

Supporting Urban Development in Sudan

Beyond Emergency Relief: Promoting Early Recovery and Sustainable Reconstruction

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

In partnership with the Government of Sudan — Ministry of Environment, Forests and Physical Development (MEFPD); State Ministries of Physical Planning and Public Utilities (SMPPUs)

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Covers roughly 2007–2014, published circa 2012–2013

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Sudan: Factsheet

- Population: 30.9 million. Urban population projected to rise from 40% to 68% (2010–2050).
- Population living in poverty: 47% (urban: 27%).
- Annual GDP per capita: US\$1,642.
- Access to improved drinking water: 61%. Access to improved sanitation: 27%.
- IDPs in Darfur: 1.9 million. Sudanese refugees abroad: 419,000.

Supporting Sustainable Urbanisation

UN-Habitat, according to its mandate, supports the Government of Sudan in developing and implementing sustainable urbanisation strategies. Activities commonly carried out in Sudan include construction of housing and social services using eco-friendly, low-cost construction technologies (such as stabilised soil blocks — SSB), participatory urban and regional planning, awareness raising and training, and slum upgrading interventions. The objective is to bring together national and international expertise and political will for more sustainable urbanization, reducing dependency on humanitarian aid.

National Policy-Making Support

National Conference on Sustainable Urbanisation

Where: Friendship Hall, Khartoum **When:** 2–3 November 2010

Goal: derive and agree on strategic guidelines for orienting Sudan's urbanisation process for the next 15 to 20 years.

Donors: European Union, Italian Cooperation **Partner:** Ministry of Environment, Forests and Physical Development (MEFPD)

Gathered government representatives from Khartoum State, North Kordofan Region, Southern Sudan, Gedaref State, Gezira State, Red Sea State, and Darfur region, plus academia, the private sector, media, and government observers from Egypt and Kenya. Recommendations called for a robust strategic approach prioritising the urban sector comprehensively, recognising housing rights for all — especially communities in informal urban areas — and effective decentralisation to enable community participation and local authority involvement.

Achieved result: An MoU was signed between UN-Habitat and the Federal Government of Sudan for technical assistance on urban/regional planning and management, land use and development, environmental management/conservation, building standards, gender and local governance issues, institutional training, and joint initiatives.

Activities Implemented in Khartoum (2007–2011)

Enhancing Capacity of Khartoum in the Formulation and Implementation of Pro-Poor Urban Planning and Policies

Where: Khartoum State **When:** July 2007 – April 2011 **Budget:** US\$3,577,295

Donors: European Union, Italian Cooperation **Partners:** Ministry of Planning and Urban Development of Khartoum State, localities, community-based organisations (CBOs)

The project supported the formulation of the Khartoum Structure Plan and, applying urban sectors diagnostic studies and the Rapid Urban Study Profile for Sustainability (RUSPS) methodology, resulted in the diagnosis of slums and informal settlements and the formulation and adoption of pro-poor urban policies. It provided the basis for pilot projects demonstrating innovative urban planning tools and pro-poor principles for adoption at larger scale. Khartoum State consequently adopted two resolutions:

- Implementation of the **Khartoum Slum Upgrading Programme**, involving concerned ministries, popular committees, and community groups — to prevent formation of new slums and intervene on existing ones.
- Establishment of the **Khartoum Urban Observatory**, linked to a network of 7 local observatories, for monitoring urban growth at the state level.

Achieved results: 4 thematic workshops organised; 400 government staff/CBO members trained on RUSPS and bottom-up participatory planning approaches; 520 beneficiaries trained on SSB production and use; 144 families trained on self-help housing construction; 18 beneficiaries trained on ferro-cement construction techniques; 3 pilot slum upgrading activities implemented; 2 administrative unit strategic plans formulated.

The Three Khartoum Pilot Projects

- **Pilot 1 — Mansoura:** replan and regularization of 11,000 landless poor, providing 1,973 plots plus water network and electricity.
- **Pilot 2 — Mayo:** 2,000 families of refugees from South Sudan and Darfur receiving plots and basic infrastructure.
- **Pilot 3 — Al Rasheed:** 7,000 families from squatter settlements receiving land, plus 4 model houses, 7 water tanks, 4 schools, and 1 health centre.

