A GUIDE TO SETTING UP AN URBAN OBSERVATORY

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1985   1990   1995   2000

Years

BETTER INFORMATION FOR BETTER CITIES

UN-HABITAT

A GUIDE
TO SETTING
UP AN URBAN
OBSERVATORY

Foreword

Every year, when UN-HABITAT compiles data for our flagship reports on the situation of urban dwellers and urban dwellings around the globe, we turn to the information collected by governments through routine surveys, censuses and other reporting mechanisms. Accurate, up-to-date information on urban conditions is not always readily available, and information at the neighbourhood level is non-existent for most cities. As the United Nations agency charged with monitoring the world's progress toward the achievement of Millennium Development Goal 7, target 11, on improving the lives of slum dwellers, UN-HABITAT requires reliable urban information that provides insights into differences in access to housing and basic services in cities. Understanding inequities within and among cities has become more and more important over the last decade as the pace of urbanization has increased and governments have struggled to distribute resources where they are needed most.

In 1997, UN-HABITAT developed the Global Urban Observatory to help find creative solutions to the urban information crisis. Charged with generating "better information for better cities", the Global Urban Observatory began partnering with local and national officials in selected countries to develop systems for urban data collection that are locally relevant and globally linked. This guidebook, therefore, is the product of more than a decade of work by the Global Urban Observatory and its partners worldwide. It describes the process involved in setting up a local or national urban observatory to produce, analyse and disseminate the valuable urban data needed by local decision-makers and international monitoring entities alike. The step-by-step process is easily replicable in a variety of contexts and is supported by new tools and technologies developed by UN-HABITAT.

Better Information for Better Cities is more than the motto of the Global Urban Observatory – it is a primary goal of UN-HABITAT in this era of rapid urban growth, progress and change. It is hoped that with this guidebook, governments, researchers and stakeholders in every aspect of urban management can start to develop the information they need to make informed decisions on behalf of their citizens.

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Executive Director, UN-HABITAT

Better Information for Better Cities: A Guide to Setting Up an Urban Observatory

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Introduction

Throughout the world, cities are suffering from an acute crisis that hinders their capacity to develop sound policy and provide much-needed services to their residents: a crisis of accurate, useful information. Lacking detailed knowledge of the demographic, economic, cultural, physical and environmental dynamics in their cities, many planners and decision-makers are operating in an environment of uncertainty, allocating resources to immediate and pressing issues rather than investing in progressive change over the long term. The costs of this widespread information crisis accrue in the form of expanding slums, decreasing forests and agricultural lands, deepening social problems and increasing insecurity. What city managers and citizens need to make better decisions is clear: increased local capacity for the collection, assessment and application of urban data.

Reliable, up-to-date information on a meaningful set of *indicators* – measurable attributes of local conditions, such as proportions of the population with access to basic services or the cost of housing in different parts of the city – and the means to turn collected information into good policies and urban plans are the antidote to the information crisis. Local authorities and organizations, however, have been hindered by a lack of capacity, particularly in developing countries, for the collection and assessment of data, for its transformation into useful information and for its broad dissemination. Many cities in both the developing and developed world also lack reliable, accurate and timely information for want of a credible and consistent system of urban data collection.

Most of the data referenced for major policy decisions is generally:
1. aggregated at an inappropriate scale for local relevance (e.g., gross domestic product);
2. produced and released too infrequently to inform timely decision-making (e.g., national censuses);
3. out of the step with specific policy needs and inappropriate for detailed policy work at the city level.[1]

As governments continue on a rapid trend toward increased decentralization and localized decision-making, disaggregating urban data and understanding dynamics within cities is

[1] Regional Vancouver Urban Observatory (2006). Our Purpose and Vision. Unpublished report.

becoming more and more important for ensuring the viability of urban areas and the health and progress of their populations.

For individuals with a stake in inclusive and productive cities, knowledge is key. Working together to develop and collect data on locally relevant indicators, citizens and decision-makers acquire the knowledge they need to effect positive change. Doing so requires a concerted effort to institutionalize urban development monitoring systems. This guide describes the **urban observatory model** for urban data collection and analysis and provides tips on how to set up and coordinate proactive, cooperative urban monitoring systems. The guide has been developed by UN-HABITAT's Global Urban Observatory in partnership with cities around the world.

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Monitoring Systems Branch

Chapter 1

Producing better urban information for better decision-making

1.1 Development of the United Nations urban observatory global network

In 1994, UN-HABITAT developed the Urban Indicators Programme to begin compiling and tracking urban data in a sample of cities around the world. Three years later, the Global Urban Observatory (GUO) took on the work of the Urban Indicators Programme and expanded it to include indicators specific to the Habitat Agenda, the main policy document to emerge from the 1996 United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), in Istanbul, Turkey. The Habitat Agenda indicators provide data on specific aspects of shelter,
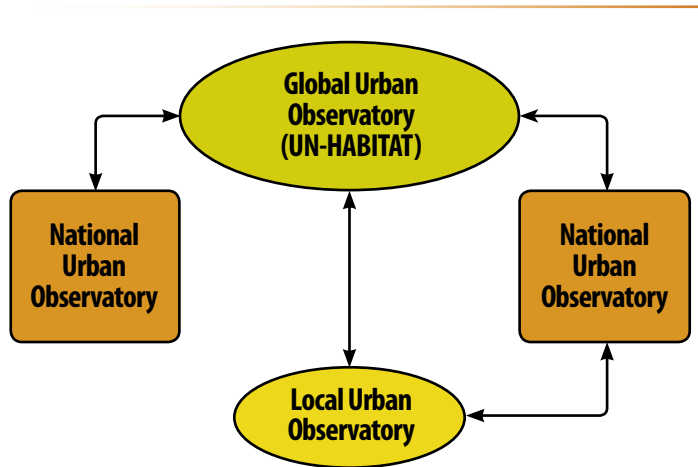
The United Nations urban observatory global network is coordinated by the Global Urban Observatory (GUO) and includes national- and local-level observatories that may be linked to each other or operate independently. In some countries, GUO works with national urban observatories only; in others, one or more local urban observatories may be linked directly to GUO or to national-level partners.

social development and eradication of poverty, environmental management, economic development and governance, with the aim of global monitoring for informed policy. With the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration in 2000, UN-HABITAT also began reporting on Member States' progress toward Goal 7, target 11: by 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.

Global monitoring plays an important role in observing the overarching trends affecting cities today. Data produced by GUO in the 1990s provided an initial glimpse into the global scale of urban achievement and urban crisis. From this data, the magnitude and dimensions of issues in urban development first became clear. However, the success of the Urban Indicators Programme also pointed to the limitations of city-aggregated data in pinpointing problems within cities. Data on urban averages can mask important differences from one part of a city to another and skew perceptions of which services and resources are needed most.

Recognizing the need for improved systems of local urban data collection and analysis, GUO began working with countries and cities to build urban monitoring capacity through a network of national and local urban observatories in 1997. In 2003, GUO initiated the Monitoring of Urban Inequities Programme (MUIP) to further develop global knowledge about urban poverty, conducting surveys and data analysis on intra-city differentials. Together, the Urban Indicators Programme and the MUIP constitute the primary reference point for global monitoring of urban issues. They provide guidance to national governments and local authorities on the standard methodology, definitions, indicators and variables used in monitoring; however, GUO's global monitoring framework is not a rigid blueprint, but a flexible tool that allows for local adaptation and variation as needed.

