



# GLOBAL PUBLIC SPACE PROGRAMME

## ANNUAL REPORT 2020



PUBLIC SPACE  
PROGRAMME

**UN HABITAT**  
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

Copyright © United Nations Human Settlements Programme  
(UN-Habitat) 2021

All rights reserved  
United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)  
P.O. Box 30030 00100 Nairobi GPO KENYA  
Tel: 254-020-7623120 (Central Office)  
[www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org)

## **DISCLAIMER**

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries regarding its economic system or degree of development. Excerpts may be reproduced without authorization, on condition that the source is indicated. Views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the United Nations and its member states.

Cover photo: Faces of Covid-19 Mural in Quito, Ecuador © Dialogo Diverso

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Project manager: Cecilia Andersson

Project supervisor: Laura Petrella

Principal author: Christelle Lahoud, Chiara Martinuzzi

Contributors: Jose Chong, Joy Mutai, Mark Ojal, Sohel Rana,  
Mario Tavera, Maia Smillie, Mitiku Woldesenbet

Design and layout: Christelle Lahoud, Chiara Martinuzzi

# GLOBAL PUBLIC SPACE PROGRAMME

## ANNUAL REPORT 2020



**UN HABITAT**  
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE



# CONTENTS

<b>GLOBAL PUBLIC SPACE PROGRAMME</b>	<b>6</b>
How we work	7
<b>CONTINUED PROGRESS</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2020 HIGHLIGHTS</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>BLOCK BY BLOCK FOUNDATION</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>NATIONAL PROGRAMME</b>	<b>16</b>
Anchoring Public Space in National Urban Policies in Ethiopia	16
<b>IMPORTANCE OF DATA FOR POLICY AND STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>18</b>
Eliminating Violence Against Women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Palestine	19
Towards child-friendly open public spaces in Sharjah, UAE	20
Reclaiming the 'Green City' in Nairobi, Kenya	21
<b>ACHIEVING QUALITY PUBLIC SPACES</b>	<b>22</b>
Community-led public space assessment in Suleja, Nigeria	23
"Fair shared city", towards better quality public spaces in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	24
<b>LEVERAGING PUBLIC SPACES DURING COVID-19</b>	<b>28</b>
Mobile pop-up playgrounds for children in response to COVID-19 in Hanoi, Vietnam	32
Improving livelihood for street vendors in Dhaka and Khulna, Bangladesh	34
A kit to feed children's imaginations in Sao Paulo, Brazil	37
Covid Proofing of Public Spaces in Bhopal informal settlements, India	38
Supporting market vendors' relocation to open fields in Kisumu, Kenya	40
Increasing Hygiene in local markets in Niamey, Niger	42
Faces of COVID-19: Providing safe spaces for LGBTQI+ community in Quito, Ecuador	44
<b>GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE</b>	<b>46</b>
The journal of public space	48
Media coverage	48
Evaluation of Minecraft as a participation tool to co-design public spaces	51
Training local governments: The Arab States Regional Workshop	52
<b>LIST OF DONORS</b>	<b>54</b>
Contributions received (2019–2020)	55
<b>PROGRAMME STAFF 2020</b>	<b>57</b>

# GLOBAL PUBLIC SPACE PROGRAMME

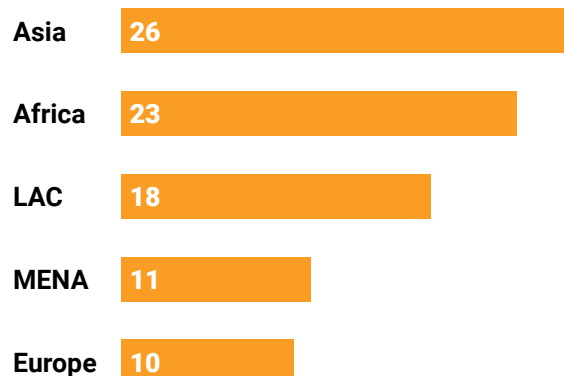
UN-Habitat's Global Public Space Programme was launched in 2012 with the objective to support local governments in creating and promoting socially inclusive, integrated, connected, environmentally sustainable and safe streets and public spaces, especially for the most vulnerable, promoting a better quality of life for all. The programme has developed an integrated, multi-sectoral and iterative approach to support local governments to create vibrant and inclusive public space networks, long-term urban strategies and national policies, focusing on the most vulnerable groups. Starting from the national and regional scale, the Programme provides technical support and capacity building in public space assessments, policy guides, strategies and design principles, management and maintenance frameworks and using innovative participatory tools. The outcomes of this approach inform city planning frameworks, monitoring of the 2030 New Urban Agenda, SDG 11.7 and thematic aspects such as inequality, prosperity, accessibility, resilience and health.

