

National Urban Policy Programme

Workplan 2021-2022:

Objectives, priorities and deliverables

UN-Habitat
OECD
Cities Alliance

1. Introduction

National Urban Policy

Addressing the evolving challenges in urban areas and fostering safe, sustainable, inclusive and resilient cities will require a cross-sectoral and whole-of-government approach to urban policies. The role of national government is critical to make this happen, and **National Urban Policies (NUPs)** have been identified as a key instrument. Well-designed NUPs can align sectoral policies that affect urban areas, coordinate across levels of government, and ensure that all urban policies are coherent in their support of cities and residents. NUPs are also expected to contribute to the implementation of different global agendas such as the 2030 Agenda (SDGs), the New Urban Agenda, the Paris Agreement, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. For instance, the New Urban Agenda explicitly places NUPs as the first pillar of its agenda for implementation.

National Urban Policy Programme

While NUPs have already been put in place in one form or another in 150 countries globally (OECD/UN-HABITAT, 2018^[1]), many countries are constantly reviewing and renewing their NUPs to reflect new circumstances surrounding them. There is lack of knowledge on NUPs to effectively meet the new demands, and there is substantive need for mutual learning on developing and implementing NUPs. In some countries, national and subnational governments may not have sufficient resources and specialised skills to successfully undertake the NUP process.

In order to address this challenge, the OECD, the UN-Habitat and Cities Alliance established the **National Urban Policy Programme (NUPP)**. It was launched at the Habitat III Conference in Quito, Ecuador in 2016. The NUPP is a global platform that facilitates the sharing of experiences on NUPs and provides targeted support to countries building on the expertise of the OECD, UN Habitat, Cities Alliance as well as other partners of the Programme. The objective is to strengthen knowledge and capacity in countries to develop, implement and monitor NUPs in an effective, efficient and inclusive way. The NUPP scope of action is built around five pillars:

- To **enhance knowledge** (creation, exchange, management) on NUP at all levels of government, civil society and other relevant stakeholders;
- To **increase capacity** (human, financial, and institutional) of policy makers at all levels of government to develop NUPs;
- To **provide direct country support** for NUP development, ensuring the involvement of key stakeholders and participatory processes;
- To **monitor the progress of NUPs** as a tool for the implementation of the NUA and the SDGs; and
- To **provide a platform** for advocacy and networking around NUPs for all level of government, the private sector, and other relevant stakeholders.

The NUPP has been managed by the three coordinating partners (OECD, UN Habitat, Cities Alliance).

2. Progress to date

2017-2018

The first outcomes of the NUPP included the 2nd International Conference on National Urban Policies (2017), global monitoring of NUPs (2017-18), and OECD National Urban Policy Review of Viet Nam (2018). The detailed outcomes are summarised in Annex A.

- **The 2nd International Conference of National Urban Policy**, organised under the framework of the NUPP was organised in Paris in May 2017 and focused on the implementation of global agendas, gathering more than 350 participants including high-level state representatives and experts.
- **The report National Urban Policies in OECD Countries** (OECD, 2017^[2]) presents key characteristics of the NUPs of OECD member states, based on a country survey.
- **The first edition of Global State of National Urban Policy Report** (OECD/UN-HABITAT, 2018^[1]) constitutes the first attempt at global NUP monitoring, with a total of 150 identified NUPs.
- **The OECD Urban Policy Review of Viet Nam** (OECD, 2018^[3]) was a first collaboration under the NUPP framework on an OECD country review with UN-Habitat, including a joint in-country workshop.
- The NUPP was also the framework for partner collaboration on **NUP country projects**, such as in Liberia, led by UN-Habitat, and Ghana, led by Cities Alliance.

2019-2020

NUPP Workplan 2019-20

Since 2019, the NUPP activities have been managed through a two-year Workplan. Following consultation and exchanges among partners at the Second NUPP Partners Meeting (in Kuala Lumpur in February 2018), the NUPP Workplan 2019-20 identified 3 key priorities for action:

- **Priority 1:** Continue and elaborate monitoring NUPs at global scale, as a unique contribution of NUPP, by developing the 2nd edition of Global State of National Urban Policy Report;
- **Priority 2:** Continue facilitating a global discussion and debate on NUPs, including through the 3rd International Conference on National Urban Policy;
- **Priority 3:** Carry out tailored country support in a shared responsibility across NUPP partners and other stakeholders, as appropriate and following a demand-driven approach.

Key outcomes

The key outcomes of the 2019-2020 Workplan include the 3rd International Conference on National Urban Policy, the preparation of the 2nd edition of the Global State of National Urban Policies Report, and a

workshop for the Myanmar-OECD National Urban Policy Review of Myanmar. The detailed outcomes are summarised in Annex A.