Over the past decade, GUO has built an integrated system of partners working toward the collection of reliable, locally relevant and internationally comparable data on urban conditions and trends to inform all levels of policy making and the development of indicators that reflect priority issues within specific urban areas around the world.

> "Demand for information is focused on management. People want to know, for example, why there is a persistent water shortage and what the authorities plan to do about it. They are also worried about the safety of drinking water. People want to know how to get jobs, how to access credit and in which areas to invest while taking reasonable financial risks." *– Respondent from Nakuru, Kenya, Local Urban Observatory client survey, 2004*

1.2 What is an urban observatory?

Definition

An urban observatory is a local network of stakeholders responsible for producing, analyzing and disseminating data on a meaningful set of indicators that reflect collectively prioritized issues on sustainable development. Data and information resources produced by the local network are used to support decision-making and the formulation of better-informed policies. An urban observatory is therefore a **focal point for urban monitoring** at the local or national scale.

Local urban observatories are typically housed in an existing city department, non-governmental organization or university. They serve to produce, manage and analyze data on the performance of a city on key urban indicators and other thematic issues relevant to both local decision-making and global monitoring.

National urban observatories coordinate and consolidate data collection at the national level using the results for evidence-based policy-making. They can either coordinate the activities of local urban observatories in the country or produce their own data and information resources at the national, regional or local level.

Purposes

Urban observatories can take many forms, but they share common aims:
- to create *sustainable* urban monitoring systems in support of local planning and management processes, linking data to policy;
- to strengthen local *capacity* for the development and use of urban indicators that facilitate the collection of disaggregated data at city and sub-city levels;
- and to promote local *ownership* of urban indicator systems and a culture of monitoring and assessment in the urban sector.

At every level, urban observatories strive to provide high-quality, up-to-date and timely city information, first and foremost. They are driven by the need for improved coordination in the measurement and monitoring of urban indicators in key areas, such as demography, socio-economic development, urban development and environmental issues, among others. Urban observatories are also driven by the desire to develop a knowledge-based information system that can ultimately be used to support better-informed urban programmes and policies.

LAMU KENYA. **MAPS-GEOSYSTEMS**

Activities

To achieve their aims, urban observatories typically work with partner groups to develop and apply appropriate indicators, indices and evaluation mechanisms. They maintain information systems and undertake evaluations and impact analyses at the request of local authorities and partner groups; they build capacity for the generation, management, analysis and dissemination of urban information on a regular and consistent basis. Urban observatories produce various knowledge products – including reports, empirical studies, CDs, DVDs, websites, online forums and email listservs – that stimulate dialogue among stakeholders around priority issues. This information is distributed in locally appropriate ways to support decision-making and the development of better-informed policies.

Urban observatories strengthen the community-wide base of urban knowledge. Increased knowledge can contribute to better use of the information produced by the observatories in the development of local plans of action and in harmonizing sectoral policies and strategies. Urban observatories cooperate with others in the global network to share resources, exchange substantive and methodological knowledge and to disseminate information to the national, regional and global levels. As part of their reporting structure, urban observatories may maintain a web site or newsletter for providing citizens with information on their cities, and may produce a biennial "state of the city" report that includes comparative analysis of indicators and presents best practices.

Composition

Local urban observatories are comprised of a consortium of local stakeholders coordinated by a municipal government office, university research centre, community-based organization or private entity designated as the "workshop" in which urban indicators are adapted from the global monitoring framework, further developed, tested and made operational in the data collection process. Several local urban observatories with different objectives may work simultaneously within a city; those concerned with similar issues in different parts of a city may link up for mutual assistance and information exchange. Rather than replicate efforts, however, GUO recommends that groups with complementary interests in one city partner on one observatory.

Several municipalities in a city-region may coordinate their efforts to develop urban indicators, data and planning strategies for the benefit of all. The city of Curitiba, Brazil, for example, consists of 22 municipalities, 12 of which are working together in a "metropolitan observatory" under the leadership of the city's Chamber of Industries and an environmental

university research centre. Similarly, the Regional Vancouver Urban Observatory in British Columbia, Canada, serves to coordinate the environmental and social sustainability efforts of the 21 municipalities in the Greater Vancouver Regional District; it is administered by a university department with the support of local government.

In some countries, networks of local urban observatories are facilitated by a national-level partner that coordinates capacity-building assistance and compiles and analyzes urban indicator data to assess national trends and needs. In Mexico, for instance, the Ministry of Social Development coordinates around 30 local urban observatories that produce data on various urban poverty related issues. Some national urban observatories are not linked to local partners, but instead take on the responsibility of collecting, analyzing and disseminating all urban data for the country. A national urban observatory may be housed in a central government agency, a national university, a prestigious private research centre, a non-governmental organization, or other institution.

**The number of Local Urban Observatories
by region
(Total in 2006:119)**

Transitional, 15

LAC, 27

High Income Countries, 1

Europe, 1

Asia, 24

Arab States, 9

Africa, 42
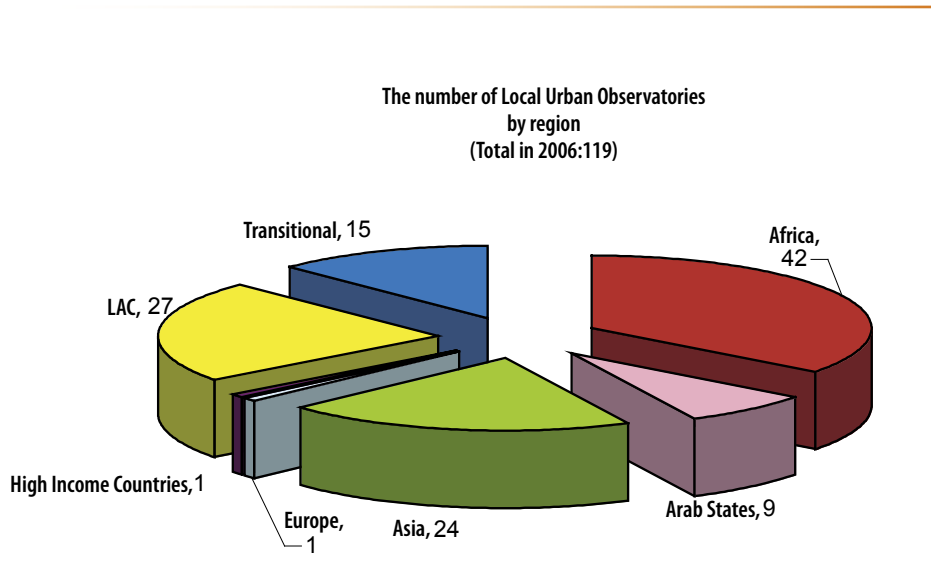
Local Urban Observatories by Region and Host Type
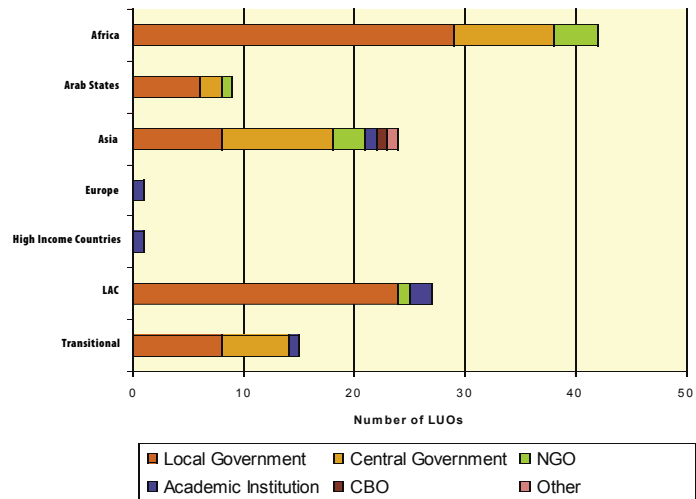
GUO now works with 119 local urban observatories around the world, most of which are coordinated by local authorities.

