THE UN-HABITAT REGIONAL STRATEGY FOR ASIA-PACIFIC – DRAFT SUMMARY

PART I: INTRODUCTION

– Who we are

The UN-Habitat Regional Office for Asia Pacific, ROAP, has a successful track record and is trusted by countries and donors alike, but also has potential to improve. ROAP has an impressive portfolio and presence in the field. It also has increasingly normative/knowledge activities in different countries; and new themes seem to emerge justifying our presence in countries, from People Process to themes such as land management, resilience, etc. One of the agency’s constant strengths is its high profile vis-à-vis the governments, and good partnership with different public partners.

In countries with large programme portfolios—such as Afghanistan, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Vietnam—with capable staff pools, effective management of temporary rise and decline in funding, excellent reputation, and innovative flagship projects, there is a solid foundation for UN-Habitat presence in the country however programming is still considered to be merely at “base camp” level; an ideal platform for rolling out the Urban Agenda & Habitat III.

These predominantly LDC countries where presence was established through programmes built on the Asia Pacific flagship approach the Peoples Process has brought about a transformation in ‘thinking’ with a shift towards ‘institutionalization’ of the Peoples Process generating significant success in terms of governance through adoption by national and local governments in addition to an increase in bilateral contributions by governments as demonstrated in Afghanistan and Mongolia.

This paradigm-shift evidenced in LDC countries with large-scale operations such as Afghanistan, Myanmar and Srilanka has seen the Peoples Process evolve from grassroots to governance applications. Similarly in MIC’s with significant presence such as the Phillippines and Vietnam, a successful shift in perception and awareness of leaders has been witnessed through implementation of flagship City Development Strategies (CDS) and Programmes such as ASUD – via the three-pronged approach of Sustainable Urban Development.

The need for Transformation is paramount and necessary for the new Urban Agenda to be effectively rolled out and this will be ensured through the development of regional strategies to ensure a one UN-Habitat identity throughout the agency. The significant knowledge assets and normative approaches at HQ will be harnassed and better leveraged by the regional office, in the process of transformation. This is a two-way process as a stronger Asia Pacific regional office, an engine within the agency, automatically leads to a stronger UN-Habitat.

– Trends

UN-Habitat in Asia Pacific is influenced by the Internal and External operational, developmental, socio-economic and political Environment i.e. the Internal mandate such
as the Urban Agenda/Habitat III and the SDG’s, COP 21; the management and thematic structures and assets of UN-Habitat; as well as the cumulative knowledge resources shaping the operations and organizational delivery within Asia Pacific, chiefly the Peoples Process, City Development Strategies and Planning, Climate Change, DRM and the Sendai Framework. The agency is also influenced by the External developmental, socio-economic and political environment within Asia-Pacific and in particular from the perspective of the agglomerations of countries as follows: Least-Developed Countries (LDC’s), Middle Income Countries (MICs) Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and the ‘Big 5’ Countries (China, India, Indonesia, S.Korea and Japan) within Asia Pacific - these will be the key geographical distinctions utilized within the document from hereon.

As the LDC countries move towards sustainable urban development through the three-pronged approach and MIC countries move towards utilization of community participation in the urban development process to ensure participatory approaches, it is ROAP’s intention to harness the success of both approaches through cross fertilization of programmes and knowledge sharing to ensure the success of these LDC and MIC countries approaching sustainable urban development from two different directions.

- What we face

UN-Habitat faces significant challenges with the emergence of the new institutional environment, the rise of Middle-Income Countries - their changing needs and expectations - for which the agency also requires Transformation to stay relevant and useful in the delivery of its mandate. As the only agency focused on sustainable urbanization with a human settlements mandate, and a hybrid programme of normative and operational delivery, UN-Habitat is uniquely positioned to address the changing institutional landscape but requires transformation through strategies that allow it to stay adaptable, flexible & “fit for purpose” to cope with the fast changing dynamics of urbanization.

With large scale humanitarian programmes planned for MIC’s such as the Phillipines a cross fertilization of approaches becomes necessary with frequent natural disasters providing opportunities for integrating principles of community participation into the City Development and planning processes for resilience.

Most Asia-Pacific countries however, are still developing countries and experience rapid urbanization with fast economic growth and negative impacts on the environment. These factors offer significant opportunities for UN-Habitat to engage in the area of sustainable urbanization and human settlements development particularly in - Bangladesh, Laos, Cambodia, Mongolia, Island States, India and China.