- **The 3rd International Conference on National Urban Policy.**

The third conference was organised in Nairobi, Kenya, on October 18-31 2019, with the theme: Fostering Innovations for Sustainable and Climate-Resilient Cities. The conference gathered 160 participants, from national ministries, international organisations, academia, and the private sector of 25 countries and 46 cities.

- **The 2nd edition of the Global State of National Urban Policies Report.**

This second edition is based on a country survey that was shared to all UN-member countries, as well as expert assessment. It provides an analysis of the evolution of key trends and characteristics of NUPs since the first edition, as well as two additional in-depth chapters on NUPs and the global agendas, and on the role of NUPs in enhancing climate resilience and the low carbon transition.

- **Myanmar-OECD Workshop for the Urban Policy Review of Myanmar.**

Under the framework of the OECD Urban policy Review of Myanmar, a workshop was organised on December 17th 2019 in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, supported by UN-Habitat and Cities Alliance. It gathered more than 70 participants from key Myanmar ministries, urban stakeholders, and international organisations, as well as representatives from the Japanese and UK governments.

3. Designing the NUPP Workplan 2021-22

The strong outcomes of the NUPP in the last four years has successfully established the NUPP as a global reference for NUPs, laying out strong foundations through international conferences and global monitoring reports. Country specific activities have also demonstrated how NUPP can meet country demands and add value through international partnerships. In 2019-20, the NUPP also started to engage partners more substantially, especially in the process of global NUP monitoring, with participation and contributions of partners such as ISOCARP, UCLG, International Science Council and the Coalition for Urban Transitions.

With growing interest and demand for guidance in NUP development and implementation, it is crucial for the NUPP to review its objectives and priorities and to design the activities accordingly.

The continued / emerging policy needs for NUPs

Cities, COVID-19 and the role of NUP

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic plays out unevenly across geographical contexts within the same country, and cities have been on the frontline of the response to the crisis. In a context of emergency, cities have been playing a crucial role in implementing nation-wide measures (e.g. lockdown), and have also revealed themselves as laboratories for bottom-up and innovative policies and actions towards long-term recovery. Moreover, the disruptions of the crisis and the calls to 'build back better' have built momentum for cities to lead an urban paradigm shift towards inclusive, green, and smart cities (OECD, 2020^[4]). The path to recovery from this unprecedented crisis calls for strong multi-level dialogue, for which NUPs will remain a key coordinating instrument. While recovery strategies will be a priority agenda for all countries in the coming years, they will need to be specifically tailored to the local contexts and diverse sources of vulnerabilities that the crisis revealed, through an approach centred on 'people' and 'places'. NUPs will have a crucial role to play to ensure that these recovery strategies address the asymmetrical impacts of the crisis between and within urban areas.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath are also prompting cities to rethink how they deliver services and how they plan their space, learning from the lessons from the crisis (e.g. urban density, digitalisation and mobility in cities). To a certain extent, "life after COVID-19" will rather be "life with COVID-19", which stresses the need for rebuilding cities over the long term, taking better account of the different needs such as social distancing and teleworking. The rediscovery of proximity provides a window to shift faster from a target of increasing mobility to one of enhancing accessibility by revisiting public space, urban design and planning. Essential concepts such as "circular economy", "localisation of SDGs", "tactical town planning" and "the 15 minute city" can help improve the quality of life while preserving the productivity, social inclusion and the environment (OECD, 2020^[4]). NUPs can also play a key role in driving the paradigm shift, by engaging policymakers, town planners and city dwellers and developing an enabling framework for bottom-up and innovative urban strategies.

Implementing global urban agendas

NUPs have been increasingly recognised as instruments for countries to implement policy agendas such as the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda, the Paris Agreement, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. In 2019, NUPs have formally become part of the indicator framework of SDG 11 on cities. This fact will accelerate countries' attention to and interest in developing NUPs.

The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated the risks of setting back the implementation of these global agendas several years. NUP should be leveraged even more strongly, in order to address the unprecedented shocks in urban areas while at the same time to move forward the global urban agendas.

In particular, with the impacts of climate change worsening, and carbon emissions rising, NUPs should play a key role to accelerate climate action. Embedding climate measures in an effective enabling framework such as a NUP enhances governments' ambition and reduces cities' emissions and exposure to climate risks. Urban areas have untapped opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. By 2050 local governments can reduce 1/3 of all urban emissions and national-local collaboration can achieve a reduction of another third (Coalition for Urban Transitions, 2019^[5]). NUPs can valuably support the transition to the zero-carbon economy, as NUPs cover a wide range of policy areas with a profound effect on climate policy goals and wellbeing co-benefits such as economic development, land-use, housing, transport, labour and health.

