands and incorporates members throughout the world, it will need an ICT strategy to maintain regular communication and to disseminate information and tools. The proposal first discusses modern methods of global communication, including the internet, video and web conferencing, e-mail, and regular publications among other modalities. Websites and portals are extremely widespread these days. The most recognized portal in the international development field is the Development Gateway, which provides a wide variety of services to its users. Other modalities include online communities and discussion boards and weblogs. Assuming the Network develops its own website, it will be connected to the UN-HABITAT website, currently in the process of redevelopment.

**Information Access**

Although technology has advanced rapidly in recent years, it has not always reached the poor communities which this Network intends to support. While NGOs and national government agencies can easily access websites, careful work will have to be done to ensure that the information produced and accessed by the Network will be reachable by the poor. This will partially be a matter of language; partially a matter of connecting the Network through community intermediaries to local groups; and partially a matter of developing participative methodologies that are inherent in the tools. Before the larger project gets fully underway, an inventory of tools needs to be carried out at all levels to determine the best approaches for the poorest groups. In particular, the use of radio needs to be carefully considered as a medium to reach the very poor.

**Knowledge Management**

In order to better assess the needs of the project within UN-HABITAT, the proposal looks at some of the ICT-based accomplishments of the Land and Tenure Section and other related sections, such as the Best Practices and Local Leadership Programme, and the Training and Capacity Building Branch. The
experience offered by both these units can be helpful to the Network in terms of lessons learned. The proposal recommends a website to act as the hub of communication with and among members of the Network. This suggestion is accompanied with a distinct set of recommendations to incorporate various approaches and devices for different purposes within the Network. Suggestions are made about the design of the website itself, and about the kinds of information that will be available to members and users by contacting this website. The key individual in charge of this website will be the Information Manager, located at the international research institution. The proposal suggests that the website not be hosted using existing UN-HABITAT servers. Discussions are currently going on with respect to the capabilities of international research institution to host the website.

Knowledge management in a widespread Network such as this needs to take language and translation issues into account. English should be the working language of the Network, but non-English speakers need to be accommodated. Strategies to break down language barriers at both the local and regional level include procuring translation services for meetings, hiring staff that are multi-lingual, including materials on the web in a variety of languages, and working with the Regional Coordinators to disseminate information in local languages.

**Ten year Budget**

The last section of the proposal presents the 10-year budget, based on the design of the Network as indicated, and the costs as estimated through interviews and through information collected. The budget contains the following main sections: personnel, office expenses, office equipment, website, tool development/implementation, tool dissemination, the Expert Group linked to the research institution, the International Advisory Council, University student internships, travel, evaluations and audits and overhead.
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Urban Land and Urban Land Tools

1. Operate under a comprehensive and articulated socio-legal framework for urban land action and policy, which is flexible enough to be adapted to regional, national, and local realities, differences, and needs.
2. Identify suitable tools to be developed by the Global Network which correspond to a wide range of inter-related objectives to be achieved.
3. Identify and articulate the main actors responsible for the development of such tools.
4. Create the necessary political-institutional processes as well as financial mechanisms so that the right tools are created for the right needs, situations, and actors.
5. Translate generic tools into specific sets of initiatives.
6. Establish a sensible balance between discussion and action in the work of the Network.
7. Operate within a broad socio-legal framework for urban land which includes five interrelated dimensions: land rights, land management and administration, the making of urban land laws, the enforcement of urban land laws, and informality in access to urban land and housing.
8. Orient the tool development process towards addressing the following areas: policy-making, management, capacity building, research, teaching, advocacy and conflict resolution.
9. Establish three priority areas for the Network’s activities, including: land rights, land use and development planning and control, and land taxation, each of which could in turn serve as a research node.
10. Engage the grassroots in participating in the Network to ensure a virtual feedback loop between research and action, to enhance accountability to pro-poor and gendered land tools, to support community mobilization, and to maximize policy impact.

