Proposed work programme and budget for the biennium 2012–2013

Report of the Executive Director

Addendum

Opportunities Fund for Urban Youth-led Development

Introduction

1. Since the 1990s Governments in the developing world have become increasingly aware of the demographic, economic and political impacts of the exponential growth of their youthful populations. While not yet demonstrated in effective policies, this awareness was reinforced by the 1989 adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1995 adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

2. To inform policies, a steady flow of reports ensued, often directed at issues related to unemployment, HIV/AIDS and social inclusion, and insecurity and crime, among others. The challenges were seen to be concentrated in cities, where, in many countries, the proportion of the population under 25 years of age exceeds 60 per cent. With nearly half of the world’s population under 25 years of age (some three billion people), the 2007 World Development Report helped to concentrate global concern on the need to take advantage of a window of opportunity, urging Governments to invest in education, health care and job training for young people to produce economic growth and reduce poverty.

3. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is recognized within the United Nations system as one of the lead agencies focusing on young people and, more specifically, young people living in cities and informal settlements. Policymakers now increasingly acknowledge the limitations of deficit-based approaches focused on problems, and there is growing recognition that young people should not be viewed as burdens, but as resources and opportunities.

4. The UN-Habitat Youth Empowerment Programme is based on this view, and seeks to mobilize and develop young people as resources by engaging them in a variety of initiatives. The organizational...
genesis of the Programme was a timely and appropriate response to policy and programmatic needs arising from demographic, economic and political developments, in particular in the cities of developing-countries. The Programme has been reinforced and shaped by several resolutions of the General Assembly and the Governing Council.

5. Following up on General Assembly resolution 54/120 of 17 December 1999, on policies and programmes involving youth, the UN-Habitat Governing Council has, beginning with resolution 17/19 of 14 May 1999, adopted resolutions at each of its sessions intended to support the participation of young people in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. The overall significance of these resolutions lies in their creation and reinforcement of a normative framework for the Youth Empowerment Programme.

6. By its resolution 20/1 of 8 April 2005, the Governing Council, among other things, requested Governments, local authorities, Habitat Agenda partners and organizations serving young people to establish youth information and resource centres, where feasible, with the aim of reaching all young people, including vulnerable youth groups; and resolution 21/6 of 20 April 2007, by which the Governing Council, among other things, requested the establishment of a special fund within UN-Habitat, to be designated the “Opportunities Fund for Urban Youth-led Development”, to support youth-led initiatives in pursuance of the Habitat Agenda and the UN-Habitat work programme and overall strategy.

7. Of equal importance is resolution 22/4 of 3 April 2009, by which the Governing Council, among other things, requested the Executive Director to evaluate the operation of the Opportunities Fund for Urban Youth-led Development and to submit a report thereon to the Governing Council at its twenty-third session.

8. The present report is a summary of an evaluation of the Opportunities Fund undertaken by Thomas Miller and Willem Van Vliet from October to December 2010 in response to resolution 21/6, as part of a larger evaluation of the Youth Empowerment Programme. It looks both back and ahead and, in doing so, seeks to assess recent outcomes and current conditions in the light of a prospective evaluation informed by a vision of how the Youth Empowerment Programme can best contribute to implementation of the medium-term strategic and institutional plan over the coming two years. Considering the Fund’s wider programmatic context, the evaluation also calls for the assessment of progress of various young people’s initiatives. The report covers the Fund from inception through to the second round of funds distribution in 2010.

I. Evaluation of the Opportunities Fund for Urban Youth-led Development

9. The analysis found in the evaluation of the Opportunities Fund is based on archival material, progress reports from organizations that received grants from the Urban Youth Fund in 2009, responses from grant recipients to a web-based survey, site visits to two projects in Nairobi that received grants from the Fund and information from a focus group comprising five Nairobi-based grant recipients.

10. By paragraph 1 of its resolution 21/6, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director to establish a special fund within UN-Habitat, to be designated the “Opportunities Fund for Urban Youth-led Development”, to support youth-led initiatives in pursuance of the Habitat Agenda, the work programme of UN-Habitat and overall strategy within the following areas:

   (a) Mobilizing young people to help strengthen youth-related policy formulation;
   (b) Building the capacities of Governments at all levels, non-governmental and civil society organizations and private-sector entities to ensure a better response to the needs and issues of young people;
   (c) Supporting the development of interest-based information and communication-oriented networks;
   (d) Piloting and demonstration of new and innovative approaches to employment, good governance, adequate shelter and secure tenure;
   (e) Sharing and exchange of information on best practices;
   (f) Facilitating vocational training and credit mechanisms, in collaboration with the private sector and in cooperation with other United Nations bodies and stakeholders, to promote entrepreneurship and employment for young women and men;
Promoting gender mainstreaming in all activities of urban youth.