2020 has been a challenging year: the world is living through an unprecedented crisis as COVID-19 continues to spread, with hundreds of thousands of lives lost and over two hundred countries affected. The impact of COVID-19 will be most devastating in poor and densely populated urban areas, particularly affecting the most vulnerable groups of our society. In just a few months, the pandemic has transformed the way we live, work, travel and socialize. As a quick response, most cities are following semi-similar prevention actions by adopting confinement, strict dusk-to-dawn curfews and lockdown measures to minimize physical contact. However, social distancing does not work for the informal sector that relies on public spaces to earn a living. As a result of these globalised measures, many businesses are closing, working hours are narrowing and supply networks for food and goods are being disrupted. Meanwhile, stay at home orders are increasing rates of depression and put women, girls and children at a greater risk of domestic violence with limited access to protection services and social networks.

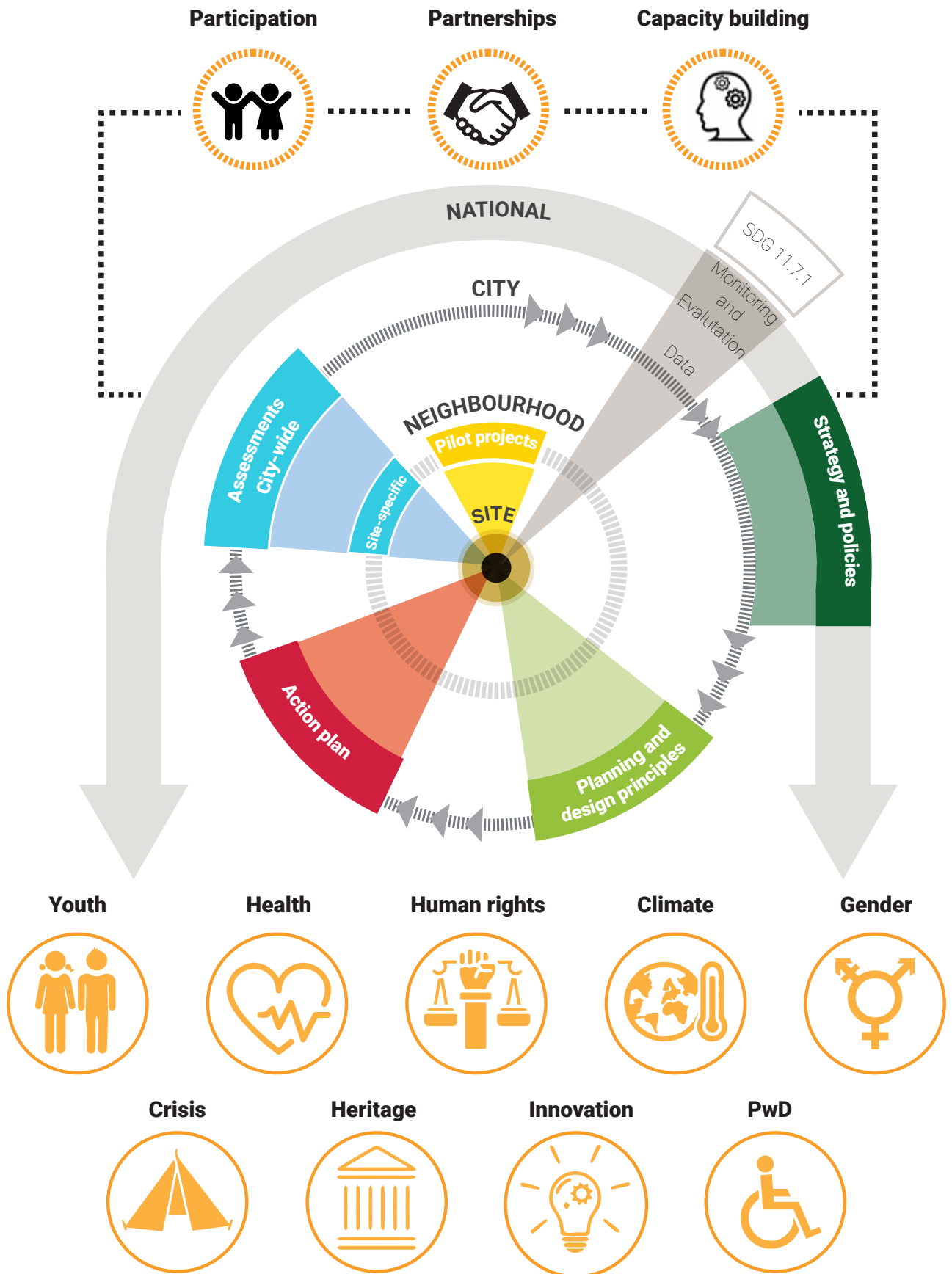
Worldwide measures cannot be generalized and should rather be adapted to diverse contexts. If not addressed properly, the impact of COVID-19 could exacerbate inequalities once the crisis is over. Public spaces have the potential to provide space for the rapid establishment of temporary and secondary facilities (e.g. for health care and for food distribution) and livelihood opportunities. Furthermore, streets and markets can allow informal vendors to continue to operate if these public spaces are adapted and designed in a way to provide sufficient distance from each stall and provide the opportunity for some of the vendors to spill over into the streets ensuring adequate distance.

