



UNCHS (Habitat) - the global campaign for good urban governance⁽¹⁾

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I. INTRODUCTION

THE UNITED NATIONS Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) was established in 1978, two years after the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in Vancouver, Canada. Based in Nairobi, Kenya, UNCHS (Habitat) is the lead agency within the UN system for coordinating activities in the field of human settlements.

The Centre was the secretariat for the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) held in Istanbul, Turkey, in June 1996. This conference formulated the Habitat Agenda and the Istanbul Declaration in which governments committed themselves to the goals of adequate shelter for all and sustainable urban development. Habitat is the focal point for the implementation of these commitments.

Habitat's operational activities focus on promoting housing for all, improving urban governance, reducing urban poverty, improving the living environment, and managing disaster mitigation and post-conflict rehabilitation. The Centre is supporting the implementation of the Habitat Agenda at local, national and regional levels. At the end of 1998, UNCHS (Habitat) had 238 technical programmes and projects under execution in 86 countries, with an annual budget totalling US\$ 70 million.

During the biennium 2000-2001, Habitat will launch two significant global campaigns, one for secure tenure and the other on urban governance. The aim of these campaigns is to reduce urban poverty through policies which emphasize equity, sustainability and social justice. Strategic and operational partnerships with government, local authorities, non-governmental and community-based organizations, the private sector and UN agencies are crucial to the success of these campaigns.

Another major activity for the biennium is the preparation and servicing of Istanbul+5, the special session of the UN General Assembly planned for June 2001, which will review and appraise the worldwide implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

II. THE GLOBAL CAMPAIGN ON URBAN GOVERNANCE

THE GLOBAL CAMPAIGN on Urban Governance signals a new and strategic approach by UNCHS (Habitat) for achieving the goals of the

Istanbul Declaration and the Habitat Agenda. The campaign is designed to promote accountable and transparent urban governance which responds to and benefits all sectors of society, particularly the urban poor, and which strives to eradicate all forms of exclusion. Its goal is to improve the quality of life in cities, especially for the poor and marginalized, through improved local governance. The strategy for achieving this is to advocate the norms of good urban governance and promote inclusive decision-making processes.

Cities offer immense opportunities everywhere. They are important engines of economic growth, they provide significant economies of scale in the provision of jobs, housing and services and they are important centres of productivity and social development. Cities in most countries are also nodes for political activity. Good governance is an enabling tool, which ensures that cities carry out their functions with maximum effectiveness.

The campaign will contribute to the increasing emphasis world-wide on improving governance in cities as a means of achieving sustainable development. By focusing on the city and community levels, the campaign will complement these efforts and build on Habitat's considerable experience of urban issues. All Habitat programmes, regardless of their strategic entry point, promote good governance in one way or another. The campaign will distill and focus these lessons of experience so that they can be harmonized with those of other agencies, and be applied more widely.

To this end, the campaign will itself be a model of good governance, both in process and outcome. It will be guided in its operation by the principles of inclusiveness and decentralization. The participatory design of the campaign will mobilize partners and, to the maximum degree possible, implementation will be decentralized to partners and their networks. A steering committee consisting of Habitat and key strategic partners will be established to guide the campaign design, implementation and evaluation.

Habitat is committed by the Habitat Agenda, adopted in Istanbul in June 1996, to "...enabling local leadership, promoting democratic rule, exercising public authority and using public resources in all public institutions at all levels that is conducive to ensuring transparent, responsible accountable, just, effective and efficient governance of towns, cities and metropolitan areas." (para 45a). Furthermore, it has an objective of "...institutionalizing a participatory approach to sustainable human settlements development and management, based on continuing dialogue among all actors involved in urban development (the public sector, the private sector and communities), especially women, persons with disabilities, and indigenous people, including the interests of children and youth." (para 45h).

a. What is Good Governance?

The concept of governance is complex and controversial. The campaign attempts to define the "desired standards of practice". Adding such a value judgement to "governance" increases the controversy exponentially. Different people and organizations will define "good governance" according to their own experience and interests. To facilitate the debate, definitions of good governance, from the perspective of three organizations, namely, the UNDP, the World Bank and Habitat, are given below.

2. UNDP (1977), *Governance for Sustainable Human Development*, New York, page 3.

3. World Bank (1999), *Urban and Local Government Strategy*, Washington DC, pages 8-9.

4. See reference 2, pages 7-10.

5. Civil society includes individuals and groups, organized or unorganized, who interact in the social, political and economic domains and who are regulated by formal and informal rules and laws. See reference 1.