11. The Opportunities Fund is financed under an agreement of cooperation between UN-Habitat and the Government of Norway. It has provided grants of close to $1 million per year in its two first rounds of application (2009 and 2010). In 2009, the Fund awarded grants to 63 young people’s groups globally. In 2010, 50 such projects received grants.

12. The first call for applications was made in March 2009. By 16 June, more than 1,100 applications had been received by the secretariat, with most originating from African and Arab States. A total of 63 projects led by young people from 33 countries received grants. The processing of applications and the disbursement of the first payments was a challenging learning process, as a result of lack of human resources in the Partners and Youth Branch, recipients’ failure to supply information and the internal payment processes set up in UN-Habitat, all of which delayed the payments.

13. A second call for applications was made on 15 February 2010, with a total 1,563 applications received and 50 approved. Applications from Latin American countries more than doubled but, overall, most applications continued to originate from African, Arab and Asian and Pacific countries. The applications in 2010 were generally of a higher quality, with 38 per cent found eligible compared to 28 per cent in 2009. The size of the average grant was also larger in 2010, resulting in relatively fewer recipients when compared to 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grants by region, 2009 and 2010 (number of projects and grant amounts)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African and Arab countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of projects</td>
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<td>Percentage of projects</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total grants (United State dollars)</td>
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<td>Average grant (United States dollars)</td>
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1 Later reduced to 63
2 Later reduced to 50

II. Findings

14. The findings of the evaluation can be broken down into five categories: award decisions and project selection; monitoring and evaluation; communication; participation of young people; and capacity-building.

A. Award decisions and project selection

15. The evaluators suggested that there was a need to focus future Fund award selection in fewer countries, where UN-Habitat had existing strengths, so as to increase impact and enhance opportunities for learning lessons. Alternatively, if projects were chosen from more than one continent, it would be best to subcontract project management to others and to bring in evaluators at the outset to devise a uniform evaluation system that would permit comparisons of findings across all sites and programme types.

16. The evaluators also suggested linking decisions regarding the selection of projects for Fund awards more strongly with existing focus areas of strength in UN-Habitat (e.g., water and sanitation, shelter, land) and making this linkage a criterion when deciding on awards. It was also important to consider the specific interests of prospective donors (e.g., climate change) and the potential of

1 Although 67 projects originally received grants in 2009, 4 were later disqualified.
intergenerational partnerships between programme beneficiaries and organizations for older persons as means of attracting additional funding and enhancing capacity.

B. Monitoring and evaluation

17. The evaluators suggested:
   (a) Ensuring careful monitoring and evaluation of projects funded in the future to identify promising practices;
   (b) Ensuring that future award decisions included adequate funding to carry out monitoring and evaluation;
   (c) Analysing midterm progress reports and final project reports submitted by beneficiaries to identify challenges and lessons learned;
   (d) Revising the template for interim and final project reports to include questions about lessons learned, partnership development and organizational sustainability;
   (e) Facilitating monitoring and evaluation, making first payments to recipients conditional on the provision of baseline data and making second payments conditional on the provision of progress data;
   (f) Building monitoring and evaluation into initial programme design and beneficiary reporting requirements.

C. Communication

18. The evaluators suggested:
   (a) Maintaining consistent focal points for communications with grant recipients and advising them of any changes;
   (b) Disseminating promising practices on an information-resource website focusing on young people;
   (c) Maintaining an interactive website where grant recipients and other organizations led by young people could find information on projects of interest (e.g., names of organizations, project descriptions, locations, contact information), receive support for training, upload information on their own projects and share experiences;
   (d) Supporting regional consultations between grant recipients to facilitate networking and exchange of lessons learned by working with regional offices and Habitat programme managers.

D. Participation of young people

19. The evaluators suggested:
   (a) Engaging young people, for payment, to assist in the review process for new applications for grants;
   (b) Engaging young people, for payment, to assist in training new grant recipients;
   (c) Exploring, through the Fund’s advisory committee, how young people could become more involved in the Fund’s operations (e.g., grant outreach, review, training).

E. Capacity-building

20. The evaluators suggested:
   (a) Strengthening the involvement of Habitat programme managers in the Fund’s management and operations, possibly through sharing costs with another United Nations entity;
   (b) Supporting grant beneficiaries by linking them to social entrepreneur programmes at universities.