Key entry points for intervening in these countries should address the national urban priorities such as the review or formulation of national housing and urban policies, the revival or commencement of City Development Strategies through technical support to national governments; policy and advocacy for national counterparts and/or the implementation of urban policies related to delivery of urban basic services or scaling up slum improvement/housing programmes through operational support. Each new programme should be approached with the vision of rolling out the Urban Agenda and specifically tailored to the context and needs of each country through a combination of technical or operational support and coupled with policy, advocacy.
PART II: RESOURCES & CAPABILITIES

- **Asia-Pacific Partners**

UN-Habitat will utilize its convening power as a United Nations agency and role as the leading United Nations authority on urbanization and human settlements to leverage and build partnerships at all levels - with governments, local authorities, the private sector, academia, NGOs, and civil society. Partnerships will be developed for the purposes of implementation and technical collaboration; for advocacy and raising profile of habitat agenda, and for resource mobilization.

Existing partnerships with Communities, Governments, existing bilateral and multilateral donors, and private sector will be reviewed and strengthened. New partnerships will be targeted and fostered for instance with emerging groups that are youth-led, social enterprises/startups; Arcadis for technical collaboration; Global Compact for private sector engagement; DFID as a donor for urban programming, as well as BASF, and the Islamic Development Bank.

Key Partnerships that will be reviewed and strengthened include ADB – Building on urban basic services initiatives, promote partnership on urban economy/capacity building/municipal governance; Cities Alliance/UCLG – Promote partnerships at municipal government levels for urban legislation and governance and increased presence at small-medium size city level. UNDP – have indicated their interest in local economy development and joint urban programming. A key niche for partnering as part of their involvement in the urban sector could be to partner and support the niche of urban youth and women; and urban resilience to build on the strengths of both agencies; UNEP – Environment Climate Change and Urban transport and joint access to green resilience funds and UN-WOMEN /UNICEF – Safer Cities to reduce crime, improve security, protect rights. A strong focus will be maintained on developing and leveraging partnerships with private sector.

The regional strategy places building alliances with national governments at the core of country office operations. Strategies for anchoring UN-Habitat within Asia Pacific member states will prioritize strengthening the role of Government counterparts as leaders of sustainable urbanization and human settlements development. Similarly a priority focus will be given to ensuring close links with regional geopolitical entities such as ASEAN, SAARC.

To this end, ROAP and Asia Pacific countries have identified various ministries, partners, stakeholders to work with for the delivery of thematic interventions. Due to the diverse realities of countries in the region, many with line and partner ministries with changing and unclear mandates, strategies for diversification of partnerships across multiple ministries, other developmental entities as well as UN agencies, such as UNDP, will be looked into, on a case by case basis. Each country office will therefore have its own country strategy, unique to its development context, and where necessary and/or appropriate Habitat Country Programme Documents will be developed to anchor country programmes and link up with the Regional Strategy.
Regional Office for Asia-Pacific (ROAP), Japan

– Where we can anchor ‘Urban’

Strategies for engagement with national government partners of Asia Pacific countries.

**BIG 5 - China, Indonesia, India, S.Korea and Japan:** The strategy for increasing our engagement with the big countries maintains a strong focus on raising the profile of UN-Habitat with interventions that are often political and build leverage within the international scene.

The comparative advantage of UN-Habitat was seen as the ability of big countries to use UN-Habitat’s convening power to attain a stronger voice and profile; and the ability of the agency to overcome silo’s.

Based on the existing strengths, opportunities, relationships and positioning of the agency, UN-Habitat will focus on high level engagement through development of global MOU’s with target countries, facilitating global urban discussions through Habitat III, ASEAN and raising the agencies international profile and mandate through fora such as the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (APMCHUD) and via strengthening partnerships at national, state & city levels.

**MICs - Vietnam, Mongolia, Sri-Lanka and the Philippines:** The strategy for increasing our engagement with middle income countries or countries on the verge of attaining middle income status in the coming years is through promotion of the sustainable urbanization agenda through governance interventions at all levels.

A strong focus will be maintained for the delivery modality of One UN and partnerships and collaborations developed to ensure joint programming to address the challenges posed by middle-income countries where the focus should be on ensuring good governance and human rights. The potential for governmental financing of programmes will also be explored.

Partnerships will be developed with key counterpart ministries as well as weaker or emerging government partners with mandates aligned with UN-Habitat thematic areas at national, city and local governments levels. Due to the increasing normative focus of such operations, links with local and regional academia will be fostered for the development of technical support and research programmes; and with private sector for capacity building for housing and basic service delivery and local economic development/municipal financing.

**LDC in development - Bangladesh, Bhutan, Laos, Cambodia, Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands:** This set of LDCs were characterized by small country programmes with a key strength being the potential to partner with any stakeholder from national and local governments civil society multilaterals and bilaterals as well as professional societies and academia; allowing multiple entry points for rolling out the sustainable urban development agenda.

The high levels of vulnerability and very mobile populations, with some countries such as Bangladesh having huge populations demonstrate the need for vulnerability reduction and resilience building and establishment of urban-rural linkages through development of Urban Support Programmes.
These countries also typically had governments that understood the extent of vulnerability and were committed to the formulation of urban/human settlements policies and regulations that addressed the risks they were facing, and were open minded towards ASEAN integration. Due to the lack of traditional donors and lack of resources, the potential for climate and DRR financing will be explored for policy formulation and implementation as entry points.

