Strategic Policy on Human Settlements and Crisis

Executive Summary

UN-HABITAT’s strategic policy for human settlements in crisis focuses on two discrete but inter-related goals. The first goal is to endeavour, within its mandate, to reduce or mitigate vulnerability of human settlements to conflict and disaster and therefore contribute to increasing their security and resilience. This is a long-term endeavour requiring a concerted approach to land, housing and infrastructure policies, planning and governance and institutional capacity building.

The second goal is to help ensure that emergency shelter and services are conceived as a bridge to sustainable recovery, rehabilitation, reconstruction and urban development, from the outset of humanitarian relief operations. The value added of UN-HABITAT’s early and timely engagement in humanitarian response is the reduction of future transaction costs and the achievement of overall aid effectiveness and efficiency through sustainable upgrading interventions in post-crisis operations.

1. Introduction and Overview

This policy document articulates UN-HABITAT’s role with regard to human settlements and crisis. It responds to Resolution HSP/GC/20/17 and supporting documents produced in response to Resolution HSP/GC/19/9 in relation to “Post-conflict, natural and human-made disaster assessment and reconstruction”. Further, this policy has been developed as an integral part of the UN-HABITAT’s Medium Term Strategic and Institutional Plan (MTSIP). The MTSIP articulates a specific provision for urban resiliency and vulnerability reduction in Focus Area 2, whereas post-crisis recovery and reconstruction is addressed under the Focus Area 3.

The policy has also been developed as part of the process of UN reform on humanitarian affairs led by the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA)¹ and its coordinating body - the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC). The Humanitarian Review and Reform process resulted in a new cluster-based planning and coordinating system that draws on both humanitarian and development actors in an integrated response and programming system. This system is designed to overcome historical gaps and assist bridging emergency and recovery processes more effectively. UN-HABITAT has been part of this process and is currently designated as focal point for housing, land and property related issues across all relevant clusters.

¹ ECHA - the inter-agency forum created within the context of UN reforms, is comprised of 16 UN and non-UN agencies including: OCHA, UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP, OHCHR, DPKO, DPA, UNRWA, WHO, FAO, DPI, UN-HABITAT, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict and the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa.
The ECHA review process has recognised the unique niche of UN-HABITAT as an important agency in the humanitarian arena. Through its focus on housing, land and settlement planning, UN-HABITAT provides a cross-cutting approach that reduces vulnerabilities and risk both before and after disasters. The cost of sustaining displaced people in conditions of dependency can be enormous if early measures are not taken to plan and provide for sustainable shelter, infrastructure and services, and for restoring livelihoods. UN-HABITAT’s unique approach to disaster management, reconstruction and recovery is based on its long-standing experience in working closely with communities and local authorities to meet their needs for shelter and services, while simultaneously addressing the longer-term development needs for land, secure tenure and infrastructure. It is clear from this experience that the potential for development gains is far higher during the early stages of relief and recovery, and that an integrated and strategic approach to relief and recovery to facilitate these gains is a clear niche for the agency.

2. Mandate of UN-HABITAT

UN-HABITAT is mandated derived from the Habitat Agenda (paragraphs 40. (l); 43. (z); 170. – 176. ; 208. (d), (e); 228. (c)) to assist member states in disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness, and post-disaster rehabilitation capabilities in human settlements. Other mandatory instruments are contained in Annex I. Based on the above and benefiting from consultations with partners at the second and third sessions of the World Urban Forum, UN-HABITAT has finalised a conceptual framework entitled ‘Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction’

3. The Strategic Policy

The policy defines important baselines and priority areas of focus that are considered necessary for the implementation of both preventative pre-crisis intervention, and sustainable recovery from crisis, with a special focus on the role that UN-HABITAT plays in enhancing an effective and sustainable response to identified human settlements needs in post-crisis environs. It addresses the issues of: institutional priorities; inter-agency cooperation; partnerships; and reporting.

3.1. Institutional Priorities

The Strategic Policy shall:

i) Provide an agency-wide platform for supporting national and local institutions responsible for disaster management, promoting implementation of risk and vulnerability reduction plans, and sustainable reconstruction interventions;

ii) Provide a platform for co-operation and exchange of knowledge and information within UN-HABITAT, and between UN-HABITAT and other United Nations agencies, as well as other relevant parties;

iii) Support the agency’s role in policy development, humanitarian action plans and operational activities as a means of initiating sustainable recovery and reconstruction programming within the overall humanitarian coordination mechanisms, such as the IASC and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and at country level with the Humanitarian Coordinator, UN Country Teams and the new IASC cluster response system.

3.2 Interagency cooperation

UN-HABITAT shall:

i) Continue to develop its role as focal point for housing, land and property rights within the IASC Cluster system at headquarters, in Geneva and within UN Country Teams where called upon;

2 See Annex 2: ‘Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction’
ii) Continue to pursue full membership in the IASC as recommended by the General Assembly in Resolution A/60/203;

iii) Continue coordination with Humanitarian Agencies through regular participation in meetings of the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs, as well as maintaining relevant linkages with UN initiatives related to linking humanitarian work with recovery and development.