Activities Implemented in Darfur (2011–2013, ongoing at time of writing)

Institutional Capacity Development in Darfur on Urban and Regional Planning and Land Management

Where: Darfur (5 States) **When:** October 2011 – October 2013 (ongoing) **Budget:** US\$2,128,215
Donor: USAID/OFDA

Partners: 5 State Ministries of Physical Planning and Public Utilities (SMPPPU), Darfur Regional Authority (DRA), Ministry of Environment, Forests and Physical Development (MEFPD)

Based on an accelerated, action-oriented assessment of urban conditions, priority needs, capacity gaps, and existing institutional responses at local level, the project assists Government institutions and local leaders in capacity building on urban/regional planning to tackle rapid urbanization driven by elevated IDP numbers and ongoing urban re-integration dynamics.

Achieved: 52 government staff trained on regional planning tools (Matrix of Functions; Spatial Multi-Criteria Evaluation); 124 SMPPPU staff trained on participatory planning and land conflict management.

Expected at completion: 1 regional spatial strategy for Darfur discussed and approved; 5 participatory local urban plans elaborated and approved; at least 5,000 new land plots (1,000 per state) demarcated, registered, and allocated to IDPs willing to exit the camps.

Cross-Cutting Results, Sudan-Wide (2007–ongoing)

Training and Capacity Development

UN-Habitat identified stabilised soil block (SSB) technology as the most suitable for reconstruction of returnee settlements in Sudan — eco-friendly, socially inclusive, and economically competitive.

- 452 government staff trained on participatory planning techniques
- 2,975 beneficiaries trained on SSB making; 220 SSB-making machines purchased
- 318 beneficiaries trained on ferro-cement construction
- 60 beneficiaries trained on VIP-latrines construction
- 300 families trained on self-help construction
- 166 demonstration buildings constructed; 12,973 plots demarcated

Pilot Activities — Housing (Darfur)

Where: Southern/Western Darfur **Budget:** US\$1,400,000 **Donor:** UNHCR

Achieved: 40 housing units built; 2,000 beneficiaries received demarcated, serviced plots; 380 young unemployed people trained on SSB making and construction techniques.

Total expected at completion: 140 housing units for IDP families; 3,500 plots demarcated; 630 young unemployed people trained.

Pilot Activities — Infrastructure and Public Services

Where: Northern, Southern, Western Darfur states **Donors:** DFID, Government of Japan, USAID, WHO

Achieved: 80 demonstration buildings constructed (14 SSB workshops, 19 VIP latrines, 44 classrooms, 2 boundary walls, 13 basic/primary health centres); 2,115 beneficiaries trained on SSB making; 120 SSB-making machines purchased.

A Story: New House, New Home, New Life

“Since I fled my village ten years ago, carrying one child in my arms and ushering the other 6 in front of me, I have not had an opportunity to live in a proper house,” says Aisha, a 40-year-old widow and mother of 7 children, describing arriving in Geneina town after the conflict cost her husband's life and her home in BirDageeg Village. Chosen among 150 families for a durable SSB and ferro-cement-roof house, Aisha said: “This beautiful and strong house is mine now, and it means a lot to me and my kids.” The new house let her store goods safely, plant sorghum, and keep her children in school through the community's existing social services.

Lessons drawn out

- Partnerships with government and civil society increase national ownership and allow institutionalising and scaling up good practices.
- Promoting local leadership and participatory planning facilitates prioritisation and builds trust among beneficiaries.
- Regular consultations before and during implementation have proven effective.
- An integrated approach to data collection and planning, with different scenarios and options, is necessary for identifying durable solutions.
- Increased coordination with national institutions and joint programming among UN agencies facilitates an integrated vision.
- A Do-No-Harm approach is crucial for achieving land conflict resolution.

Looking Forward

Blue Nile State, like Darfur, is one of three protocol areas continuously affected by conflict outbreaks, insecurity, and large displacements. UN-Habitat committed to identifying feasible recovery strategies for the state's future development, alongside continuing peace-building activities in Darfur through a project

restoring migration/nomadic routes.

Conclusions

The United Nations Development Assistance Framework for 2013–2016 identified achieving a smooth transition to recovery and longer-term development as its overarching goal, across four inter-related pillars: (1) poverty reduction, inclusive growth and sustainable livelihoods, with particular attention to youth and women; (2) basic services delivery; (3) governance and rule of law; and (4) social cohesion and peace consolidation.

UN-Habitat committed to continuing institutional capacity development on urban and regional planning and land management, promoting affordable housing and secure land and property rights, and advocating for adopting and scaling up cost-effective, woodless construction technologies — in parallel with training young unemployed people and women through demonstration projects — in support of a National Urbanisation Policy and wider geographic coverage across Sudan.

Source: United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), P.O. Box 30030, GPO Nairobi 00100, Kenya.

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