1.3 Why establish an urban observatory?

A powerful principle of sustainable urban development – development that meets the needs of today's citizens without impacting the ability of others to meet their own needs in the future – is active cooperation among actors with diverse and varied interests to ensure the sharing of resources and the development of mutually beneficial plans of action. Local partners may establish an urban observatory for a variety of reasons that contribute to overall urban sustainability. These include:

1. **generating value-based urban data and distributing information** by coordinating various sectors and partners within the city or country;
2. **facilitating the participation** of communities and public and private stakeholders in the development process of their neighbourhoods by producing urban data at the appropriate scale;
3. and **supporting decision-making processes** and enhancing governance within the urban sector by producing local knowledge-based information.

Generating value-based urban data and distributing information

Data on the key priorities of a city, region or country is not always available. Urban observatories provide a framework for coordination among and within local organizations for the production of urban data aggregated at the appropriate scale so that information can be put to productive use. They assist the generation and distribution of information in other ways, as well, by:

- developing an information repository that can gather, collate, package and distribute locally relevant information;
- empowering local authorities with information in an analytical but easily accessible format supported by geographical information systems (GIS) tools;
- creating conditions to decentralize the use of the information;
- and developing a strategy to communicate the information to decision-makers, providing them with a set of comparable data that enables informed planning over the long term.

Information plays a vital role in creating public awareness of urban issues and improving accountability of decision-makers. Reliable and timely information stimulates dialogue and actions to reverse negative trends and to understand positive trends for possible replication. The establishment of urban observatories enables local authorities and other stakeholders to generate information on shortfalls or problems confronted by different parts of the community or city, helping to define causes of identified issues, develop strategies for tracking and addressing problems, and formulate policies to help improve the existing situation.

Facilitating participation

Local and national urban observatories promote a participatory approach to developing urban indicators, collecting and disseminating data and using the information for urban development that meets citizens' needs and aspirations. Facilitating participation serves several aims:

- to build the capacity of civil society groups and engage them in the decision-making process using accurate, up-to-date and timely urban information;
- to inform communities, policy makers and other development agents about city- and neighbourhood-related information on key measures for the city's top priority issues;
- and to increase flow of information from one level of decision-making to another.

In many cases, the users and producers of urban data neither know each other nor understand each others' needs and methods. Urban observatories offer the possibility of greater data flow among actors, provided that they integrate multi-sectoral information and the resulting data sets are broadly accessible. A participatory approach seeks to meet the needs of all key players for cooperative collection, management and use of indicator data.

Supporting decision-making

An urban observatory is not a policy think tank or an isolated academic research centre, but is instead a coordinated knowledge- and decision-making body that serves to generate high-quality data on specific indicators that inform urban planning, resource allocation and development. Governments, as urban managers and policymakers, must be fully engaged in data production and analysis in order to ensure that the information is put to work for the good of citizens. Urban data that is transformed into good-quality information has the capacity to stimulate dialogue and promote its integration into policy.

Urban observatories around the world are using the information they have generated to support decision-making and enhance governance at the local level. The local urban observatory in Ahmedabad, India, for example, has provided the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation with data and maps for 47 slums (7,065 households) that are part of the corporation's Slum Upgrading Programme. This information is being used by the corporation to target resources more effectively and to monitor changes in slum conditions as a result of the programme's activities. The local urban observatory has also trained stakeholders in the use of GIS and has collected citizen feedback through a survey, the results of which led the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation to revise its budget allocations.

The ultimate goal of a local urban observatory is to bring together people and institutions to work collaboratively on a common vision for their community aimed at providing high-quality information for decision-making. Transparency and accountability in good local governance are facilitated by accurate information on locally relevant indicators, and urban observatories serve to provide that information. Urban observatories, therefore, provide a framework for accountability.

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Chapter 2

How to set up an urban observatory

This chapter provides a step-by-step process for developing a national or local urban observatory. It is important to note that the implementation process may differ slightly from one context to another.

Urban observatories progress through two major simultanous phases of initial development:

1. Inception and feasibility assessment
2. Organizational development

Each phase consists of several sequential steps that lead an urban observatory team toward its ultimate goal of building a coordinated data collection and management entity.

Steps to building an urban observatory at the local or national level

**Phase 1
Inception and feasibility assessment**

6: Initiate certification process
5: Build local capacity
4: Nominate host institution
3: Assess local capacity
2: Generate participation
1: Create a steering committee

**Phase 2
Organizational Development**

10: Plan for sustainability
9: Define products
8: Identify skills needed
7: Specify level of intervention
6: Select primary actors
5: Identify sectoral focus
4: Develop approach
3: Identify purpose
2: Develop mission and vision
1: Define objective

2.1 Phase 1: Inception and feasibility assessment

The **inception phase** of an urban observatory includes the identification of the major development priorities, reforms, policies and programmes in the urban sector that could provide a framework for monitoring, including measuring progress towards Millennium Development Goal 7, target 11. Partners should understand the current and potential use of monitoring in urban policy-making, planning and management, and in the promotion of good governance in the context of their country or city. This phase relates to the **demand** for monitoring urban development, municipal performance and the Millennium Development Goals.

At this preliminary stage, it is important to assess the **feasibility** of setting up an urban observatory in the country or city. Inform the Global Urban Observatory of your group's intentions in order to learn how other urban observatory applicants managed their early development. GUO certifies urban observatories that follow specific guidelines for indicator development, monitoring and reporting. GUO can also provide assistance with identifying relevant stakeholders within and outside the project and create awareness among stakeholders about the usefulness of urban indicators for the project and beyond.

Local or national staff involved in coordinating the development of the observatory need to assess potential data sources – including census data, household surveys, other existing or planned surveys and existing mapping and imagery – and identify information needs for the project. *At the end of this phase, project partners and other relevant stakeholders should be aware of the potential usefulness of urban indicators and monitoring.* Some level of commitment is needed on the part of all relevant partners to institutionalize an indicator system through an urban observatory, defining their contribution to the collection, analysis and use of urban indicators.

Assessing the feasibility of the urban observatory requires that initial partners express some degree of commitment to make available financial and in-kind resources for the implementation of the project. A report on feasibility of the urban observatory is required.

