

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME (UN-HABITAT)

Support to NEPAD

Period of Report: July 2006 to June 2007

UN-HABITAT's normative and operational activities in the Africa region provide strong support to NEPAD. The Agency addresses the NEPAD goals at various levels, as briefly described below.

NEPAD Cities Programme

UN-HABITAT and its partners, including the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG-A) have been focusing on the political and normative debates around the NEPAD vision. The synergy created by this collaboration has resulted in designing a unique programme of activities called the "NEPAD Cities Programme", which has become a core element in the implementation of NEPAD within interagency consultations coordinated by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

The NEPAD Cities Programme, which was adopted as a product of cluster 4 established by ECA, with UN-HABITAT as the lead agency, remains a major component of UN-HABITAT's efforts to address NEPAD objectives. It is designed to achieve quick-wins for giving concrete and visible expression to NEPAD's ideals at the community level.

The NEPAD Cities Programme entered Phase II with the signing of an agreement of cooperation with eThekweni Municipality (ex-Durban) on behalf of the NEPAD Cities Programme network in April 2007. The agreement aims at strengthening the collaboration between all members of the network to fulfil their commitments to effectively implement NEPAD objectives within the broader framework of attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the local level.

Major activities undertaken within the context of Phase I included: (i) a concept paper developed and a proposal for the selection of seven pilot cities, endorsed by the Heads of State Implementation Committee at their 8th meeting in Maputo, (ii) a flash publication of the concept paper, printed in both English and French, (iii) initial activities started in Bamako, Douala, Durban, Lagos, Lusaka, Nairobi and Rabat which form the core member cities of Phase I.

Phase I of the NEPAD Cities Programme was successfully concluded and its global report was launched at the Third Session of the World Urban Forum, held in June 2006 in Vancouver, Canada. Building on the Vancouver momentum, a follow-up session was organised in Nairobi, in September 2006 in conjunction with the fourth AFRICITIES Summit, to market the concept of a "NEPAD City", which is conceived as an African city that is fit to deliver on the MDGs. This will remain one of top priorities of the Programme during Phase II implementation.

Advocacy and awareness-raising

On the advocacy front, UN-HABITAT continued mobilizing major stakeholders at all levels in support of NEPAD and to raise the awareness of African leaders on the issues related to the rapid rate of urbanization in Africa and the impact of the “urbanisation of poverty” on the quality of life of citizens.

The African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (AMCHUD), which was established as a major outcome of resolution 29 of the African Union on “Promoting the Development of Sustainable Cities in Africa”, has met two times since 2005 to address the challenges of urbanization at a high level.

The major outcomes of AMCHUD I included: (i) the establishment of a standing consultative mechanism, whose Bureau is composed of a Chair (South Africa), a Rapporteur (Kenya), and members (Algeria, Senegal and Chad); (ii) an agreement on an “Enhanced Framework of Implementation of Housing and Urban Development in Africa”; (iii) an agreement on a common position on Africa’s message to the 13th Session of the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD-13), and the 20th Session of the Governing Council on the Implementation Review of MDGs.

The relevance of the NEPAD Cities Programme as an innovative approach towards the effective implementation of NEPAD objectives and the MDGs in Africa, was recognized by AMCHUD I. The Programme is now entrenched in the Declaration by African Ministers, who have resolved to support and further strengthen its activities.

AMCHUD held a special session at the UN-HABITAT headquarters in Nairobi in April 2006 on the theme: "Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Africa: Strategies for the Realization of the Millennium Review Summit Commitment on Slums". It clearly emerged that the political will to address the slum challenge, currently affecting 72 percent of urban dwellers in sub-Saharan Africa or 187 million people, is on the rise.

Against this background, UN-HABITAT has intensified efforts between 2006 and 2007 to achieve tangible results through its technical cooperation and operational activities in various African countries, which affect positively the implementation of the NEPAD in this region.

Operational activities for 2006/2007

UN-HABITAT has reinforced its presence on the ground by recruiting national officers as “Habitat Programme Managers” to work closely with United Nations Country Teams in follow-up implementation at the country level.

Supporting NEPAD within the framework of the new Medium-term Strategic and Institutional Plan for 2008-2013

The Governing Council of UN-HABITAT approved the Medium-term Strategic and Institutional Plan for 2008-2013. This plan seeks to further strengthen and align UN-HABITAT's normative and operational contribution at the country level. Priority is being accorded by the Plan to least developed countries and countries which are witnessing the fastest growth in urban poverty and in the proliferation of slums. As a result, the plan will accord a high degree of programme support to the NEPAD Cities Programme, both directly at the local level, and indirectly through policy and institutional reform at the national level.

Another key objective of the plan is to strengthen UN-HABITAT's work in pre-investment finance in partnership with international, regional and domestic financial institutions. The objective of pre-investment finance is to package advocacy, technical assistance and capacity building with follow-up investment to bring pilot initiatives in slum upgrading and pro-poor urban development to scale. Priority will be accorded to countries having demonstrated their commitments to realizing human settlements related MDGs. The NEPAD Cities Programme will constitute an important platform and entry point.

Lessons learned and way forward

UN-HABITAT's financial resources are limited. Despite these limitations, UN-HABITAT has demonstrated that it can play an important catalytic role in mobilising domestic and international resources in support of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and the attainment of human settlements related MDGs. Africa is currently experiencing historically unprecedented rates of urbanisation and slum formation. The result is chaotic urbanisation, on the one hand, and the urbanisation of poverty on the other. The NEPAD Cities Programme has shown what can be achieved through a concerted approach by all spheres of government and the international community to advocate for urban poverty, slum improvement and slum prevention. The next steps are to mainstream these issues within existing development assistance frameworks and to harmonise sectoral interventions in health, education, infrastructure development and finance to achieve quick-win results on the ground.