Contributing to regional urban agendas

Many countries are also going to review and renew their NUPs motivated by political agendas across different continents across the globe. For example, at the European scale, the Urban Agenda of the EU, "Pact of Amsterdam" also acknowledges the importance of the contribution of urban areas to development, and the need for national and European policy frameworks to consider them and help foster territorial cohesion. Moreover, the current development of the "New Leipzig Charter – The transformative power of cities for the common good" – emphasizes the need for strong national urban policy frameworks, urban resilience including the risk of pandemics, and the digital transformation. Its implementation plan also calls to attention on the need for better connection and collaboration with existing urban networks and knowledge creation initiatives on the science-policy continuum. In Africa, several countries have pointed out that they are revisiting their NUPs to achieve the African Union's Agenda 2063.

Addressing inequalities in cities

Inequalities and divides within and between cities are increasing, and addressing inequalities can be a strong political requirement for NUPs. The COVID-19 crisis also starkly illustrated the importance of addressing socio-spatial inequalities in urban areas and enhancing urban resilience, as it was found that cities marked with inequalities and a high concentration of urban poor are potentially more vulnerable than those that are better resourced, less crowded and more equal (OECD, 2020^[4]).

Continued urbanisation and fostering urban-rural linkages

One of the key characteristics of explicit NUPs found in the latest NUP country survey is that a NUP *applies an integrated territorial perspective, promoting a system of cities approach and connectivity between urban and rural areas* (OECD, UN-Habitat, Cities Alliance, forthcoming^[6]). In many countries, continued and sometimes accelerating urbanisation remains a key challenge. NUPs can help with balanced territorial development, avoiding overconcentration in major cities and oversaturation of public services and infrastructure. As stated by the OECD principles on Urban Policy and OECD Principles on Rural Policy (OECD, 2019^[7]) (OECD, 2019^[8]), urban and rural areas' paths of development are highly interconnected

through functional relationships and complementarities. Hence, urban policies should take into account the functional geographies and the system of relations addressing urban-rural linkages by means of integrated policies.

Place-based actions based on these functional geographies might foster the economic growth of all territories and promote quality of life and well-being of people. Hence, NUPs cannot tackle cities and rural areas in isolation. On the contrary, they should promote complementarities and synergies within the urban rural continuum by a systemic and integrated approach. In order to achieve a spatially balanced development within the urban-rural continuum, a key role is also played by the development of mid-sized cities. On the one hand, mid-sized cities can provide functions and infrastructures for rural areas. On the other hand, they can balance the overconcentration of activities in large cities and its negative impacts in terms of economic, social and environmental costs.

Guiding principles for the NUPP Workplan 2021-22

Given these renewed relevance and needs requested to NUPs, what roles can NUPP play to address identified relevance and urgent needs for NUP development? What are real value-added of the Programme? Below are three principles to guide the NUPP during the next two years.

Creating evidence base for NUP decision making

Data at the urban scale is crucial for successful evidence-based and iterative NUPs. However, the latest NUP country survey highlights that data and evidence are still lacking for decision making regarding NUPs, as very few countries have identified that their NUPs “relies on robust urban scale data and ensures regular monitoring and evaluation” (OECD, UN-Habitat, Cities Alliance, forthcoming^[6]).

Thus, creating evidence base for NUPs can be a central role of the NUPP for the next two years. Global monitoring of NUPs will still be the centrepiece of this effort. In addition, in 2021-22 the NUPP can further help countries by conducting researches in collaboration with partners, in selected relevant thematic research areas, including the role of NUPs in the recovery from COVID-19, given strong interests from countries.

Strengthening knowledge exchange through a global platform

Due to the increasing interest in NUPs, a number of knowledge products have been produced for effective design and implementation of NUPs, and many countries are also sharing their practices and lessons. As a global platform of a range of institutions (i.e. international organisations, national and subnational governments, planning experts, scientific institutions and academia), the NUPP could take more advantage of the network and disseminate relevant information effectively. For example, the NUPP can regularly collect and disseminate latest news from partner institutions in the form of webinars, newsletters or web platforms. In addition, NUPP partners meeting can be used as a platform to exchange views among experts on some ongoing NUP-related work (peer-reviews). For instance, beyond the development of a NUP, ensuring the necessary conditions for its successful implementation is also an important concern of countries.

In order to ensure the quality of such knowledge sharing, it is crucial to keep engaging diverse partners to the NUPP. Strengthening the management of the NUPP as a global knowledge platform is another key to deliver successful outcomes.