Assessing demand for monitoring in the context of existing urban development planning and management processes

The main precondition for the successful development of an urban observatory and monitoring system is local demand and commitment from government institutions – an indicators system should not be imposed on government institutions that will not be in a position to use the data collected to improve policies or activities. This step will help you consider incentives as well as disincentives or "roadblocks" to developing the monitoring system and the urban observatory. Some guiding questions may help in assessing demand: Is there real local demand or are stakeholders developing monitoring systems simply because of demands and pressure from development agencies? Is there a "champion" at the national or local level who can take the initiative forward? Where is the local demand focused? Will the indicators support planning, policy-making, management, accountability or reporting to donors?

The inception and feasibility phase is comprised of six steps, outlined below.

Step 1: Create a steering committee

An urban observatory is a network of local stakeholders that express interest in working together on the collection, analysis and dissemination of data. The main partners of the project should all be represented in the steering committee. GUO recommends also including representatives from national statistics agencies, entities that are potential sources of funding and organizations that are already producing data. The steering committee plays a role in building consensus on the creation of the observatory and guiding its general orientations. See Phase 2, "Organizational development," for steps in defining the objective and nature of the observatory.

Step 2: Generate stakeholder participation

The steering committee should work closely with local policymakers, professional associations and representatives of non-governmental and civic organizations to:
- Identify existing key structures or organizations involved in the collection of urban data and the monitoring of urban development.
- Assess government policies and programmes in the urban sector, their formal inter-relationships and their data needs.
- Bring policymakers, practicing professionals and the community together to exchange views about urban issues and the need for an urban observatory.
- Identify preliminary urban indicators and types of expertise required to gather and analyze indicator data.

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- Sensitize stakeholders to the overall local conditions, trends and issues concerning urban development.

Step 3: Assess local capacity

Assess the capacity of existing entities to:
- Carry out urban indicator data gathering and analysis and to establish benchmarks for monitoring urban conditions and trends.
- Map options for developing monitoring capacity.
- Identify and learn from good practice in monitoring urban management and to document possible best practices for sharing with other urban observatories.
- Involve all interested groups in the generation, analysis and management of relevant information for local-level policy development, implementation and policy impact monitoring and evaluation.

Identify existing structures and organizations involved with monitoring in the urban sector

As part of Step 3, this activity will help you to describe existing key structures or organizations involved with monitoring urban development, and government policies and programmes in the urban sector. Key organizations are those that are important to monitoring within government. These organizations influence government's resource allocation decisions, the management of sectors and programmes, and its accountability relationships. They have responsibilities in one or more of the following areas: public expenditure management; strategic urban planning; management of public investment programmes; policy formulation; policy advice; monitoring and evaluation. These organizations include central ministries and local authorities, NGOs, local governmental agencies, academia and the private sector.

Step 4: Nominate a host institution

Designate an urban observatory "workshop" from among competent partner entities that will:
- Identify and programme its own capacity-building needs.
- Develop the work programme and biennial budget for the activities of the urban observatory.
- Seek local budgetary allocations and other sources of funding.
- Continue the consultative process with partners over time

Step 5: Build local capacity

In countries and cities where technical capacities are high, further consultation to define priority areas of intervention and a meaningful set of inter-related urban indicators is often needed. In cases or contexts with fewer technical capacities, there is a need to organize training and capacity-building sessions in various areas, particularly in the design of the monitoring system and the development of an action plan.

- Design the monitoring system, identifying key areas of intervention and urban indicators that can be adapted from the global framework or developed locally. At the end of this exercise, partners should agree on key indicators.
- Develop a general action plan for the urban observatory, identifying milestones and targets as per the objectives pursued by the observatory. At this stage, there is a need to formalize necessary institutional agreements.

> **Why are indicators important? Indicators are needed to:**
>
> - support the design of policies and programmes and monitor progress towards achieving local and global development goals;
> - target resources more effectively;
> - raise awareness of urban problems and mobilize community support;
> - make local government more accountable to citizens.

> **Assessing the existing monitoring capacity**
>
> Building local capacity requires an assessment of the quality of the information infrastructure: the processes and systems for making urban data available. It includes an assessment of the monitoring capacity and activities of central ministries, local authorities and other institutions such as NGOs, research institutes and universities. Assessment typically considers: a) level of skills in the existing technical and managerial systems of data collection; b) existing data systems and their quality; d) the technology available; and e) institutional experience in data collection.

Step 6: Initiate the certification process

Start the formal application process to become an urban observatory recognized by UN-HABITAT in order to fully benefit from the GUO network and to inform others about your work. The steering committee, the host institution or other designated partners should begin preparing an action plan for the urban observatory to submit to GUO (see box).

Preparation of an Action Plan for an Urban Observatory

While there is no single "correct" way to prepare an action plan, a plan should ideally include the following components:

1. Background
Describe the rationale for the creation of the urban observatory, presenting a justification of data needs and assessing the local demand and need for an urban monitoring mechanism. How does the action plan fit within the framework of local and national development priorities adopted in the city or country?

2. Objective
What are the key objectives of the plan? How will the chosen approach contribute to improvements in local monitoring to produce value-based urban data that will support more informed decision-making and to strengthen accountability?

3. Description of the Urban Observatory and Monitoring System
Describe key functions, scope and components of the proposed observatory and monitoring system (refer to steps in *Phase 2, "Organizational development").*

4. Expected Outcomes
These should refer to what the action plan is expected to achieve in terms of its results: products, increased capacity, and the like.

Examples:
- Local monitoring systems and local urban observatories successfully established in cities X, Y and Z, and linked to national reporting on MDG 7, target 11.
- City development and slum upgrading policies evaluated and reviewed, and new policies introduced at city and national level in response to local monitoring.

5. Activities
Describe the specific activities the urban observatory will undertake to achieve the above outcomes.

Examples:

- Create a steering committee and designate a host institution.
- Develop a range of key indicators related to local priorities and national reporting needs through multi-stakeholder consultation.
- Develop baseline urban indicators and create a local/national database.
- Adopt UrbanInfo to incorporate priority indicators and maps.
- Prepare and distribute analysis reports to government planners and policy makers at local and national levels for general policy evaluation and development purposes.
- Disseminate indicator results and reports to the public via local/national workshops, the media, the internet, and the like.
- Organize and conduct training programmes targeting policy-makers and technical staff.
- Prepare an annual work plan and budget for the urban observatory.

6. Partners

Describe and demonstrate the commitment of government and/or local authorities (supporting documentation should be provided and specific commitments and actions taken by the government described). What other local partners have been identified and how have they been involved in the preparation of the plan? Describe the activities the partners will undertake.

What international partners have been identified? Describe the activities they will undertake.

7. Implementation Plan

Describe the implementation schedule, including the starting and ending date of all activities, as well as major milestones.

8. Monitoring

Describe how the success and impact of the plan in reaching the objectives listed above will be measured, including key performance indicators and mechanisms for monitoring.

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9. Sustainability Plan

Describe how the observatory will be financially sustainable and how it will be embedded into the local data-producing systems.

10. Scaling Up

Describe the potential for replication and scaling-up of the observatory and monitoring system through the transfer of experiences and expertise to other cities.

11. Budget

Provide a summary budget for establishing the monitoring systems and observatory.