**LDCs with complex development approaches: Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan:** The first group of LDCs were classified as the least developed countries with security and crisis environments that were however characterized by (i) substantial UN-Habitat presence on the ground through implementation of Peoples Process programmes and (ii) partnerships and engagements with multiple national counterparts, for example Myanmar with 5 MOUs with line ministries and Afghanistan with strongest presence amongst all UN agencies in country, both countries with programmes engaging municipalities at national, sub-national and municipal levels and (iii) demonstrated credibility and experience in responding to post-crisis and post-conflict programming.

National governments in these countries experience political instability and change frequently due to the security situation, leading to shifting mandates and weak capacities of counterparts. The prevalence of frequent and new emerging counterparts allow room for the development of new partnerships and programmes and ensure a secure presence through multiple engagements, the status quo for which will be maintained.

The active participation and often leading role played by the agency in post-crisis and post-conflict emergency clusters presents a strong opportunity and platform to anchor future programmes with a view to sustainable urban development. Furthermore the potential to expand into ‘green’ development and mobilize significant resources from green/climate/risk reduction funds towards resilience building across all programmes would allow for a more secured presence within these increasingly more insecure countries.

- **Our Know-how, knowledge networks**

UN-Habitat has a wealth of core knowledge resources at HQ, branches, regional and country levels.

HQ Branches lead and coordinate a number of global programmes in partnership with the Asia Pacific region and country offices that build on technical expertise and knowledge resources; these include programmes with (1) Global sanitation Facility (GSF) in Nepal, (2) Achieving Sustainable Urban Development (ASUD) in Philippines (3) Water for Asian Cities (WAC) in Laos and Cambodia, (4) Africa Training Labs in China, (5) Participatory Slum Upgrading Projects (PSUP) in Pacific countries (6) CCCI, U-LEDS, CCCI-Asia Pacific programmes at the regional level, (7) International urban training Centre (IUTC) in Korea and NUP for the region (8) Global and Regional Land Tool Network (GLTN/RLTN) (9) The Asia Pacific Youth Assembly (APUYF), (10) Training for city leaders in Malaysia and Bangladesh and (11) the State of Asian Cities Report, the flagship publication of UN-Habitat for the Asia Pacific.

With the new business models of UN-Habitat the opportunities for closer collaboration between ROAP and HQ become evident and present opportunities to build on the
strengths of HQ normative knowledge and ROAPs operational knowledge for successful cross fertilization and transformation of service delivery.

For Asia Pacific, the flagship approach is that of the Peoples Process which has demonstrated success and multiple synergistic benefits through its utilization – indeed the Asia Pacific know how to deliver on the Peoples Process is a vital factor of ROAP’s success.

“The People’s process: a success story of people centered, community driven interventions provides strong foundation for development of sustainable human settlements both in post disaster/conflict recovery and development context. While UN-Habitat continues to apply People’s Process in the post disaster/conflict recovery interventions, it will also anchored in the implementation of SDGs particularly Goal 11. Implementation of SDGs requires collaboration across different levels of government and stakeholder groups including communities. Therefore, People’s Process is a useful approach to prioritize goals, determine the level of effort needed and set out timelines. ROAP will encourage to demonstrate and institutionalize ‘People’s Process’ to promote cross cutting agenda such as promoting gender quality, space for youth, human right based approach in city planning, basic service delivery, promote accountability & transparency in governance through innovative people centered tools such as participatory budgeting, community based markers, IT based applications for real-time community interaction for good governance in realization of SDGs.

a community driven and rights-based approach to sustainable development that put people and communities at the centre of recovery and their own development. The Peoples Process should be adopted for post disaster urban and rural community settlement planning as well as for urban human settlements upgrading and will be the continuation of successful community level programmes that the Asia Pacific office has been implementing to date on Housing & technical training, Water Sanitation and Risk reduction. Future programming will also look to incorporating and/or strengthening elements of community electrification, waste management and urban livelihoods.”
PART III: VISION & ROADMAP

The RS Document

Goals: The regional strategy will address the following objectives:
1) To act as bridge for the realization of the new global frameworks at the regional and country levels through advocacy and implementation;
2) To act as a facilitating, guiding and supporting document for country offices;
3) To address how the Asia-Pacific region can most effectively utilize available resources to transform its current programme portfolio into urban and human settlements implementation for continued normative and operational presence in the region, and its countries.

Focus Areas

A key outcome of the HPM/CTA meeting 2015 was that the five anchor points around which discussions focused - land/secure tenure, ending poverty, sustainable urban development and humanitarian programming and urban resilience, evolved into four with the Urban Resilience anchor mainstreamed across the remaining four – this strategy is conducive to achieving the goal of sustainable development and also allows the agency to harness the emergence of green and resilient funding opportunities to address multiple, integrated priorities vis-à-vis the mandate.