Network Design and Management

1. Locate the Network Management Unit at a university institution.
2. Organize a network of experts linked to an international research institution to strengthen the Network’s relevant capacity, bringing together experts from different disciplines and sectors and people with varying levels of experience in development research and practice, in order to contribute to the tool development process and strengthen development research capacity.
3. Divide the members of the Network into three groupings: research institution component, global grouping, and regional/local groupings.
4. Hire an Administrative Director and Network Manager to staff the administrative group.
5. Establish a research institution linked Expert Group to advise the administrative group.
6. Choose as the Network Coordinator the existing P5 in the Land and Tenure Section, to be based at UN-HABITAT in Nairobi, supported by a P4-equivalent position, funded by the Project.
7. Establish an International Advisory Council comprised of up to 20 international agencies, donors or networks, including a representative of the Swedish Expert Group, to oversee Network functions.
8. Establish a Steering Committee composed of 2 UN-HABITAT officers and representatives of the International Advisory Council based in Nairobi to assist the Network Coordinator.
9. Establish Regional Councils of Local Tool Developers (Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Transitional Economies), which incorporate Member States, to undertake tool development work in an effective and appropriate manner.
10. Set-up a Task Force in the first year of Network operation to consult widely from the grassroots to the international level to inform subsequent work of the Network.
11. Vary the location of annual International Advisory Council meetings to enhance and promote broad regional and local connections with the work of the Network.
12. Provide funding for local Network members (i.e. researchers and NGOs) to attend International Advisory Council meetings in their respective regions.

13. Provide financial remuneration for the development of tools.

14. Follow a phased sequence of activities in establishing the Network which identifies the initial scope as well as the steps needed to initiate and scale-up its functions and impact over time.

15. Evaluate the Network's agenda and outputs on a deliberate basis to ensure that they conform to its commitment to the development of gender sensitive, pro-poor urban land tools.

**Gender Priorities**

1. Operationalize gender priorities in the Network by addressing the following issues and measures:

   - A gender balance exists between the number of women and men participating;
   - Women will play key roles in decision-making;
   - A gender-responsive capacity is developed in Network members using training in gender mainstreaming and analysis;
   - The process of creating pro-poor land tools is shared between women and men;
   - Contributions by women to the development of pro-poor land tools are actively supported, sustained, encouraged and monitored;
   - Land issues that specifically affect women are given voice and advocacy for enabling policy reform;
   - A gender-sensitive Network environment is maintained;
   - Pro-poor land tools that are developed are gendered.

2. Establish and fund a Network gender focal point in the Land and Tenure Section.

3. Ensure that there is a gender balance established between the number of women and men participating in the Network and that women play key decision-making roles in order to promote the participation of women in the Network.

4. Ensure contributions by women are actively encouraged and monitored, and that there is a gender-sensitive environment to ensure women-centred processes in the Network.

5. Lead a concerted effort to foster the capacity of Network members to develop gendered tools and to engage women and men in the process of pro-poor land tools development in order to ensure that the Network supports gendered activities.

6. Undertake gender analysis and research to ensure that the Network focuses on land issues and tools that affect women.

7. Conduct evaluations which incorporate gender analysis of the actual tools developed to ensure that they address gender priorities and issues.

8. Conduct gender reviews as part of the regular evaluation and monitoring process of the Network which include the following:

   - A gender auditing framework to be designed in conjunction with Network participants;
   - Gender monitoring and evaluation exercise;
   - Creation of measurable indices to assess gender impacts; and
   - Assessment of the effects of technology on Network members to gauge both inclusion and exclusion and devise solutions to redress negative effects on women.

9. Ensure that various Network members are charged with the responsibility of the following activities to enhance gender mainstreaming:

   **UN-HABITAT**
   - Ensure representation of women and men in the Steering Committee;
Select an institution to manage the Network that demonstrates clear and verifiable gender mainstreaming activities and policies and has women in decision-making roles.

**Steering Committee and International Advisory Council**
- Ensure that appropriate measures are taken to redress any lapses in gender mainstreaming efforts;
- Ensure gender training of Network members along with gender mainstreaming and analysis are integrated into all activities of the Network;
- Devise policies for the Network that are gender sensitive and inclusive.

**Network Manager**
- Select Network members using a gendered approach.

**Gender-Sensitive Network Coordinator**
- Ensure participation of women and men in the Network in terms of discussions and tool development;
- Ensure that gender training, gender mainstreaming and analysis is made available to Network members;
- Encourage the use of gender-sensitive language in discussion forums; publications and tool development.

**Information Manager**
- Create tools to capture gender details of Network members and their areas of interest.

Allocate necessary resources to carry out the above gender priorities of the Network.

**ICT Recommendations**
1. Develop a website to act as a communication hub for the Global Network.
2. Establish the Global Network website as a preeminent source of land-related information.
3. Facilitate online discussions through mailing lists – listservs, and email conferences.
4. Communicate with Network members through a variety of media, including print, CD-ROMs, email and the web to ensure that information can be widely disseminated, irrespective of Internet connectivity and technical capacity.