For the UNDP, "...good governance is, among other things, participatory, transparent and accountable. It is also effective and equitable. And it promotes the rule of law."⁽²⁾ The World Bank states "...good governance implies inclusion and representation of all groups in the urban society... and accountability, integrity and transparency of local government actions ... in defining and pursuing shared goals."⁽³⁾ There are some important consistencies between the World Bank's definition and that of UNDP, specifically the shared references to participation, transparency and accountability, and an emphasis on process.

To be properly understood, the Bank's definition must be seen in the context of its vision for the sustainable city.⁽⁴⁾ Good governance is but one of four characteristics shared by sustainable cities; the other three are: livability: "...ensuring a decent quality of life and equitable opportunity for all residents, including the poorest;" competitiveness: which seeks to ensure that "...approaches to urban equity and social safety nets [are] consistent with incentive systems that foster productive and competitive firms of all sizes;" and bankability: which "...implies financial soundness in the treatment of revenue sources and expenditures." Equity, competitiveness and financial sustainability are introduced in a way that suggests that governance is responsible for balancing social and economic interests.

Habitat's own understanding of good urban governance is based on its operational experience and the Habitat Agenda... the global plan of action adopted during the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II). Habitat's operational experience suggests the emergence of a new approach to good urban governance based on a shift from direct provision of goods and services by government to an enabling approach. Habitat II embraced this approach as the best available strategy for achieving sustainable human settlements. It is characterized by three principle strategies, namely, decentralizing responsibilities and resources to local authorities; encouraging the participation of civil society; and using partnerships to achieve common objectives.

Three aspects of the various definitions are relevant for the campaign. First, governance is a neutral concept; it can come in many forms, tyrannical or benevolent, effective or incompetent. Second, governance is not government. As a concept, it recognizes that power exists inside and outside the formal authority of government. In many formulations, governance includes government, the private sector and civil society.⁽⁵⁾ Third, governance emphasizes "process". It recognizes that decisions are made based on complex relationships among many actors with different priorities.

b. The "Inclusive City"

The theme of the Campaign for Good Urban Governance is the "inclusive city" because inclusive decision-making is at the heart of good urban governance. Exclusion as a result of physical, social or economic conditions, or because they are not politically recognized in the cities in which they live, prevents certain groups of people from participating in city life and activities. The failure of cities to integrate excluded groups into their decision-making process is often also a function of inertia, and bureaucratic and unresponsive forms of government. Exclusion and marginalization creates and reinforces poverty in urban society.

The poor and excluded in most cities are underprivileged groups often

characterized by their ethnicity, gender and religion; the implication is that these are the factors that define who is poor. These are, often, important influences on exclusion but an analysis of who is poor finds others than merely those of a particular ethnic group, gender or religion. For example, there are those who are self-excluded as the result of a breakdown of trust in government and politics. Exclusion means that groups are denied access to services that will enable them to engage fully in the economy and society.

The campaign will promote inclusive decision-making processes as a practical strategy for putting into practice the norms of good urban governance. It is at the local level that universal norms for good governance meet the messy reality of competing interests and priorities. To ensure the greatest chance of sustainability, the means and methods used to balance, reconcile and trade off competing interests must be inclusive; thus, the "inclusive city" represents both the final vision and the process used to create it.

c. Normative Goals for the "Inclusive City"

The Global Campaign on Good Urban Governance will promote four specific goals for realizing the "inclusive city": decentralization and local participatory democracy, efficiency, equity and security. The campaign will encourage central and local governments to strive for policy and institutional change to achieve these normative goals, through the means and methods summarized in Table 1.

Through the promotion of decentralization and local participatory democracy, the campaign will support the World Charter for Local Self-Government, which focuses on the autonomy of local government. This charter, which is an autonomous element of the campaign, is being undertaken in conjunction with the World Associations of Cities and Local Authorities Coordination (WACLAC).⁶ The norms of the charter, which are based on the already widely ratified European Charter, are being discussed by national and local governments at regional meetings. It is hoped that the charter will be ratified by national governments at a special session at the UN General Assembly in the year 2001, which will also review the achievements of the Istanbul Conference, dubbed Istanbul+5.

d. Operational Structure of the Campaign

The operational structure of the campaign is based on gathering, disseminating and applying lessons of experience, as shown in Figure 1.