Subsequently the emerging area of Urban resilience (including DRR and Climate Change) will be considered as a cross-cutting initiative across all thematic areas, to promote resilience building.

FA1: A renewed emphasis on land as a precursor for governance and policy

ROAP land interventions are centric to the delivery of Focus Area 1 within Asia Pacific and will be geared towards ensuring secure tenure through provision of housing for the poor in line with our mandated area for ensuring the basic rights of adequate shelter for all. Potential conflicts on land will be viewed as opportunities for creation of partnerships and programmes; and resource mobilization.

A number of comprehensive or innovative programmes will be developed for ensuring access to land with proposed interventions ranging from addressing ‘statelessness’ in Pakistan to land titling in ‘plantations’ in Sri Lanka with an overall shift towards working on urban land issues. An RLTN pilot will also be rolled out in Nepal to establish longer term programme post earthquake presence through comparative advantage of UN-Habitat.

The Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) and Regional Land Tool Network (RLTN) will act as repositories and platforms for engagement and networking. Land experts in country will be made aware of encouraged to use GLTN resources.

At a regional level, the RLTN will also focus on developing an Asia Pacific land policy and convene a multi-stakeholder platform with multilaterals, bilaterals and civil society for discussions around land issues in the Asia Pacific and dissemination of land tools and approaches pioneered by UN-Habitat.
UN-Habitat is poised to play a vital role in the enhancement and institutionalization of municipal governance in the region. The involvement of youth in urban governance will also be an area that is prioritized and expanded in particular for the design of programmes promote youth policymakers and participation in politics and shaping society.

‘State reports’ on urban legislation are proposed to bridge the divides that exist within the Asia Pacific region as well as countries within the sub-regions.

**FA1, FA2, FA3 : Anchoring Urban Planning as a central component in ROAPs projects on sustainable urbanization**

**The 3-pronged approach to sustainable urban development**

The Asia Pacific region again exhibited a strong normative shift towards achieving sustainable urban development and sustainable resilient cities through the entry points of urban and housing policies and frameworks development or mainstreaming.

A number of new entry points and innovative approaches are proposed such as Planned City Extensions as an entry point for working with municipalities through addressing urban-rural linkages particularly for LDCs and MICs; projects integrating City Prosperity Index (CPI) as a measure of sustainability; urban land projects; the establishment of urban observatories along with training and capacity building programmes for governments; as well as support for the development of eco and smart-cities as an entry point for SUD particularly across bigger Asia Pacific countries such as India and China.

The regional office will also prioritize the development of programmes incorporating the three-pronged approach in all countries where operations would be feasible.

Capitalizing on the good coordination that exists between HQ, UPDB and HSUB, CCCI and ASUD, ROAP will promote the implementation of best practice collaborations between thematic branches, global programmes and units for replication of approaches that requires systemizing.

The synergies between the areas of urban planning and design and housing and slum upgrading will be explored normatively, through planning labs to see how the development of housing strategies can be done in tandem with the urban planning process and integrated into the urban planning cycle. At an operational level, the participatory urban planning approach will be adopted to complement the participatory peoples process method of housing development. Some countries have expressed interest in participation with the HQ Urban Lab initiative.

The entry points for commencing programmes specific to this emerging priority area of Urban economy will be firstly through promoting cities as engines for economic development through partnering with municipalities in creating a supportive environment for the growth of MSME’s (micro-small-medium enterprises); and secondly through targeted programming for youth as a vital contributors not just to the urban economy but to urban societies as a whole, through their interest in urban governance, democracy and sustainability. ROAP will work with the UEB to identify existing best practices for UE projects that could be replicated in the region and also for strengthening the adoption of mainstreaming markers for youth related work.
FA3, FA4, FA5: Transform people driven settlement development into genuine urbanization programmes contributing to ending poverty

Programmes to end poverty to date, has focused on addressing the rights of beneficiaries through the provision of basic services such as water & sanitation and provision of adequate shelter which had previously formed the crux of UN-Habitats community based interventions in Asia Pacific. A shift in thinking however is required in line with the agency’s mandate to transform operations to address sustainable urban development and human settlements mandate as articulated in the new Goal 11 of the SDG’s – Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable and for this UN-Habitat Asia Pacific plans to scale up programming via dual delivery of policy interventions that focus on (i) adapting and implementing integrated national policies incorporating demonstration of cross cutting initiatives, that result in inclusive, safe and resilient communities while at the same (ii) implementing poverty alleviation field projects and housing for slum dwellers, with these projects being led by the initial policy intervention and/or resulting in influencing policy creation.