This year, more than ever, the Global Public Space Programme is working to leverage the value of public spaces for urban health and social inclusion. In particular, digital participation has now become a critical point to ensure inclusive urban planning processes during the era of social distancing. Our methodologies and operative tools are adapting to the change and integrating new approaches and opportunities to plan and design the public realm of the new normal, following the guidelines of WHO. The focus of upgrading projects is on building health resilience, livelihood opportunities and social trust among the community, to enable people to use and enjoy public spaces again.

## Number of cities where the Global Public Space Programme is active



# HOW WE WORK





# CONTINUED PROGRESS

## Where we started and where we are now

STRATEGIC PLAN

2014-2019

2012

2013

2014

2015

2016

Launch of the Nairobi Public Space Programme

Partnership between UN-Habitat and Mojang

First Future of Places Conference, Stockholm, Sweden

2 upgrading projects completed in Nairobi, Kenya

First Block by Block workshops in Kenya, Haiti and Nepal

Launch of the Charter on Public Spaces

Publishing of UN-Habitat technical report, "Street as Public Spaces Drivers of Prosperity" to address the importance of streets as public spaces

**210,000 PEOPLE IMPACTED**

Second Future of Places Conference, Buenos Aires, Argentina

4 public space projects completed in Nepal, Haiti and Kenya

Crowdsourcing Public Space designs using Minecraft with over 7,500 youth in Mexico

**340,000 PEOPLE IMPACTED**

Launch of the Nairobi City-wide public space assessment

International Public Markets Conference, Barcelona, Spain

Public Space Biennale, Rome, Italy

Establishment of the Block by Block Foundation

9 public space projects completed in Nepal, Haiti, Kosovo, Bangladesh and Kenya

Launch of the publication "Using Minecraft for Youth Participation in Urban Design and Governance"

Launch of the publication: "Public Space Toolkit: From Global Principles to Local Policies and Practice"

Adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals including a specific target on Public Space

**450,000 PEOPLE IMPACTED**

Bamenda city-wide public space and market place assessment

Launch of Regional Arab States Programme

First Nairobi Placemaking Week

9 public space projects completed in India, Nepal and Kenya.

