



# UN-HABITAT EVALUATION BRIEF

## Evaluation of the UN-Habitat Youth Programme and Urban Youth Fund Evaluation Report 2/2011

### 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In many developing countries young people constitute over 70 per cent of the urban population and studies have confirmed that the urban youth is disproportionately affected by major urban problems such as crime, insecurity and drug abuse, both as victims and perpetrators. In adopting the Habitat Agenda at the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) held in Istanbul in 1996, global leaders called for specific attention to the needs of youth. Paragraphs 45, 113 and 120 commit UN-Habitat to work in partnership with young people.

The United Nations General Assembly resolution 56/206 of December 2001, which upgraded UN-Habitat from a center to a fully-fledged programme, also called for the adoption of cross-cutting perspectives related to gender and youth in its work. Through Governing Council resolution 18/3 of 2001, UN-Habitat was requested to enhance partnership and engagement of the youth. Resolution 19/13 of 2003 proposed the establishment of a mechanism enabling consultation with young people and contributing to the work of UN-Habitat. It also requested development of a strategy to enhance the youth engagement and called for their participation in important meetings of UN-Habitat.

In 2005, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director of UN-Habitat to mainstream youth issues into the divisional work of the organisation. Further, the Council requested that UN-Habitat develop and foster inter-agency collaboration on youth issues and involve young people in the formulation of its programmes and policies through the UN-Habitat Youth Advisory Board. In 2007, the organization was requested to establish

the Opportunities Fund for Urban Youth-led Development (commonly referred to as the 'Urban Youth Fund') to financially support youth-led initiatives, whose main funder was the Government of Norway. The Government of Norway provided USD 2 million specifically for the Urban Youth Fund over the period from 2009 to 2011.

Other youth-led initiatives implemented through the Youth Programme include the so-called "One Stop" centres, "We are the Future" centres, "Messengers of Truth" centres, "Moonbeam Training" centres as well as sports and recreation centres, whose focus is on providing the urban youth practical skills training in order to improve their lives and raising awareness on issues that affect them.

### 2. EVALUATION PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was conducted in response to Governing Council resolution 21/6, which requested UN-Habitat to establish the Urban Youth Fund and undertake an evaluation of the operation of the Urban Youth Fund to be presented at the Governing Council session in April 2011.

The evaluation assessed the UN-Habitat Youth Programme in general and the Urban Youth Fund in a particular, with a specific focus on the relevance of UN-Habitat's work with the urban youth; integration of youth issues in the normative and operational work of UN-Habitat; evaluation of the operations of the Urban Youth Fund; and review of the normative and operational performance of youth empowerment initiatives of UN-Habitat.

The evaluation team, which comprised of external consultants, Dr. Thomas Miller and Prof. Willem van Vliet, relied upon data collected through desk reviews of relevant documents, interviews with

UN-Habitat Programme Managers, other staff and key stakeholders, field visits to project sites and web-based surveys of the beneficiaries of the Urban Youth Fund, the Youth Advisory Board, UN-Habitat senior managers and national Habitat Programme Managers. The evaluation was limited by the fact that only one day was spent in the field at Youth Programme sites, and the evaluation team relied on UN-Habitat to select participants of the focus group. There was also limited documentation on the outcomes of the Youth Programme.

### 3. MAIN FINDINGS

- The Youth Programme is highly relevant, its importance being reflected in the upgrading of UN-Habitat's NGO Unit into the Partners and Youth Section in 2002 and subsequently into a Partners and Youth Branch in 2010.
- The Youth Programme and Urban Youth Fund are currently the major components of the Partners and Youth Branch in terms of funding, activity and visibility. The Youth Programme has raised the profile of youth issues on a global level and helped entrench youth issues in the organisation's work on human settlements problems.
- The achievements of the Youth Programme have been the result of the commitment of few individuals and there must be increased efforts to weave this commitment into the institutional fabric of the entire organisation.
- Interdivisional collaboration and mainstreaming of youth issues within UN-Habitat have been addressed during consultations between the Partners and Youth Branch and other units. These efforts have manifested themselves in various joint activities with the Youth Programme.