Enhancing communication and engagement

The NUPP could also take more advantage as a global multi-stakeholder platform to enhance communication among partners on the roles that NUPs can play in the changing urban contexts (e.g. digitalisation, climate change, demographic change, COVID-19 crisis). To that end, it is essential for the NUPP to reach a wider range of institutions, across levels of government (countries, regions and cities), planning professionals and multi-disciplinary academics. This wider mobilisation can also increase political buy-in on NUPs, raising the visibility and significance of NUPs in global agendas and international policy discourse.

Areas of priorities and proposed activities for 2021-22

Following these three guiding principles, the NUPP proposes the following areas of priorities and key activities:

Priority 1 - Global Monitoring of NUPs

The role of monitoring NUPs therefore remains a core pillar of the NUPP mandate, made even more significant by the introduction of NUPs within the monitoring framework of the SDGs. This will be done by pursuing the series of GSNUP, while further refining methodological approaches for an increasingly detailed and evidence-based monitoring.

Proposed Activities

- The third edition of the **Global State of National Urban Policies**. The third edition of the GSNUP will build on and augment the coverage and scope of its two previous editions, and engage NUPP partners and member countries in its development.
- **A methodological framework measuring the impact of NUPs**. The NUPP proposes to start developing a methodological framework to measure the quantifiable impact of NUPs. This will be done through a review of existing urban monitoring frameworks and indicators, and the proposal of a tailored framework for NUPs specifically. This research could be presented initially as a working paper, and then be integrated in the GSNUP3.

Priority 2 – thematic studies

The NUPP can invite partners to collaborate and conduct a few thematic studies, building on respective expertise. Research themes can be global or country-specific, to be discussed and determined by partners.

Proposed Activities

- **Roles of NUPs in the COVID-19 recovery / in the post pandemic cities**. While many studies are underway on the economic, social and environmental impacts of the COVID-19 in urban areas and on national recovery strategies, there are very few attempts to specifically look at how national urban ministries can contribute to ‘building cities back better and greener’ over the long term, taking the lessons from the crisis (e.g. urban density, digitalisation, accessibility in cities). The NUPP and its partners can collect evidence from countries as to what role NUPs have played in the short-term and long-term recovery, which could build the basis for country-specific in-depth analysis and guidance on NUPs.
- **Fostering mid-sized cities and urban-rural linkages**. Both aspects relate to the functional relationships and complementarities within territorial systems. Previous and ongoing OECD

research on Urban-Rural linkages and Functional Urban Areas can provide a quantitative basis of evidence for this new focus, notably highlighting the links between systemic characteristics within the urban-rural continuum and the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development.

Priority 3- Enhanced knowledge exchange

To answer countries' need for dialogue, exchange of best practices and guidance on NUP development to answer today's policy challenges, the NUPP will continue to be a platform for such dialogue, involving all levels of government. It will also gather the expertise and perspective of international organisations, academics, and professionals.

Proposed activities

- **Thematic webinars.** In addition to NUPP partners meeting, thematic webinars with more technical focus could be organised online to exchange knowledge on specific themes. Webinars can also be an occasion to draw in a wider audience and increase the visibility of the NUPP.
- **The fourth International Conference on National Urban Policy.** The International Conference on NUP is intended to be a unique forum to facilitate high-level policy dialogues among stakeholders including policy makers of national and sub-national governments, NGOs, academia, civil society and the private sector. It has been organised every second year (2015, 2017, 2019). Depending on interest of partners / host countries, the fourth Conference can be planned in within the NUPP Workplan 2021-22.

Priority 4 – Stronger engagement and collaboration with NUPP partners

The NUPP will aim to solidify and enlarge its partnerships, and engage its partners more substantially and frequently with the activities proposed above to create stronger complementarities and synergies.

Proposed activities

- **NUPP Newsletter.** Regular newsletters (e.g. quarterly) can pull together latest news on NUPs, showcasing the achievements of the NUPP and its partners and disseminate them widely among partners and external stakeholders.
- **NUPP partners meetings.** NUPP partners meetings can be organised more regularly (e.g. biannually). Meetings can serve as a global platform to engage diverse partners, share country practices and lessons (e.g. ongoing policy initiatives, programmes), and exchange views on specific topics (e.g. NUPs and climate resilience).