Premiere of the documentary 'Gaming the Real World' featuring UN-Habitat and Mojang

Agreement and adoption of the New Urban Agenda in Quito, Ecuador

UN agencies Action Framework for implementation of the New Urban Agenda on public space

EGM on public space indicator to monitor implementation of SDG 11.7.1



NEW STRATEGIC PLAN  
2020-2023

2017

**1.1 MILLION  
PEOPLE IMPACTED**

Launch of 2 city-wide public space assessments in Ethiopia, and South Africa

Over 100 members of the UN-Habitat public space network

Latin American Placemaking Week, Valparaíso

Global Placemaking Week, Amsterdam

47 public space projects completed in Peru, Kenya, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Bangladesh, Kosovo, South Africa and Madagascar

First tests of mixed reality technology for citizen participation and visualization of public space designs in Johannesburg, South Africa

2018

**1.5 MILLION  
PEOPLE IMPACTED**

Launch of 6 city-wide public space assessments in Kenya, Mongolia, South Africa, China and Uganda

World Bank and UN Agencies Public Space Working Group launched

Launch of the European Placemaking Network

Launch of the China National Network Public Space / Placemaking

17 public space projects completed in South Africa, China, Brazil, Vietnam, Palestine, Bangladesh, Kenya, Mexico, Colombia and South Africa

Tests of improved mixed reality platform and Expert Group Meeting in Stockholm, Sweden

Indicator 11.7 on public space upgraded from Tier 3 to Tier 2 by the UN Statistical Commission

City-wide public space strategy - A global guide for city leaders

City-wide public space strategy - Compendium of International Practices

Development of the Regional Strategy for Asia Pacific

Mainstreaming Public Space in NUP (Draft)

2019

**1.72 MILLION  
PEOPLE IMPACTED**

Launch of the Ethiopia flagship programme

Completed 17 city-wide assessments in Afghanistan, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Palestine, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Uruguay.

17 public space projects completed in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ethiopia, Mexico, Nairobi, Peru and Uruguay

Launch of the publication "Mixed reality for public participation in urban and public space design"

Launch of the site-specific assessment tool

Finalising the Block by Block Training Kit

Conducted 12 Training of Trainers on Public space tools in Ethiopia, France, Somaliland Scotland, UAE, etc

Launch of the city-wide public space assessment guide

Public space featured prominently during the First UN-Habitat Assembly

604 cities are included in the database of public space

Launched UN-Habitat's partnership with the Journal of Public Space

2020

**1.85 MILLION  
PEOPLE IMPACTED**

Supported 10 cities with Covid-19 response through public space interventions

Completed 11 city-wide public space assessments in Palestine, UAE, Nigeria and Ethiopia

26 upgrading projects completed in 12 cities

Released a guidance note on COVID-19 and public space

Conducted 11 training on city-wide public space assessment for 200 people

Produced 8 normative outputs on tools and methodologies to support local governments in planning public spaces