- Senior managers are of the opinion that the Partners and Youth Branch lacks a clear organisational identity and would function better as an independent unit with its own budget and work programme. Likewise, the **Peer Review of the Implementation of the Medium-Term Strategic and Institutional Plan** in 2010 found that intra-organisation collaboration on youth issues is uneven in terms of uniformity, quality and focus.
- The first ever, **State of the Urban Youth Report**, launched in 2010 has been instrumental in highlighting issues that affect urban youth and raising global awareness. The report has weaknesses including the lack of a specific target audience, the inclusion of irrelevant materials and the use of ineffective research methods.
- The Youth Advisory Board, which is composed of young people, was established in 2009 and tasked with integrating youth issues into the policies and procedures of UN-Habitat mainly through Governing Council resolutions, World Habitat Day and World Urban Forum events. The Youth Advisory Board participates in the selection of programmes to be funded by the Urban Youth Fund as well as other advocacy work. The Board's work, however, has been impeded by a lack of regular consultations and relevant training programmes.
- The training programmes and centres implemented through the Youth Programme ("We are the Future", "One Stop" and "Moonbeam" centres) have played an important role in providing the urban youth in various African cities practical skills training in an effort to improve their lives. Although many young people have been reached through these centres the existing funding has been spread too thinly, new funding has not been forthcoming, UN-Habitat's involvement has been sporadic and its role not properly defined. There is an absence of evidence on their actual impact.
- The Sports and Recreation Programme has not demonstrated impact on improving the urban life of young people.
- The Urban Youth Fund has gone

through two application rounds. Following the first call for proposals, 63 youth-led projects from 33 countries were awarded grants totalling USD 960,000, while in the second round 51 projects worth USD 893,000 were approved. A total of 118 youth organizations have received funds from the Youth Opportunity Fund. Majority of beneficiaries have reported that their programmes have improved their lives and the communities in which they live.

- Challenges faced by the fund include understaffing, lack of funding in order to effectively monitor the fund beneficiaries or to document best practices and a lack of a clear focus of the fund as a result of the wide spectrum of the activities it is engaged in. There is also a need for increased engagement of other UN-Habitat Programme Managers in the work of the Urban Youth Fund as this represents a pool of undeveloped potential capacity for the fund's management.
- The normative and operational activities of the Youth Programme have been affected by various factors including the limited amount of funding being spread too thinly, limited participation of municipal councils, limited technical support from UN-Habitat staff and the lack of resources to document best practices and assess the programme's impact on the ground.

## 4. LESSONS LEARNED

- The participation of youth in the Youth Programme is essential to its success. The programme should be by youth for youth, with clear delineation between the responsibility of youth in the running of the programme and their appropriate and distinct roles.
- Most youth activities have been run on an ad hoc basis, but activities cannot be effectively run on a spontaneous ad-hoc basis. There must be predictable and timely funding and greater coordination between actions held together by a strategic plan and sufficient core

staff. The Youth Programme shows that there is not a single paradigm or model for addressing the problems and challenges facing urban youth.

- The promotion of youth projects has created an environment for up-scaling UN-Habitat's focus on youth, but it has also introduced new challenges, especially where there is no clear framework for mobilizing new resources, creating knowledge from experience for learning, advocacy and mainstreaming of youth-led activities.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- UN-Habitat should build the capacity of the Youth Programme, in particular in terms of staff and core funding in order to strengthen the ability to deliver its mandate and increasing the involvement of young people, UN-Habitat Programme Managers at country level and regional offices.
- The programme should also build strategic partnerships with other United Nations agencies such as the International Labour Organization and United Nations Children's Fund.
- UN-Habitat should review the Youth Programme strategy, utilising the lessons learned and focus on mainstreaming youth issues within the institutional framework of UN-Habitat.
- The agency should review the governance structure of the Youth Programme in order to align it with UN-Habitat procedures and governance structures, increase the involvement of other programme managers and clarify the roles of staff and youth members.
- The implementation of the Urban Youth Fund should be strengthened in terms of documenting best practices and selecting beneficiary projects that fall within existing UN-Habitat focus areas as well as developing strategies for providing technical support to projects.
- The programme should strengthen its monitoring function, including creating a reporting framework and building capacity for reporting and documentation of best practices by staff and implementing partners.