Support from GUO for the inception phase

Groups or institutions planning to set up an urban observatory are eligible to receive information and technical support from the Global Urban Observatory to help get them started:

- Monitoring frameworks (guides and manuals on urban indicators) – urban observatory coordinators will receive an electronic package of documents from GUO that are part of the global monitoring framework.
  These documents serve as a reference guide and a methodological tool. They include this guidebook, an urban indicators guide and manual, the MUIP urban inequities survey questionnaire and manuals, the Guide to Monitoring Target 11, reference documents from other urban observatories, and other materials.
- Institutional assessments and needs assessment consultations – GUO consults with urban observatories
  to help them determine appropriate institutional partners and personnel, and to assist with initial needs assessment activities.
- Urban observatory design and indicator methodology – GUO staff can also help design new urban observatory systems and provide advice and assistance in linking up with partners and other municipalities, as well as coach urban observatory administrators and trainers on developing appropriate methodologies for designing locally relevant indicators (for more information on the GUO support to build local capacities, refer to chapter 5).
- Partnership – GUO can assist in establishing connections with other urban observatories, to enable applicants to learn from past experiences regarding related issues. New groups can learn from others about different methods and approaches to the participatory process, how to engage more stakeholders in the work of the urban observatory, how to use indicators to influence meaningful change, and other valuable lessons.

2.2 – Phase 2: Organizational development

After coordinating a coalition of partners, completing all necessary background research and assessing the institutional and technical feasibility of the observatory, the group or institution planning to set up an urban observatory should follow a series of planning processes to ensure consistency, professionalism and quality of data collection over time. This section of the guide provides a step-by-step overview of the **organizational development** of an urban observatory at any scale.

Step 1: Define objective

Question: What overarching, concrete goal will this urban observatory serve to achieve?

The objective refers to what the urban observatory ultimately intends to do or achieve. It should respond to specific contextual challenges and problems facing the city or city-region.

The objective should describe the overall desired achievement involving a process of change in a particular sector or area.

Step 2: Develop a mission statement and a vision for the observatory

The mission statement reflects the urban observatory's reason for being. It should be developed cooperatively by core stakeholders early in the process.

In one concise statement, the mission summarizes the long-term objective of the urban observatory and states the vision of the organization. The statement helps to build consensus on the nature of the observatory and describes to the larger public audience how the observatory adds value to existing systems.

Step 3: Identify the purpose of the observatory

> **Questions: What contribution will the observatory make to overall urban planning and management? How can original value-based urban data influence decision-making on urban issues?**

The purpose derives from the mission statement. It refers to how the urban observatory will be embedded in the overall institutional, political and social context of the city or city-region and the role it will play at the local or national level.

The purpose reflects the overarching orientation of the urban observatory and its general mandate. It responds to what needs to be changed for the benefit of the city, neighbourhood or society.

Purpose points: The urban observatory should be seen to strengthen ongoing policy-making processes by providing missing information and enhancing collaboration between communities and institutions. It can generate information for advocacy that may lead to the development of new policies.

Step 4: Develop a clear and concrete approach

> **Questions: What methodology will the urban observatory use to attain the established objectives and targets? How will each partner contribute to the urban observatory, in terms of methodology?**

The approach describes the methodology of the urban observatory, explaining how the partners will move toward the stated objective. It is the logic under which the observatory will work, in general terms, to achieve its mandate.

The approach highlights the broad framework for the efforts that the observatory will undertake, but does not provide details on specific activities and actions or the resources they will require.

The approach also links action agendas, methodologies and indicators of different institutions, building bridges based on issues that are no one institution's mandate but are in the interest of all.

Approach point: The approach of the urban observatory should respond to the real and potential use of indicators and information in the specific policy context within which the observatory is set.

Step 5: Identify the sectoral focus

The focus derives from the approach. It refers to the specific sectors or fields with which the observatory will be primarily concerned.

The focus is determined by the response that the urban observatory provides to local priorities or problems. Consultative processes involving a wide range of actors and institutions should identify these priorities.

The urban observatory should focus on issues and topics to which policies can respond – and around which there is room for change.

Focal points: The urban observatory should be flexible enough to respond to new questions or demands from data users, or clients. The focus could therefore change while the approach is maintained. Additional topics or fields can be added to the initial focus of the observatory as it proves its capacity for producing valuable information. The observatory should focus on those areas or indicators for which data is readily available.

Step 6: Select the primary actors and composition of the observatory

Questions: In addition to the steering committee, who should be enlisted in the ongoing development of the urban observatory? Which organizations are likely to support the observatory and provided needed resources, including money, data and time?

The urban observatory should include among its primary actors representatives of civil society and experts on the chosen focus areas – particularly representatives from the national statistical office. The purpose, objective and focus of the observatory will determine its necessary composition. To ensure that the information produced by the urban observatory is used to inform policy, public institutions and local decision-makers must be present.

Establishing an urban observatory does not imply the creation of a new governmental or non-governmental organization. An existing entity should house the observatory activities.

An observatory should be a coalition of stakeholders, not a single entity, for effectiveness and sustainability.

NOTES ON FOCUS
- Most urban observatories adopt a multi-sectoral approach, collecting and analyzing urban indicators germane to different thematic areas and departments within the city.
- Urban observatories can also focus on one or two specific areas, such as health, environment and quality of life; basic service delivery and urban infrastructure; or urban poverty eradication.

OBSERVATORY COMPOSITION
- The core team or "workshop" of the observatory should ideally be composed of the following staff:
  - Management director
  - Chief statistician
  - Data analysis expert
  - Data entry staff
  - GIS expert
  - Communications expert

Step 7: Specify the level of intervention

Questions: How broad will the geographical focus of the urban observatory be? Are the activities of the observatory likely to overlap with other existing observatories?

The level of intervention refers to the geographic area that the urban observatory operates within.

The level of intervention is determined by the institutions involved, the thematic focus, the scope of the work and the problems the observatory will address.

An urban observatory should foster and help develop systems for producing data that can be disaggregated at appropriate scales for conducting intra-city analyses.

I*ntervention points: GUO advises that urban observatories determine the level of intervention based on data availability, building on existing sources and systems of information and expanding indicators accordingly. A metropolitan or regional observatory could initially collect data on the city proper, for example, and progressively extend to other municipalities that are part of the urban agglomeration. Topics and sectoral foci of the observatory also help determine the level of intervention.*

Step 8: Identify the necessary skills to accomplish the objectives

Questions: What skills will the observatory staff and personnel of participating organizations contribute? Will the observatory rely on external skills and technical expertise, and if so, what will be needed?

The skill sets of urban observatory staff and professionals in participating organizations should complement each other according to the objectives and focus of the observatory.

The observatory core team or "workshop" should combine professional staff, including statisticians, GIS technicians and data analysts, with advisory service and communications experts. Decision-makers and civil society representatives should be part of the steering committee to ensure broad participation and representation.

Step 9: Describe expected results in terms of products

> **Questions: What knowledge products will the observatory generate? Who is likely to use this information?**

The products – outputs or results – derived from an urban observatory exemplify its utility for urban knowledge generation and decision-making support.

The more successful urban observatories produce a variety of products using urban indicators. Products generated should respond to the nature and objectives of the observatory and the type of indicators used. These indicators provide a picture of the existing situation and the state and rate of change; they provide information on the mechanisms that allow intervening and changing trends. In that sense, they are liked to policy formulation, including better management of programmes and actions.