The four main operational elements of the campaign will be:

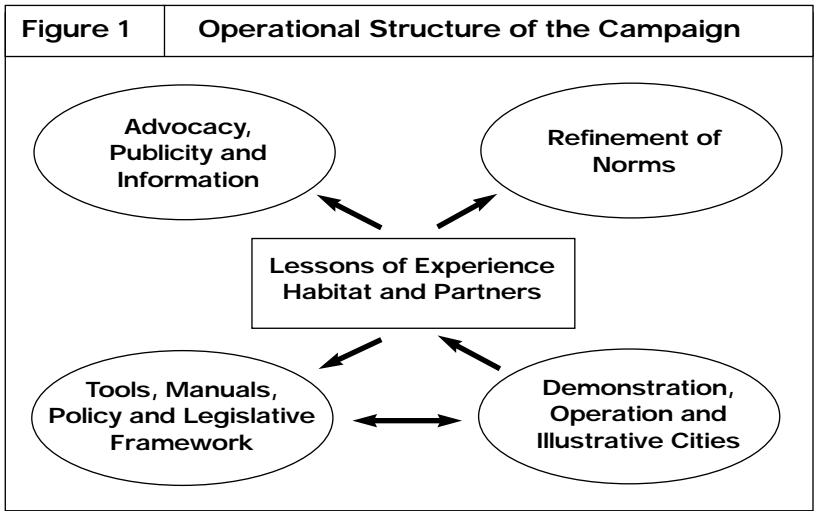
- gathering and synthesizing lessons of experience for convergence of approaches;
- operational activities at the local level;
- global normative debate; and
- advocacy and opinion change.

The key campaign outputs, which are to be produced in collaboration with various partners, include:

- the World Charter of Local Self-Government;
- a declaration on the Norms of Good Urban Governance;
- a State of the World's Cities report;
- a policy paper on the role of women in governance;
- illustrative cities - examples of good governance process and practices in

6. WACLAC, formed in Paris in September 1996, is the resulting world alliance of international associations of cities and local authorities committed to responsible and effective local self-government for sustainable development. Its mission is to represent the local government sector in the international arena and, in particular, with the United Nations. The Secretariat of WACLAC is based in Geneva, Switzerland.

Table 1:		Normative Goals, Means and Methods for the Inclusive City
Normative goals	Operational components	Means and methods
Decentralization and participatory democracy	Local autonomy	Delegation of authority to the competent level closest to the citizens (decentralization, subsidiarity and proximity)
	Leadership for public participation and stakeholder involvement	City referenda Public hearings and town hall meetings City consultation and participatory planning Citizens' fora and other mechanisms for negotiation Processes for conflict mediation
	Building democratic culture	Enabling legislative framework to protect the rights and entitlements of all groups in society Women's participation
	Enablement	Affirmative actions for marginalized groups Procedures for public petitioning
Efficiency	Transparent financial management	Participatory planning and budgeting Transparent contracting and procurement systems
	Administration and service delivery	Popularization of service standards and complaint procedures Codes of conduct for leaders and officials "Best value" approaches to target setting
	Efficient investment in infrastructure	Participatory strategic planning to address the needs of all groups in society Public-private partnerships for service provision
Equity	Resource allocation	Investment incentives for targeted sectors and geographic areas Social pacts and fair and predictable regulatory frameworks
	Empowerment	Rules governing freedom of access to local authority information Civic education Enabling legislative framework for traditional economic and social institutions and informal sector operators
Security	Environmental management	Environmental planning and management methodologies based on stakeholder involvement
	Disaster preparedness	Partnership disaster prevention strategies
	Crime control and prevention	Conflict mediation mechanisms taking into account local and ethnic democratic traditions Safety audits (especially for women) Partnership crime prevention strategies



- one or two cities in each region related to each of the norms;
- a good governance index - which will measure the achievements of cities in relation to the normative goals; and
- a good governance toolkit - a toolkit of good governance tools and methodologies based on a synthesis of existing Habitat tools and methods, including guidelines for conducting city consultations and other consultative processes.

III. CONCLUSION

THE GLOBAL CAMPAIGN for Good Urban Governance will be successful only to the extent that partners take it on board, for it is through them that much of the implementation will take place. Partners will be drawn into the campaign through involvement in the debate on norms, and through collaboration on operational activities. A high level steering committee for the campaign will be formed, and partners drawn from central/local government, the private sector and civil society organizations.

Current partners⁽⁷⁾ will be approached first in the process of engagement, and mechanisms such as memoranda of understanding, programme documents and other appropriate means will be used, through negotiation and building on existing partnerships.

As the campaign is implemented, strategic partners will be identified and engaged based on their areas of interest. Partnerships will also be established with lobby groups, that is, NGOs and CBOs working as “change agents” to support local authority efforts to realize good urban governance. They will be specifically targeted through the information and media strategy, and demonstration activities at the city level.

This is a partnership campaign and UNCHS (Habitat) would welcome anybody - from global level to local level - to join in this global campaign to make our cities more inclusive.

7. Current partners include the World Bank/Cities Alliance, UNDP, UNEP, other UN agencies, multi- and bi-lateral agencies, regional development banks, IULA and other global and regional associations of local governments, international NGOs, and regional and national networks of CBOs and NGOs.