A strong trend towards a normative direction of thinking is witnessed by the intention of the region and country offices to deliver poverty reduction programmes that prioritize policy first. Taking a lead for provision of technical, and advocacy support for the development of urban and housing policies, and national human settlements frameworks, some with climate resilience integrated as a cross cutting issue are planned across the board in countries such as Bangladesh, Laos, Cambodia, Mongolia, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Urban Basic Service delivery holds the majority share of operational and indeed all programming for the region along with Housing and slum upgrading programmes. In addition to providing access to basic services such as Water, Sanitation, Hygiene education (WASH), and small access infrastructure projects such as roads, footpaths, culverts, jetties and bridges modelled on the local terrain and context, ROAP integrates mitigation / adaptation measures into small scale infrastructure thereby fulfilling the dual purpose of improving access as well as resilience.1

ROAP has been successful in establishing a number of innovative partnerships for the area of Water and Sanitation and the office intends to build and expand on these partnerships. A key focus will be to strengthen partnerships with International financing institutions that support national and regional level infrastructure works establishing primary and secondary networks, where UN-Habitat’s niche would be to support connecting communities in the periphery by tertiary networks.

With the increasing urban dimension of our work, focus will also be given to development of alternative energy and electrification programmes, solid waste management mechanisms, mobility and public transport, The office will be assertive in pursing private-sector partners at the regional and national and municipal levels who could be brought on board for the delivery of ‘smart services’ bearing in mind their potential to mitigate green house gas emissions and help cities adopt more innovatively to climate change.

1 For example, through the construction of embankments in areas at risk of flooding
Housing and Slum upgrading There is a strong need to re-focus UN-Habitats work to ensuring basic human rights and this approach is augmented by a recent paper by the UN-Habitat office of the Executive Director on maintaining “Housing at the centre” of sustainable urban development.

ROAP will continue to support and facilitate country offices to play a pivotal role in the shelter cluster of UN humanitarian framework in responding to post disasters/conflicts situations providing technical and implementation support. Building upon the experience of extensive engagement in the large scale housing reconstructions programmes in many countries in the region, innovative and high impact housing response modalities will be a key approach to a) support affected communities to build back their houses to be more resilient, affordable and meeting required technical standards b) provide total recovery solutions through housing. The implementation modality will predominantly continue to be the Peoples Process and programme design will be tailored to the specific cultural context and aspect of the serviced communities.

A strong focus and consideration will be given to housing support for the increasing number of urban poor across established and emerging cities in the Asia Pacific - at the community level. Over the last two decades ROAP has tested array of housing products with state and non-state partners in many countries in the region. Building on success cases and the evolving trend in the housing sector, ROAP will continue to facilitate and guide country offices to help the urban poor communities to gain access to decent and affordable housing through various interventions ranging from policy advocacy to multi-level governance structures, facilitation to housing finance institutions to create innovative and affordable housing finance products, introduction of tools and knowledge products to partner organizations including communities to explore new, affordable housing options. ROAP will promote right based approach protecting the Right to Adequate Housing and enhancement of security of tenure while creating space for women and youth to actively participate in housing initiatives.

More recent trends and engagement with municipalities within Asia-Pacific have identified a trend and strong need for technical assistance on Housing Finance, an area that UN-Habitat is well positioned to support. Normative programmes of assistance can be rolled out with national and municipal level governments and also link to programmes that support the improvement of urban legislation, land and governance.

Urban Economy ROAP will partner with municipalities particularly small-medium size cities for the formulation and implementation of effective urban strategies and policies supportive of local economic development, through research and identification of the MSME market and needs and through facilitating innovative partnerships with financing institutions that promote the growth and prosperity of MSME private sector, particularly for the delivery of green infrastructure and urban basic services. Synergies will be identified where possible for the creation of decent urban jobs, especially for the youth and for women.
FA6: Responding to cities and communities in crisis

Disasters and displacement  The frequency of natural disasters and rise in ‘urban crises’ will warrant the establishment of a quick-response mechanism at the regional level – human resources, mobilization capacities and contingency plans need to be put in place for addressing urban and human settlements crises issues through the re-establishment of shelter-related emergencies and recovery capacities, whilst also establishing regional level dialogues on creation of international or regional frameworks for addressing these issues. A regional level project will be developed and funding sourced for providing emergency support to country offices in post-disaster/post-conflict crisis, with Japan envisioned as being the key donor for systematic targeting of support for humanitarian appeals, building on the presence of ROAP in Japan and for possible inclusion in the upcoming MOU with the Government of Japan.

A key strategy will be the establishment of UN-Habitat leadership as cluster or sector leads building on the agency’s substantive housing and shelter expertise, providing the entry point for establishment of longer term technical support programmes to the government. Cluster coordination will be used as a knowledge sharing and networking platform for mobilization of joint programmes with UN agencies and INGO’s/LNGO’s as previously done for Myanmar and potentially as an entry point for establishing programme presence in Nepal and Pakistan.