An urban observatory facilitates processes that continuously produce compatible data sets, and transforms them into a variety of products. A clear linkage should be established between the inputs and outputs of the observatory: the information and data sets processed into new knowledge products. The observatory should also remain flexible enough to develop new products as needed by data users.

The urban observatory team must carefully assess the target audience for the observatory's products and find simple and effective means of communicating its information and messages. Indicators and related information are used differently by different audiences. The urban observatory team should clarify whether the knowledge products will be used for advocacy, engagement or other purposes.

Product points: The products produced by an urban observatory should inform local or national urban policy and decision-making processes. The focus of the observatory should be linked to existing urban issues, thus providing crucial information that impacts directly on relevant processes.

- **Urban observatories are sustainable when:**
  - there is a clear political commitment from the national government and the local authorities to their success;
  - they are conceived through participatory processes involving local stakeholders, including the private sector, NGOs, community organizations and others;
  - financial provisions are made by a variety of stakeholders in a clear and systematic manner;
  - efforts are made toward building consensus among different constituencies;
  - sufficient capacity and leadership exist. Successful observatories typically have an institutional or individual "champion".
- **Proposals to establish new urban observatories must assesspotential sustainability risks in each of the above areas.**

Step 10: Plan for sustainability

Questions: Does the observatory enlist the support of well-established local institutions? Are the observatory partners committed to its financial stability, now and into the future?

To ensure the long-term viability of the urban observatory, adequate institutional and financial support is essential.

Institutional support includes national or local government commitment to:
- endorse the observatory;
- establish horizontal linkages with different departments or units as possible data users and participants;
- ensure that information is used to strengthen decision-making and policy formulation.

An urban observatory should engage those institutions that can provide technical and institutional support in the data collection process, such as national statistics offices, academic research centres and non-governmental organizations.

At the proposal stage, the urban observatory team should prepare a well-defined implementation framework plan that specifies clear and feasible timelines and delivery mechanisms to ensure institutional commitment.

In addition to institutional sustainability in terms of outputs, observatory administrators can leverage the fact that the observatory will inspire change and add value to existing data collection and decision-making efforts to gain the financial support of vital institutional partners.

Financial support requires the provision of funds for the day-to-day functioning of the observatory by one or more stakeholders. A good funding strategy will ensure that resources are available for all projected expenses, including hiring experts to provide necessary skills and input. Financial support can be secured through a governmental budgetary allocation for a three- to five-year programme or through donations from partners. National urban observatories should encourage and facilitate replication of local urban observatories, taking into account their sustainability plans, potential to develop local partnerships and networking plans to ensure participation of local actors.

Chapter 3

Linking data and information products to inform decision-making

Good urban policy and planning are products of reliable, accurate, up-to-date and timely information presented in formats that decision-makers can reference and apply. This chapter describes tools and methods urban observatories can use to communicate the information they develop, ensuring its dynamic integration into urban decision-making processes.

A better tool for data collection and processing: UrbanInfo

Better information requires better technology for its storage, presentation and dissemination. A major contributing factor in the limited impact of many projects with large data collection components is the ad-hoc creation of project-specific databases. In many cases, groups collect data, produce a report and initiate a project, but the database developed is not maintained or embedded within local institutional systems and thus becomes irrelevant after a short period of time.

An *alternative approach* is to use a corporate or process database, which allows an urban observatory to systematize ongoing data collection, storage and reporting efforts. A process database is a dynamic environment that can produce a variety of information-product outputs for the use of planners and urban decision-makers. Data is collected on a continuous basis for a variety of projects and is stored, synthesized, analyzed and disseminated in different ways to meet the needs of different data users.

GUO's UrbanInfo is a process database that allows the quick and easy retrieval and reporting of information in user-friendly formats. UrbanInfo stores geographic and quantitative data on indicators selected by users, analyzes information according to chosen attributes and produces tables, graphs and maps in personalized presentations and analytical reports. The software is compatible with most database systems. Urban observatories that adopt this tool can benefit from the global statistical information that is provided with the software, collected and analyzed by GUO. The information can help observatories to associate or correlate indicators or to undertake comparisons with data from other cities and countries around the world.
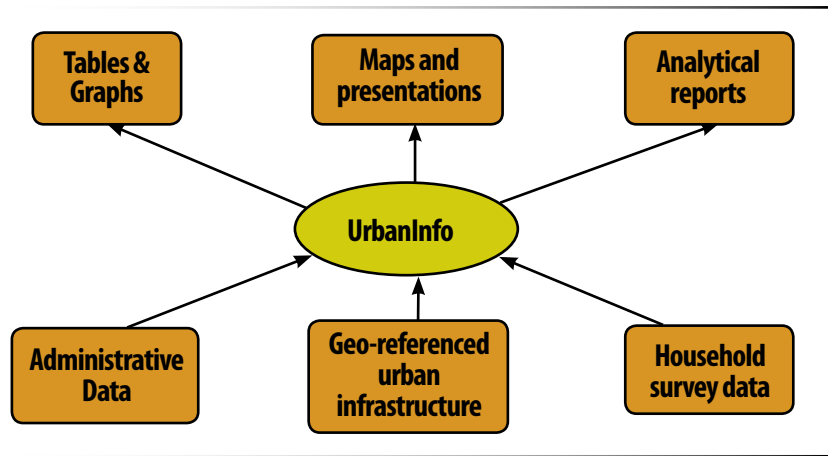
UrbanInfo is easy to adapt to the needs of an urban observatory at the national or local level, using locally relevant indicators. GUO provides new urban observatories with an UrbanInfo and GIS package to help them get started.

Using indicators in public communication strategies

An urban indicators system opens up a number of ways to communicate with the public and, over the long run, to increase public awareness about the state of the city and build trust and confidence in the monitoring systems that assess the municipal government's ability to deliver services. As the first study review process undertaken by the Regional Vancouver Urban Observatory concluded, "measuring makes sense, but without action it will not produce change".

To influence change, an urban observatory must first develop a communication strategy that effectively markets the specific indicators on which it collects and disseminates data. Stakeholders and citizens must be compelled and motivated by the indicators; the indicators must reflect common values, and the messages associated with them must be simple. The second step is to prepare meaningful products that communicate the complexity of local issues encapsulated in the indicators to different audiences without oversimplifying the messages. The third step is to successfully engage the public in the work of the observatory through a variety of communications strategies.

Examples of successful communications strategies include the following:

- In Brazil, the **Curitiba Metropolitan Observatory** has disseminated its initial data results on some of the Millennium Development Goal indicators and other poverty-related data through the local press, workshops and city websites.
- The **South Africa national urban observatory** has successfully publicized the results of its work in a State of the Cities Report, through the national press and public workshops. An urban observatory may consider producing similar reports that provide residents with feedback on the outcomes and quality of services and the overall health of a city or nation's cities, including economic, social and environmental development.
- **Ahmedabad Urban Observatory** in India is using its urban report cards and community resource centres to disseminate information to city residents – particularly slum dwellers.
- The **Nakuru, Kenya, local urban observatory** has also been quite active in publishing its results. The analysis of a field survey on urban development priorities and needs for information on urban development issues has been published and circulated to stakeholders and is also available online (http://www.nccr-north-south.unibe.ch/documents.asp). The NakInfo database is available on CDs for those organizations and individuals who can afford a computer. It has been installed in public access points where it is freely accessible and also in commercial information centers such as cyber cafes. This is the main interface between the project and individual users.