Conducted 5 online digital workshops using Minecraft as a participatory tool

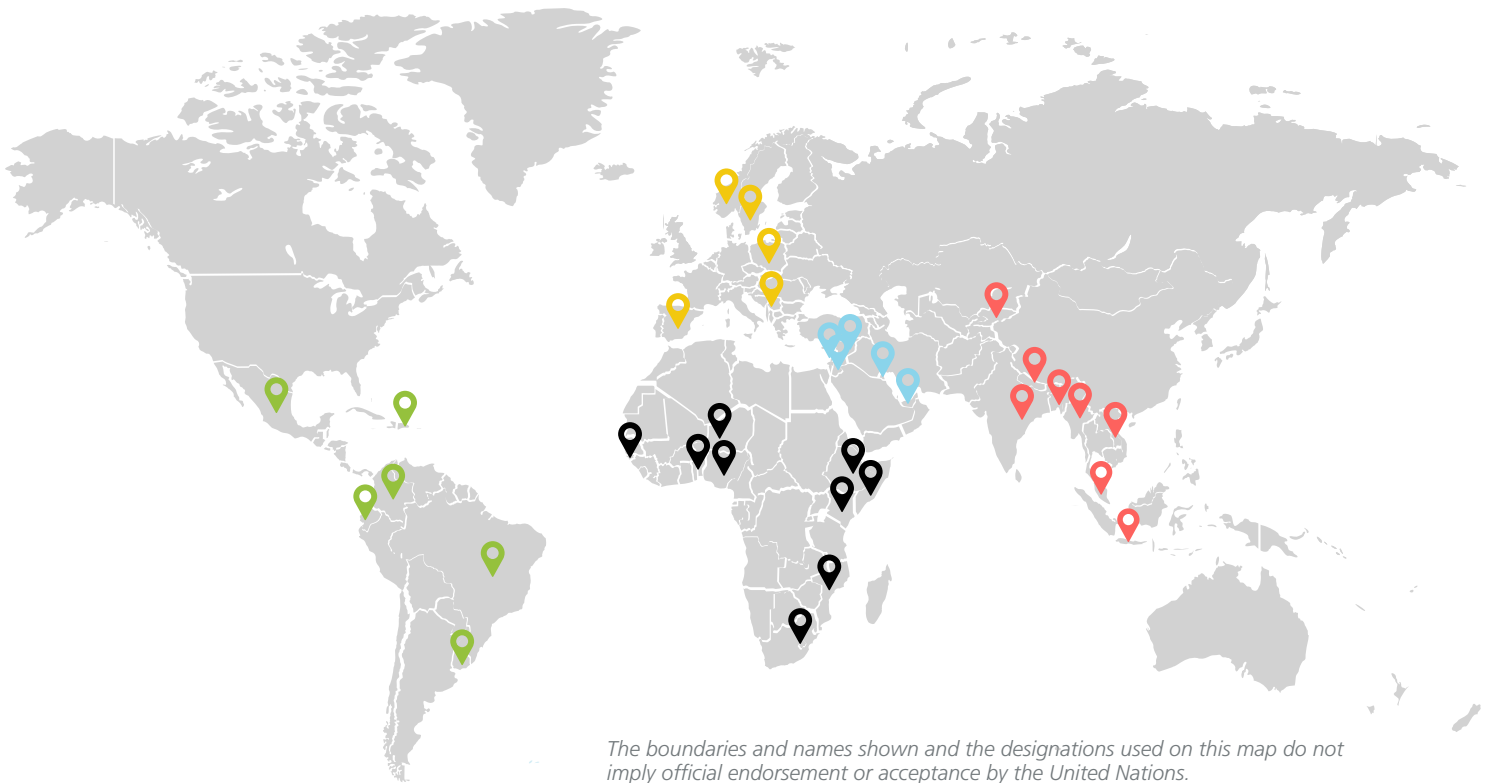
Conducted 2 regional trainings on localizing the Public Space Toolkit for the Arab States

Launched the city-wide public space inventory in Nairobi, Kenya

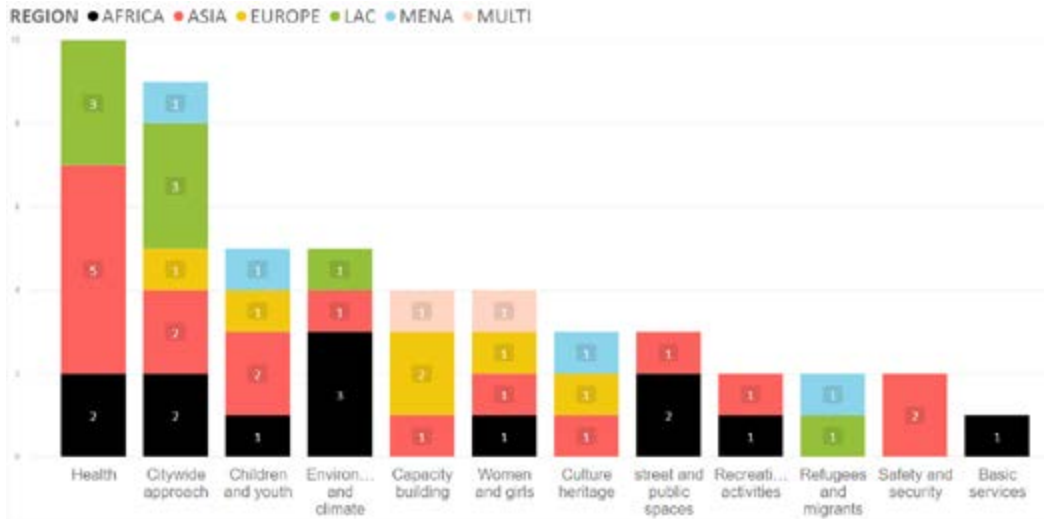
900 cities are included in the database of public space