Technical support for resettlement programmes will be provided for post-conflict scenarios such as in Sri Lanka and Myanmar. New approaches will be fostered for the creation of National IDP policies and frameworks with a view to ensuring secure tenure, land and human rights for the increasing number of people displaced due to natural disasters or made ‘stateless’ due to conflict in countries with UN-Habitat presence, with support sought from RLTN and GLTN for sensitive operational environments.

Resources for this broad area could be mobilized from new and emerging resilience and ‘green’ funds with a view to bridging humanitarian interventions to sustainable development of resilient cities and communities. This will aid the positioning of the agency as a technical resource for resilient recovery and sustainable urban development.

FA2, FA6 - Urban Resilience: Climate Change, Climate Funding, Disaster Risk Management and the Sendai Framework

Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction have become increasingly more aligned under the emerging ‘resilience’ framework. Globally, there has been substantial progress, with the Sendai Framework for Action in 2015 and the forthcoming Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (CoP21) in Paris. These agreements see a prominent role for cities; as drivers of the increase in GHG emissions (and hence centres for GHG mitigation actions), and as being inherently vulnerable (hence centres for resilience building actions)

Resilience building will be a crucial focus for integration across country and regional programmes, particularly in view of the huge financing opportunities that are emerging from sources such as ADB, bi-laterals + multi-laterals, the Adaptation Fund, Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and the Global Climate Fund (GCF).

ROAP is engaged in dedicated efforts to gain access to these emerging funds – although substantial inputs of time and planning are required the pay-off will pave the way for
ensuring secured resources and presence of UN-Habitat in the region, towards achieving sustainable urban development.

In countries such as Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and the Philippines large programmes have been developed through ‘cross-fertilisation’ – either through a humanitarian or DRR programme that has been leveraged to scale up on climate change or vice versa. This highlights the need and opportunity for Asia-Pacific countries to leverage existing small-scale projects in the areas of Climate Change and DRR for scale up. It will be crucial, however to identify the strategic focus of engagement in terms of resilience along with potential partners for engagement with whom the agency will develop longer term partnerships for technical collaboration and implementation vis a vis UN-Habitat’s strategic priorities and comparative advantages within the emerging institutional environment.

- **FA 7: Knowledge, Research and Capacity Development**

With the unprecedented levels of urbanization expected to materialize over the next 30 years, particularly for the Asia-Pacific region, a key challenge of UN-Habitat will be to document the socio-economic changes that take place in urban areas. This provides a potential opportunity for learning, through our presence in urban centres and regions, providing opportunities for improved performance and replication.

ROAP will strengthen its data collection mechanisms as part of projects and programme design to better monitor the impacts of its human settlements service provision and urban development programmes, delivered through its Knowledge Management Strategy.

With the Asia-Pacific region soon to surpasses the 50% mark and become predominantly an ‘Urban Asia’, it is vital that measures are taken to increase the research and data capabilities of Urban stakeholders to stay on pace with the huge transformations anticipated. Moving towards strengthening the normative function of UN-Habitat means that appropriate and effective policy formulation and capacity building support will need to be provided. However, the data-deficit that exists in being able to track and monitor real-time information on urban trends related to economic growth, poverty reduction, environmental and spatial changes hinders the ability to make evidence-based policy and capacity building decisions and consequently, prepare in advance for the changes that could be predicted via any trends identified.

The lack of centrally available monitoring and evaluation information, therefore reduces the likelihood that knowledge from these sources will be used to improve performance. Building on the recommendations of the OIOS evaluation to strengthen the ability of UN-Habitat to monitor such changes and produce solid evidence of results, ROAP will focus on strengthening its regional level information and knowledge management practices. The regional office will harmonize its data collection through increasing coherence of the type and quality of information collected at country level – linking to HQ level Results Management /M&E system with key indicators.

A KM plan will be developed to further strengthen the normative capacity and knowledge resource capabilities of ROAP. Some proposed knowledge interventions include: Establishment or strengthening of knowledge hubs within countries supported by dedicated focal points, production of flagship regional/national reports to target policy makers and decision makers,; wider dissemination of donor and Urban event
information, A database of practical tools, legal agreements, rosters for country offices, increased ROAP publications/brochures to aid in country advocacy initiatives; and definition of the “Urban Agenda” for Asia and the Pacific.

Furthermore Local Urban Observatories (LUO’s) will be established for improved research and data collection and monitoring capabilities in partnership with relevant Universities for mainstreaming of capacity development across other Focus Areas. Training and Capacity Building (TCB) Activities will be reinforced at the Municipal level to improve Urban service delivery, housing finance and urban governance for small to medium sized cities. Vulnerable urban groups: such as youth and women will also be targeted for skills development and enhancement of employability and capacity to contribute to society and economic growth in urban areas, as well as through projects using Peoples process. Training and Capacity Building needs in line with the emerging Urban Agenda also require urgent addressing for instilling capacities of UN-Habitat country and regional teams, which could be potentially supported by HQ expertise.