Generating S.M.A.R.T. Indicators for Urban Sustainability

In April 2006, the Regional Vancouver Urban Observatory in British Columbia, Canada, held its second public workshop to discuss social sustainability indicators on eight priority issues for the city-region: developing sustainable mobility; overcoming poverty; developing a vital regional economy; nurturing governance for sustainability; building community; having an adaptable natural environment; creating a sustainable food system; and enhancing the arts, culture and community. Study groups for each of the eight priority areas had spent six months developing indicators by which to measure progress toward the region's goals. Their lists revealed a wide range of concepts about how best to capture urban data, with indicators dependent on government statistics, new surveys, observational data and organizational reporting.

A critical dialogue following the presentation of the recommended indicators resulted in an important conclusion: to be politically relevant and marketable, indicators must be S.M.A.R.T. – specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely. To ensure community relevance, indicators must also be "motivating, mobilizing and magical". Getting S.M.A.R.T. about indicator development, workshop participants realized, means focusing on indicators that match the community's needs and interests and are framed in ways that encourage buy-in by political actors. Participant Michael McKnight pointed out, "All indicators tell a story, but not all indicators tell the right story – the story that inspires change and improvement."

Local, national and regional urban observatories serve to "tell the right story" by engaging a range of stakeholders with a variety of skills and knowledge sets in the development of S.M.A.R.T. indicators. Indicators can build on the Habitat Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals but should also be specific to the local context and be developed by local participants. Working together, local actors can achieve an important goal of the urban observatory development process: to help partners build their professional skills and aptitude in improving the quality of data and its use in policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation, which ultimately leads to sustainable urban development and the strengthening of public accountability.

Source: Regional Vancouver Urban Observatory, "Expanding OuR View: Sustainability indicator results of the RVU study group process", April 2006.

Mapping data for greater understanding

The geo-visualization – mapping – and spatial analysis of datasets make the data more user-friendly and can provide an interesting and dynamic way of illustrating urban issues to decision-makers and citizens. Good urban policy and planning require accurate information on the situation of all citizens, in every part of the city. Most cities in developing countries, and some in the rest of the world, lack accurate and up-to-date spatial data. Modern tools such as Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing provide urban observatories with powerful information to support the dissemination of data.
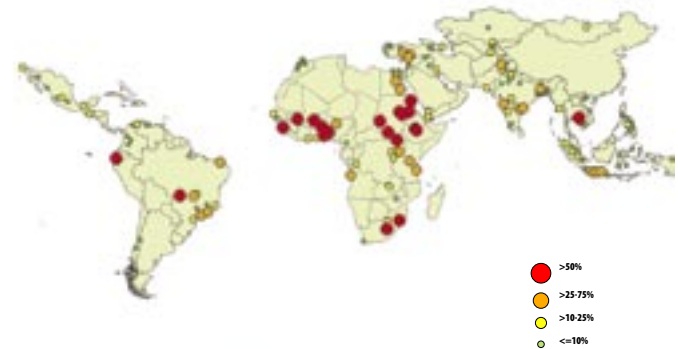
A geographic information system is a system for management, analysis and display of geographic knowledge, which is represented using a series of information packages such as maps and globes, geographic data sets, process and work-flow models, data models and metadata.

Urban observatories that use GIS can take advantage of many capabilities, including:
- visualizing planning scenarios and their impacts on the local population;
- retrieving information quickly and translating it into user-friendly maps;
- and analyzing patterns in different parts of the city, such as identifying the houses most prone to flooding.
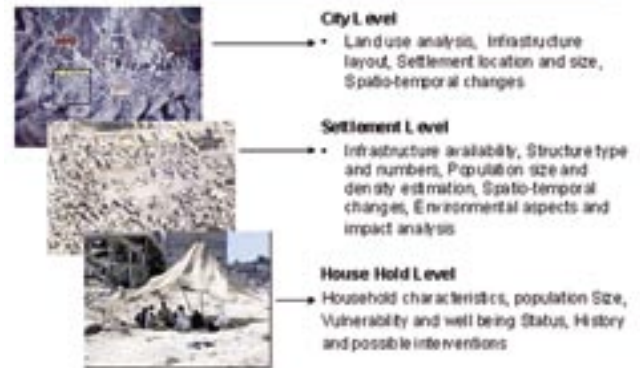
The availability of maps and related spatial data can help to define the level of intervention of the observatory. With high-quality digitized maps and spatial units at a scale appropriate for the kind of data being collected, an urban observatory can create its own visual datasets. The local urban observatory in Nakuru, Kenya, for example, has successfully used its own database-NakInfo-to illustrate urban issues through mapping and to influence urban change (see box page 36). A LUO can also adapt the GIS capabilities of UrbanInfo for its own uses. In Morocco, the Ministry of Housing is working with GUO to set up a "slum urban observatory" within the framework of Millennium Development Goal 7, target 11 – the Cities without Slums initiative. The observatory will explore new technologies, including remote sensing using aerial photographs and satellite images, to assess the development of slums in the principal cities of the country.

Proportion of Households without access to improved sanitation, 2003

>50%
>25-75%
>10-25%
<=10%

Source: UN-HABITAT, Global Urban Observatory 2005

GIS and Remote Sensing

City Level
- Land use analysis, Infrastructure layout, Settlement location and size, Spatio-temporal changes

Settlement Level
- Infrastructure availability, Structure type and numbers, Population size and density estimation, Spatio-temporal changes, Environmental aspects and impact analysis

House Hold Level
- Household characteristics, population Size, Vulnerability and well being Status, History and possible interventions

In order to mainstream the use of GIS technology for improving urban governance and planning in developing and transitional cities, GUO initiated the 1000 Cities GIS Programme. The programme offers GIS software and related training packages to institutions such as local authorities and other stakeholders of urban development. The packages include modules on monitoring and analysis of urban information, as well as information on how to translate the results into local policy. By providing decision-makers with reliable and accurate information this Programme will enable cities to prioritize issues and channel attention to the most neglected areas within urban areas. This effort is expected to complement other initiatives within cities that aim to improve city planning, governance and to promote environmental management.

Nakuru Local Urban Observatory GIS Database: NakInfo

NakInfo consists of about 40 information layers on various development issues gathered through a participatory mapping exercise involving members of community-based organizations. In order to develop the NakInfo database, participants mapped the availability of water, type of shelter, crime hot spots, and other issues in the city of Nakuru, Kenya. This was complemented with information from the relevant municipal and district authorities. The local urban observatory is now collecting additional data on access to education and detailed demographic profiles, which will eventually be integrated into NakInfo.

This screen shot of NakInfo shows the extent of poverty and lack of sanitation in Nakuru. The local urban observatory used participatory poverty mapping combined with digitized information on sewer lines obtained from municipal records. Clearly, most poverty areas (orange) are not covered by the municipal sewer system (red). This data, along with other information on illegal dumping, led to the reorganization of solid waste collection by city officials.