Released two special volumes on public spaces in the Journal of Public Space

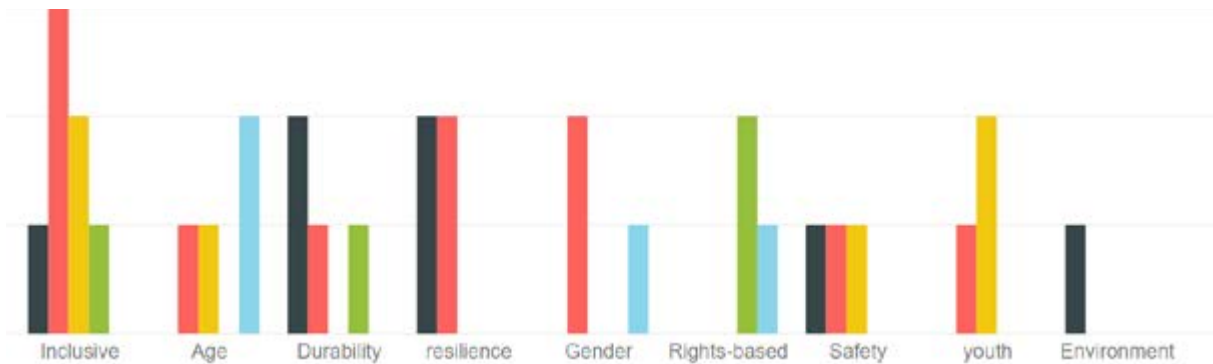
# 2020 HIGHLIGHTS



## Thematic focus per region



## Cross-cutting focus



By 2020, more than **1.85 million people** enjoy safe access to more than **134 public spaces** designed and upgraded through UN-Habitat's global public space programme operating in **87 cities**.

In 2020:

started  
**27**  
public space  
projects

Active in  
**41**  
Cities

Completed  
**26**  
public spaces  
interventions

Completed  
**11**  
city-wide  
assessments

Completed  
**12**  
site-specific  
assessments

Conducted  
**5**  
online Minecraft  
workshops

Engaged  
**6,750**  
citizens in  
participatory  
planning

Engaged  
**470**  
citizens in digital  
participation  
workshops

Trained  
**560**  
people on public  
space assessment  
and tools



We commit ourselves to promoting safe, inclusive, accessible, green and quality public spaces, including streets, sidewalks and cycling lanes, squares, waterfront areas, gardens and parks, that are multifunctional areas designed and managed to ensure social interaction, human development, building peaceful and democratic societies and promoting cultural diversity.

We reaffirm the central role of inclusive public space in reducing social and spatial inequalities across urban areas (formal and informal) and that public spaces have positive impacts on health and well-being.



*Transformative commitments for sustainable urban development,  
New Urban Agenda*







# BLOCK BY BLOCK FOUNDATION

## INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIP SUPPORTING DIGITAL PARTICIPATION AND ADVANCING THE PUBLIC SPACE AGENDA GLOBALLY

Among the most innovative aspects of the Global Public Space Programme are the partnerships behind it. Block by Block was initially launched in 2012 by UN-Habitat and Mojang Studios (the company behind Minecraft) with the aim of reinforcing the importance of digital public participation. Eight years later, the methodology has been used by tens of thousands of people in more than 87 cities to co-create public spaces. The collaboration has also generated around \$10 million, that has been used to advance the public space agenda globally.

The Block by Block Foundation was established in 2015 as a US 301(c) non-profit to support digital public participation, advance the public space agenda globally and support UN-Habitat's Global Public Space programme's work. The board of the Block by Block Foundation is made up of experts from a variety of sectors with skills in architecture and urban planning, digital technologies, community development, video gaming, finance and business development. The foundation is a great resource to the Global Public Space Programme and in addition to financing, its board members provide insight and advice in areas including public space design, policy, advocacy and partnerships.

Every year, the Foundation strengthens its commitment to public space development as a key enabler for inclusive, prosperous and healthier cities. Due to COVID-19, the Foundation has reallocated resources for relief projects in 10 cities. The projects support cities with their response to the pandemic by rebuilding social cohesion, enhancing the livelihood and wellbeing of citizens and improving hygiene and sanitation.

We would like to extend a special thanks to the Block by Block Foundation for financing UN-Habitat's public space upgrading work and many core functions of the Programme.

More information about the Block by Block Foundation can be found on the official website.