On a normative level, UN-Habitat ROAP will continue to produce its flagship publications such as State of Asian Cities Report, and other reports pertinent to the development of Habitat III such as the Pacific regional Habitat III report as well as country level Habitat III reports for designated countries and promote its normative agenda.

Cross Cutting issues – Gender, Youth & Human rights

Cross cutting themes will be mainstreamed more effectively though the rollout of the PAG process via critical review to integrate conceptualization of cross cutting issues at the very beginning of project formulation; in addition the creation of markers ensures a shift in thinking and implementation through establishing gender, human rights and youth and climate change/resilience as integral to delivery of any UN-habitat programmes.

**Gender:** ROAP has quite successfully mainstreamed gender across its community level human settlements projects particularly ensuring impact via the regions flagship Peoples process. For instance, the OIOS Evaluation found that “In Myanmar, women involved in the agency’s largest country-based project consistently reported that their inclusion in village development committees, this owing to the participatory approach of UN-Habitat (i.e., People’s Process), had constituted the first time they had been included in major decisions that affected them —and that it had translated into a sense of volition in other aspects of their lives.”

ROAP will continue to implement and strengthen gender mainstreaming work through the use of mainstreaming markers in line with the Gender and Policy Plan for 2014-2019 and collaboration with the UN-Habitat Gender Unit. The feasibility of generating stand-alone projects for improvement or livelihoods of Urban women and youth, will also be explored under the Urban Economy Focus Area 3 and in tandem with the cross cutting area of youth.

**Human Rights:** In 2013, the Governing Council approved the mainstreaming of human rights as a cross-cutting issue in UN-Habitat through its resolution 24/11. All of UN-Habitat’s interventions contribute to the universal deceleration of human rights which promote the right to an adequate standard of living. UN-Habitat is the key agency mandated for the implementation of two specific rights related to ‘basic services’ —the right to adequate housing and the right to safe drinking water and sanitation. ROAP will continue to uphold the rights of its serving populations in the delivery of programmes and project through empowering both own field staff, stakeholders and partners to ensure human rights standards for adequate housing and basic services are protected,
fulfilled and respected in all related actions. UN-Habitat continues to promote protection against evictions and provides policy advocacy and technical support to work on alternative solutions for force evictions in partnership with governments, city authorities, development partners and private sector.

**Safer Cities:**
Improving the livability of cities and quality of life for all urban residents, centered on the confidence that good urban governance, planning and management can improve the safety of neighborhoods. Safer cities programme now formulated with a holistic, integrated, multi-level government and multi-sectoral approach. Increasing urban crime rates in many parts of the world represents a manifestation of social inequalities that need to be dealt with through policies of inclusion and are a consequence of rapidly growing disparities and in-equity in Asia-Pacific, despite the high levels of urbanization.

Building on the ongoing safer cities initiatives in the region and the evolving programmatic strategies globally as a technical support outfit of Habitat, ROAP strategy is to encourage country offices to commence dialogue in multi-governance structures to promote concept of safer cities focusing multiple elements linking to city planning, governance, housing and urban transport etc.

Building partnerships with other development partners and city networks are encouraged and existing UN-Habitat city and community linkages will add value to promote partnerships.

UN-Habitat signed a global MOU with UN-Women and UNICEF to promote the development of safer cities. The ROAP will identify appropriate countries for the roll-out of this initiative.

**Youth:** The prevalence out-of-school or unemployed youth, and tendencies to resort to work in the informal sector under vulnerable conditions, highlight the need to focus on youth based programming as an absolute priority for the region. ROAP will develop skills building programmes and ventures specifically targeting out-of-school and unemployed youth, and harness partnerships to facilitate their engagement and participation in the urban economy, particularly for countries that face the existence of an idle youth population / youth unemployment crisis such as Indonesia, Maldives and Pacific Islands countries. To date, there has been minimal focus on youth programming within Asia-Pacific although this sector represents significant programmatic synergies and resource mobilization opportunities, in tandem with existing programmes and projects on the ground. ROAP intends to prioritize the development of Urban Economy and youth pilots particularly focusing on the UN-Habitat niche area urban youth.

Discussions on youth-focused initiatives at the Asia Pacific level were kickstarted at the Asia Pacific Urban Forum held in Indonesia October 205 via a dedicated Asia-Pacific Urban Youth Assembly, which was attended by over 300 youth opinion leaders from the region with 50:50 gender balance, with interest from over 1500 strong candidates representing every sub-region of Asia. Outcomes of the sessions provide a series of bottom up ideas and recommendations from young urban thinkers, as a two-way process, feeding into formulation of youth programmes and strategies under the UN-Habitat Focus Area 3 Urban Economy, with maximum impact on youth development.
PART IV: IMPLEMENTATION MODALITIES

The implementation of the regional strategy will demonstrate how to most effectively anchor the thematic substance and focus of envisioned strategies for countries across the region. It aims to address the sustainability of operations in the region; leveraging UN-Habitat resources - human, social capital, leverage, presence and finances - in the most effective manner possible to bring about positive transformation.