3.3 Partnerships, including cooperation with other UN agencies

UN-HABITAT shall:

i) Continue to strengthen existing partnerships, and initiate new partnerships with both normative and operational UN, non-UN agencies, public and private sector and civil society organisations engaged in disaster mitigation, humanitarian and recovery activities globally;

ii) Continue to strengthen and expand partnerships with UN, non-UN agencies, public and private sector and civil society organisations to ensure greater cohesion and more efficient operations addressing human settlements facing or recovering from crisis.

3.4 Reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation

UN-HABITAT will undertake regular and periodic evaluation against the terms of this policy and the indicators set out in the Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction framework. An annual report on performance of the Agency and its partners who are involved in implementing this policy will be prepared and submitted for review by the Committee of Permanent Representatives before release to other interested parties. Data and information drawn from monitoring will be provided as follows:

i) To the Governing Council and its members through the CPR, in order to monitor progress and provide substantive proposals for mobilising the necessary resources for the agency to continue “...promoting sustainable human settlements development in emergencies and post-disaster situations.”

ii) Within the agency, to provide divisions, branches, sections and programmes involved in assisting settlements at risk and settlements in crises with lessons learned for both normative and capacity building support;

iii) Through UNCT’s to Resident and/or Humanitarian Coordinator systems in support of UNCT planning and implementation addressing settlements at risk and settlements in crisis;

iv) To IASC cluster working groups both at national and global levels on areas UN-HABITAT has been given functional responsibility for;

v) Through the Executive Director informing members of ECHA on areas within the mandate of the organisation that address humanitarian issues;

vi) Through the publication of tools and documentation that provide guidance or support for assistance to settlements at risk and settlements in crises within the sustainable relief and reconstruction framework.

4. Role and Responsibilities of UN-HABITAT

The overall responsibility for the implementation of the strategic policy rests with the Executive Director, who will ensure that it is mainstreamed throughout the organisation and to:

i) Facilitate in-house coordination and to generate lessons learned and normative products, such as improved tools for vulnerability reduction, disaster preparedness and mitigation, land and property rights, and mainstreaming disaster management;

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3 See A/60/8 Res. HSP/GC/20/17, p. 43, OP 5 (Annex 1)
ii) Contribute to inter-agency cooperation, partnerships and networking and promote public-private partnerships, complementing inter-governmental commitments when suitable, in implementing sustainable interventions in human settlements at risk and settlements in crisis;

iii) Identify key partners, priorities and opportunities for immediate measures linked to longer-term technical and capacity building support to ensure a seamless transition from early crisis response to longer-term recovery and development;

iv) Act as in-house Secretariat for Agency-wide engagement and regular reporting to ECHA, the IASC, and other humanitarian coordination mechanisms, as necessary;

v) Provide agency liaison for engagement with the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF);

vi) Backstop substantive inputs through UN-Habitat’s Geneva sub-office, to the IASC Humanitarian Reform cluster working groups;

vii) Ensure, where UN-HABITAT programmes are present, collaboration with UN Country Teams in Common Humanitarian Action Plans (CHAP’s); Consolidated Appeals (CAP’s), and Flash Appeals (FA’s); and endeavour to link these to UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF’s); Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs) and other development planning processes at local and national levels;

viii) Continue building and maintaining strategic partnerships in particular with local government and local government networks and civil society, addressing the design and implementation of sustainable disaster risk reduction programmes in support of the Hyogo Framework for Action as endorsed by Member States during the World Conference for Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Japan in January 2005.

4. Substantive focus and implementation approach

Within the framework of the MTSIP, and the Sustainable Relief and Reconstruction framework, UN-HABITAT will focus on:

- Reducing the vulnerabilities of human settlements and strengthen their capacities for managing human made and natural disasters at all levels (MTSIP Focus Area 2).
- Responding to immediate needs in the aftermath of crises that are linked to Agency mandated interventions supporting sustainable human settlements (MTSIP Focus Area 3).

4.1 Risk and vulnerability reduction

UN-HABITAT activities related to risk and vulnerability reduction are based on the Hyogo Declaration and its Framework for Action. This framework of action identified gaps and challenges in several areas. Those that correspond to the Focus Areas of the MTSIP are:

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<td>Reducing underlying risk factors</td>
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<td>Preparedness for effective response</td>
<td>Focus Area 1: Advocacy, monitoring and</td>
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UN-HABITAT, in partnership with international, national and local networks, will work on the above through production and application of normative tools and products aimed at risk and vulnerability reduction and sustainable reconstruction in human settlements.

4.2 Post-crisis recovery and reconstruction

The five key priority areas of UN-HABITAT’s post-crisis reconstruction programming involve advisory and technical support to partners and counterparts on settlement upgrading by addressing:

i) Land and Tenure: ie. Land and property rights (Focus Area 3: Pro-poor land and housing); Land use and urban planning and governance (Focus Area 2: Participatory urban planning, management and governance);

ii) Transitional and permanent shelter (Focus Area 3: Pro-poor land and housing)

iii) Environmental remediation: solid and liquid waste management, rubble recycling, etc, (Focus Area 4: Environmentally-sound and affordable infra and services)

iv) Rehabilitation of basic infrastructure and services: transport, water, school and health facilities, etc. (Focus Area 4)

v) Immediate economic recovery and restoration of livelihoods: markets and income generating facilities designed to restore local government revenue systems (Focus Area 5: Strengthening human settlements finance systems).