Chapter 4

An urban observatory survival guide: Problems to avoid

Urban observatories have the potential to become well-established institutions that generate data and inform urban policy and practice for many years. For observatories to succeed and become integral assets for urban strategic thinking and planning, they must be carefully designed and managed – or risk becoming obsolete. Many urban observatories have failed to develop into vital resources for their cities and countries, often owing to problems encountered at the beginning of the process. The following list describes some of the common troubles faced by urban observatories, provided to help new groups get off to a productive start.

No clear mission, vision or objectives

For urban observatories to succeed at any scale, they must serve a clear purpose that is championed by all partners. Take time to thoughtfully develop the mission, long-term vision and clear, concrete objectives of the urban observatory as a committed team at the beginning of the process.

Lack of political support

Political leadership and senior management support is vital to the success of any urban observatory. GUO has found that in countries in which observatories are primarily coordinated by government entities, political support tends to be strong. Those initiatives driven by non-governmental organizations and academic institutions appear to have less support from their governments. For urban observatories not directly coordinated or managed by local government, linking indicators with action agendas that bridge issues and provide positive steps toward community improvement is important for engendering political support. Observatories that are supported by one person – a political "champion" – should immediately seek political support from other institutions to avoid obsolescence at the end of the primary supporter's term of office.

Lack of financial sustainability and institutional support

No matter how important the urban data collection and reporting that an urban observatory does, it cannot develop high-quality products or accomplish its goals without the financial and institutional support of its partners. All urban observatory coordinators should carefully assess the sustainability risks they face when developing their proposals and develop plans to diminish those risks. During the development of a new urban observatory, partners should honestly examine the viability of the project, given their city's unique institutional environment.

Indicators not directly connected to local concerns

For plans to be successful and sustainable, the urban observatory concept and indicators have to be practical and relevant to the needs of each community and its local decision-makers. Many existing urban observatories are in cities and countries that face challenges of managing their urban areas under severe resource constraints. They cannot afford to invest their limited resources on wasteful or meaningless data collection exercises. Arguably the most important achievement in the planning process has been to establish clear linkages between the indicators process and specific policy or planning areas in each urban observatory. This process has helped to mobilize interest in the indicators and their value as a planning tool among the officials and other stakeholders involved. The global monitoring framework produced by GUO has proven to be a good guide and reference for localizing urban indicators.

Too many urban indicators

Some urban observatories have created monitoring mechanisms with more than 200 indicators covering a wide range of urban issues. Experience shows that the monitoring system of an urban observatory should be condensed into a small number of indicators, responding to the main focus of the observatory. These "key indicators" should be measurable and realistic to be politically relevant.

Lack of clear outcomes and a sound communication strategy

All of the hard work urban observatories do to collect and analyze urban data will go unrecognized as long as it remains disconnected from innovative, user-friendly and demand-driven products. One of the first processes urban observatory partners should undertake is a detailed discussion of exactly what the observatory will produce and how the partners

will communicate it. Without concrete outcomes, social, financial and political support for urban observatories quickly wanes.

Lack of coordination among actors

This guide emphasizes the importance of collaboration in urban observatory development and maintenance. True collaboration means working together to accomplish the objectives of the observatory – not recruiting big-name supporters who cannot dedicate staff resources and their own time to help with the work that needs to be done. All partners – including government representatives, staff of local organizations and members of the public – should be made aware of their responsibilities regarding ongoing contributions to the urban observatory they support. Observatory coordinators should also take care to create realistic expectations and a workplan that suits the needs of those involved.

Lack of investment in training

A major weak link in developing urban indicators systems and observatories is the difficulty that government employees and other stakeholders have in implementing and using the developed processes. Both high-level and mid-level managers, as well as technical staff, should receive training in what indicators and observatories are all about and how the tools can help them in their work. Training is needed in the initial stages of implementation as well as later stages. A key challenge is employee, and particularly senior management, turnover in many cities, which necessitates ongoing training efforts.

Summary

Existing tools for urban policy in both developing and developed countries have largely failed to provide an accurate picture of the city and how it works. Many cities lack the means to understand relationships between policy and urban outcomes or indications of the relationships between the performance of individual sectors and broader social and economic development results. Even fewer cities have the proper tools to disaggregate urban data at the sub-city level to develop pro-poor policies and gain sufficient knowledge about the needs of different groups.

Urban observatories can provide an essential antidote to the information crisis in cities by creating partnerships to develop indicators, collect and analyze data, and communicate information in ways that meet the needs of citizens and urban decision-makers. Urban observatories are institutional homes for monitoring. They act as focal points for indicator-based urban monitoring systems and are hosted by an existing central government office, city department, non-governmental organization or university. A main objective of urban observatories at every level is to **enhance urban data collection and management to support the development of better-informed policies.**

Rather than fulfill the interests of one sector, urban observatories exist to bridge the interests and activities of different sectors concerned with urban development, including local authorities, non-governmental organizations, academic research centers, the private sector and civil society. Decision-makers must be present in order to ensure that information products and plans are put to use for the good of the public, and the public must be present in order to ensure that plans represent the interests of all stakeholders. Monitoring, in this sense, serves as a framework for accountability.

The Global Urban Observatory (GUO) at UN-HABITAT coordinates the urban observatory system and provides technical assistance to aid in the development of new observatories at the national or local level. New urban observatory groups should contact GUO in the early planning stages to benefit from the work of others and to receive important knowledge management tools and technical assistance for the inception and organizational development phases of the observatory, as well as ongoing indicator development and monitoring.

Contact information:

Annex 1

The Global Urban Observatory's local capacity-building strategy

In addition to helping local and national entities set up urban observatories, UN-HABITAT's Global Urban Observatory (GUO) also supports broader country-owned programmes aimed at strengthening the capacity of national and local authorities and other partners to monitor and manage urban development through the collection of indicator-based data.

GUO provides local capacity-building support in three key areas apart from helping with the development of urban observatories:

Area 1: Country-driven action plans
GUO is working with governments, NGOs, research institutions and the private sector to develop and implement long-term action plans for strengthening country capacity to generate improved urban data, including indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals. These plans are designed in response to the actual needs and problems identified by our partners and take into account existing institutional structures and capacities for urban data production and monitoring.

Area 2: Improving local decision-making and governance
The action plans aim to make indicator development and data collection an integral part of local planning and policy-making processes. We are helping local agencies use indicators to design policies, make mid-course adjustments to their programmes, locate problem areas and target resources. We are also promoting the public dissemination of data, allowing citizens to better understand urban problems and to hold local government accountable for the outcomes they achieve.

Area 3: Disaggregated spatial information
Through the country action plans, our partners are developing strategies to collect information that is broken out by geographical location within a city – by district and neighbourhood, for instance. This information is critical in helping planners target scarce resources to the areas most in need. Average data on a city can mask pockets of urban poverty and inequalities with regard to specific services.

By implementing the Monitoring of Urban Inequities Programme, GUO is developing methodological tools and practical approaches to monitor intra-city differentials. The GUO offers assistance to urban observatories in various aspects of the process to monitor urban inequities that include sampling frame design; definition of priority areas of analysis, including questionnaires at the household and community levels; mapping, data collection and analysis.

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