Annex A. Past NUPP activities

2017-2018

Publications:

- **Global State of National Urban Policy** (February 2018): This is the first report to monitor NUPs at global scale, covering 150 countries, prepared by the UN Habitat and OECD. It was launched at the 9th world Urban Forum in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- **OECD Urban Policy Review of Viet Nam** (February 2018): The OECD and UN-Habitat jointly supported Viet Nam's urban policy development, including through a multi-stakeholder forum in Hanoi in April 2017. This first report on national urban policy in Southeast Asia was launched at the 9th world Urban Forum in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Conferences and Events:

- **The 2nd International Conference on NUP** (May 2017, Paris): More than 350 participants, including high-level state representatives and experts gathered to discuss "National Urban Policies: Implementing the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda".
- **Workshop "Realising the SDGs in Cities: Aligning Knowledge, Tools and Monitoring Frameworks"** (July 2018, New York): co-organised at the High Level Political Forum in New York by the OECD, UN-Habitat and Cities Alliance, International Science Council, UK Research and Innovation, Global Challenges Research Fund and UNSDSN. This event showcased the role of NUPs in shaping national debate and fostering multi-level governance. It also discussed how the SDGs can be mainstreamed with national urban policies.
- In addition, the NUPP partners met in a number of occasions to exchange views on how to effectively advance the NUPP, including two dedicated **NUPP Partners Meetings** (in May 2017 in Paris, in February 2018 in Kuala Lumpur) and a side meeting during the session of OECD Working Party on Urban Policy (April 2018, Paris).

Country Support:

- **Collaborative country work in Liberia**, phase One (2017): UN Habitat and Cities Alliance have collaborated to support the development of a NUP in Liberia, building on the first-phase Feasibility Phase Discussion Paper that paves the way for a 2nd Diagnosis Phase to be started in 2018.
- **Ghana National Urban Policy Gap Analysis**: Cities Alliance has taken the lead in reviewing the Ghana NUP and the implementation of its Action Plan to identify implementation gaps, enhance the implementation of NUP framework by all stakeholders, and ensure the alignment of the NUP with global agreements, particularly Agenda 2030 and the New Urban Agenda.

2019-2020

Publications:

- **The 2nd edition of the Global State of National Urban Policy (ongoing).**

The 1st edition, launched in February 2018 was the first attempt globally to monitor and evaluate NUPs, covering 150 countries. This second edition is based on a country survey that was shared to all UN-member countries, as well as expert assessment. It provides an analysis of the evolution of key trends and characteristics of NUPs since the first edition, as well as two additional in-depth chapters on NUPs and the global agendas, and on the role of NUPs in enhancing climate resilience and the low carbon transition.

Conferences and Events:

- **The 3rd International Conference on NUP (28-31 October 2019).**

The third conference was organised by UN-Habitat, the OECD, and Cities Alliance, and was supported by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport of the Republic of Korea, and the Ministry of Transport, Infrastructure, Housing and Urban Development of the Republic of Kenya. It took place in Nairobi, Kenya, on October 20-31 2019, on the topic: Fostering Innovations for Sustainable and Climate-Resilient Cities, with the objective to discuss how NUPs can promote innovative ways to make cities more sustainable, climate resilient and low carbon. The conference gathered 160 participants, from national ministries, international organisations, academia, and the private sector of 25 countries and 46 cities.

- **The third NUPP partners meeting** took place on October 28 2019, in Nairobi, Kenya, during the Third International Conference on National Urban Policies. It was a very good occasion to re-energise the network with discussion on the 2019-2020 workplan, in particular two key work streams: the second edition of the Global State of National Urban Policy report (GSNUP2) and co-ordinated country support. There was a tour-de-table of partner countries/institutions to update their recent activities regarding NUPs. They also provided extensive inputs to a country survey draft for GSNUP2. The governance structure and engagement strategy of the NUPP was also discussed, particularly in regards to the upcoming 10th World Urban Forum.
- **The fourth NUPP Partners Meeting** took place during the World Urban Forum in Abu Dhabi in February 2020. The 4th meeting aimed to share the progress of NUPP partners' NUP related activities; discuss the second edition of the Global State of National Urban Policies Report, and exchange ideas on the strategic measures for the development of the programme. 24 people participated to this meeting, from national governments and international organisations.

Country Support:

- **National Urban Policy Workshop in Myanmar (2019).** Under the framework of the Myanmar-OECD National Urban policy Review of Myanmar, a workshop was organised on December 17th 2019 in Nay Pyi Taw, directly following Myanmar's National Urban Forum the day before. Kicking off the review process, it gathered more than 70 participants from key Myanmar ministries and subnational governments, academia and the private sector, international organisations involved in urban development in Myanmar (such as UN-Habitat, the World Bank, the Global Green Growth Initiative) and representatives from the Japanese and UK government. It was organised with the support of the National Urban Policy Programme: with the financial support of Cities Alliance and the participation of UN-Habitat.

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