In addition, UN-HABITAT will combine experiences of its global programmes and technical cooperation programmes to offer support in post-crisis situation on:

i) Damage and needs assessments for housing, basic infrastructure and services;

ii) Immediate technical assistance to affected communities, local authorities and support agencies in the areas of site preparation, land and property management, housing reconstruction, infrastructure rehabilitation, water and sanitation, and livelihoods;

iii) Field level coordination and information management in the human settlements sector (with reference to IASC clusters of Protection, Emergency Shelter, Camp Management and Early Recovery);

iv) Development and implementation of integrated shelter recovery programmes and strategies promoting the principles of sustainable recovery;

v) Selected implementation and visible delivery of priority projects/pilot activities to demonstrate the feasibility of new and improved norms, standards, laws and planning practices that assist member States achieve resilient and sustainable urban development.

4.3 Implementation approach

Positive links between disaster risk reduction, reconstruction, recovery and sustainable development need to established through;

i) Supporting local initiatives:
   - Utilisation of participatory planning and inclusive decision-making methods, ensuring involvement of all actors and in particular women, in all planning and implementation stages.
   - Creation of strategic partnerships and alliances at all levels within the continuum from relief and reconstruction to recovery and development.
ii) Building local capacities:
- Building and engaging capacities at all levels and of all actors and specifically of local authorities to operate as active partners in the process from relief and reconstruction to recovery and development.

iii) Focusing on shelter and livelihoods:
- Development of broad-based and long-term reconstruction and shelter strategies from the earliest stages to ensure effective use of emergency resources and create positive perspectives in the housing sector.
- Development of longer-term solutions for land management to reduce the potential for conflict and increase the potential for investments.
- Development of productive economic activities such as markets and income generating facilities to assist the consolidation of peace and security and promote the recovery of livelihoods and local government revenue systems.

iv) Promoting appropriate legal frameworks:
- Operating within a human rights framework particularly in terms of land rights, security of tenure, and equal rights of women, and establishing clear and understandable legal and regulatory frameworks related to human settlements.

5. Financial Implications

UN-HABITAT’s ability to respond to natural and complex emergencies depends on the availability of predictable financial resources for pre- and post-emergency interventions, scrutiny and evaluation of current and past international emergency aid practice, development of new approaches to relief activities, public information programming, and disaster vulnerability reduction. Apart from funds required for supporting national and local activities, budgetary allocations are also required for the development of normative tools and products, the dissemination of good practices and the mainstreaming of lessons learned through participation in international humanitarian fora.

Resolution HSP/GC/20/17 calls for mobilisation of necessary financial resources to implement the strategic policy and invites Governments in a position to do so to contribute generously to support activities in emergencies and post-disaster situations. To guarantee timely and credible response to humanitarian and transition needs, a strategic and dedicated outreach and fund-raising programme is developed and implemented in line with the resource mobilisation strategy of UN-HABITAT’s MTSIP for 2008-13.

The resource mobilisation strategy shall address member States in a position to do so, to provide non-earmarked, soft-earmarked and/or ear-marked funding for agency’s risk reduction and post-crisis recovery initiatives.
Annex I
Mandatory documents

i) Resolution HSP/GC/19/9 of 9 May 2003: declares that one of the special themes of the twentieth session of the Governing Council shall be “Post-conflict, natural and human-made disasters assessment and reconstruction”. (A/58/8 Report of the Governing Council of the UNHSP, p. 44)

ii) Resolution HSP/GC/19/7 of the same date recommending UN-HABITAT to devote specific attention to human settlements needs in the reconstruction of countries and territories affected by armed conflicts or by other human-made or natural disasters. (A/58/8 Report of the Governing Council of the UNHSP, p. 42, para 6)

iii) GA Resolution 59/239 of 22 December 2004 on the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the strengthening of UN-HABITAT further requested that UN-HABITAT continue to support the efforts of countries affected by natural disasters and complex emergencies, to develop prevention, rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes, and to ensure a more effective transition from relief to development. (A/59/239, para. 18)

iv) GA Resolution 60/203 of 22 December 2005 urging the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to include UN-HABITAT in its membership. (A/60/203, para’s. 15, 16)

v) Resolution HSP/GC/20/17 on ‘Post-conflict, natural and human-made disaster assessment and reconstruction’ taking note of the UN-HABITAT’s guiding principles for sustainable relief and reconstruction, and requesting that the Executive Director mainstream prospects for risk and vulnerability reduction and limiting the after-effects of disasters, elaborate on the guiding principles, and develop a strategic policy for the role of UN-HABITAT. (A/60/8 Report of the Governing Council of the UNHSP, p. 43)