Implementation modalities proposed focus on transnational collaboration, global devolved platforms, branding/ visibility/ advocacy and knowledge management, and effective Habitat Country Programme Documents (HCPD's)

- Global devolved platforms

Global and regional programmes will be devolved through promoting local ownership via technical support from Headquarters and ROAP. Promotion of exchanges between countries and dissemination of relevant tools and guidelines to aid local ownership.

The establishment of National Urban Forums and Campaigns, Urban thinkers campus / ROAP will work with HQ to facilitate opportunities for national and local experts to engage in global and regional platforms and events.

Localization of SDGs and thematic focus areas such as land through establishment of GLTN national partners/counterparts will be fostered, resulting in the devolution of the urban agenda.

- Transnational Collaboration

*Exchange Of Resources Between Countries To Address Trans-border Issues.*

Emerging trends that requires looking into from a regional perspective are the increasing number of mega-cities with over 10 million inhabitants, with mega-urban regions and trans-border corridors particularly more commonplace for Asia-Pacific. Asia-Pacific is unique as home to more than half of the world mega-cities, and by 2030, the figure will rise to 22 with Tokyo, Delhi and Shanghai – leading the way along with the emergence of mega urban regions and corridors, some of which also transcend national boundaries.

This displays the importance of engaging with big Asia Pacific countries as bilateral donors and partners for support to the development of frameworks and programmes that address the regional level challenges that are associated with trans-border urbanization. The importance of prioritizing technical cooperation in tandem with large IFI's and private sector organizations with strong regional presence is equally important.

Trans-border programmes will be developed where possible for working on common issues, and for exchange of knowledge and expertise between countries, possibly through creation of virtual teams. Countries within trans-border urban corridors will be explored for potential of becoming urban resource hubs, supported by thematic focal points at the regional office, branches and headquarters.
Multi-country projects

Furthermore ROAP will work with aggregated countries to develop multi-country regional projects for ‘Sustainable Urbanization’ within South Asia and ‘Urban Resilience’ for South East Asia which could greatly benefit from HQ inputs in terms of technical expertise, financial resources, conceptualization for resource mobilization and production of technical reports. The South Asia programme is anticipated to produce urban policies, normative products such as toolkits and guidelines and state of cities reports as well as high tech urban planning and knowledge sharing systems. The S>E Asia programme is anticipated to promote city resilience through PCE work and generate land use and spatial plans and their roll out.

Effective Habitat Country Programme Documents (HCPDs)

The Asia Pacific region and its country offices views the purpose of HCPD primarily as a tool for resource mobilization and ensuring UN-Habitat presence and accountability to government. Whether to have a signed document, depends on the country’s context, presence and ability to mobilize resources that were legally committed to, therefore a full binding HCPD is useful but not beneficial to all countries, therefore there should be flexibility on the type and length of proposed templates to be used for formulation. The HCPD also acts as a consultation document for donors and should be prepared from a bottom-up context specific perspective in order aid the monitoring process and for ensured impact.

As a country level tool the HCPD is required to be first and foremost in alignment with national and country level policies, strategies and plans developed by the national government and the United Nations. In this regard regional and country level teams will work to ensure all programmes are in alignment with the UNDAF and similar protocols, while at the same time ensuring they reflect UN-Habitats regional and global strategies, and mandates as well as other regional mechanisms such as ASEAN, SAARC.

ROAP and Country offices will work together for the development of HCPD’s for prioritized countries with large operational/normative presence or opportunities such as Afghanistan, Myanmar, Sri-lanka, Nepal, Phillippines, Vietnam and countries of bilateral and strategic interest such as India, China and Indonesia.

Branding/ visibility/ advocacy to support Knowledge Management

A strong focus will be maintained on branding, visibility and advocacy and knowledge management as the agency transforms into an increasingly more normative direction. At an internal level the vast resource of intellectual capital generated in the region will be consolidated: and externally, these resources will be used to project and position UN-Habitat as the leading agency for Urban and Human Settlements issues: through use of knowledge for advocacy policy formulation, as a resource for national governments communities and partners, and enhanced visibility of UN-Habitat key programmes for improved public image, at all levels.

The UN-Habitat knowledge management strategy for Asia-pacific will be executed in tandem with the offices communication and visibility initiatives. The KM will also act as
a resource and lever for building productive partnerships for resource mobilization. Knowledge resource tools, processes, best practices, advocacy and visibility materials already in place at country, regional and global level will be used to further enhance visibility and targeted to potential partners and donors in line with ROAP strategic interests

**Proposed Visibility & communications initiatives include:** Championing innovative events at country/regional levels such as the APUF/Y, policy fora, country specific activities for World Habitat Day and World Cities Day, WUF, national urban forums; and the development of marketable products linked to knowledge management initiatives such as brochures, state of cities reports.