[www.blockbyblock.org](http://www.blockbyblock.org)



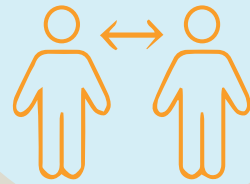
**At Mojang, we believe that games can be used for more than just entertainment. And with Block by Block, we want to show that they can be used to make the world a better place.**

Vu Bui, Mojang, Block by Block President





**Ensured  
Physical  
distancing**



Online Minecraft workshop to co-design a public space in Amman, Jordan © UN-Habitat Jordan



# NATIONAL PROGRAMME

## ANCHORING PUBLIC SPACE IN NATIONAL URBAN POLICIES IN ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia, with a population of 109 million people, is expected to be among the top 10 most populated countries in the world by 2050. The country is witnessing a rapid and unprecedented urbanisation, putting pressure on the built-environment and its services, especially on open public spaces and their accessibility.

The Global Public Space Programme started working in Ethiopia in 2017 by piloting a neighbourhood community space in Addis Ababa. Today, we are active in five cities (Adama, Dire Dawa, Hawassa, Mekelle and Bahir Dar) working on the national, city and neighbourhood level. Ethiopia was selected to be the first flagship project to focus on advancing public space in national urban policies.

Several meetings were held this year with the Ministry of Urban Development and Construction and the Department of Resilience and Climate Change to advance the national programme. In 2020, we completed city-wide assessments in the five cities; mapping over 2,000 public spaces and identifying gaps and needs regarding accessibility, quality and inclusivity. We are also supporting the

city in developing a design guideline for different government entities to adhere to when upgrading public spaces and avoid overlapping standards. Building on the latter, cities are currently framing their public space strategies which will feed into the elaboration of urban policies at the national level.

Some of the findings from the inventory revealed the need to:

1. Preserve areas of natural significance, riverfronts and public spaces and avoid encroachment
2. Improve the quality of public spaces making them multi-functional, inclusive and safe
3. Strengthen the network of public spaces at the city level to avoid fragmentation
4. Provide facilities and amenities in public spaces to increase comfort and safety
5. Adopt a maintenance and management framework to avoid degradation
6. Ensure participation of communities throughout the lifecycle of project upgrading; especially by vulnerable groups

### Steps and activities towards the objective:







Community members mapping the quality of public spaces in Adama, Ethiopia © UN-Habitat



# CITY-WIDE PUBLIC SPACE ASSESSMENT

## IMPORTANCE OF DATA FOR POLICY AND STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

The city-wide public space inventory and assessment provides a flexible framework designed to aid local governments and partners working in public spaces to assess the network, distribution, accessibility, quantity, and quality of their public spaces in a cost-effective way. The tool aims to determine priority areas and sectors of intervention – both spatial and non-spatial– that government and private entities can use to address public space challenges.

The city-wide public space inventory and assessment uses an open-source application called Kobo Collect which creates a tailored questionnaire form that can be filled out on a mobile phone or tablet. Information from these surveys is aggregated on a central server, which can then be viewed and retrieved to one’s computer for analysis. By using a smartphone or tablet, field data can be collected with all the advantages that electronic data gathering brings (value input control, skipping irrelevant sections, elimination of transcribing errors from paper, etc.). Since 2015, the tool has been applied in 30 cities and engaged approximately 1,750 data collectors, with a diversity of thematic entry points for each city, such as children, safety, markets, women, heritage etc.

40 trainings to local governments, community members and volunteers have been conducted on the use of the tool, as well as on the importance of public space and the need for data for policy and strategy development. Since the monitoring of SDG 11.7 and the public space commitments in the New Urban Agenda are done at the city level, city-wide surveys of public spaces have been key to support local governments to report their progress towards achieving these commitments.

Notably, during the COVID 19 pandemic, public and green spaces have become critical areas for containment, testing and for decongesting crowded markets. They offered the much-needed refuge where individuals can be in public, while safely practicing social distancing measures outdoors. More than ever, it has become critical for cities to understand the state of their cities in terms of the spatial distribution and quality of their public and green areas, taking into consideration aspects such as outdoor gyms, green areas improving air quality (a key factor that lowers COVID-19 death rates) among others. The guide to undertake a city-wide public space inventory and assessment has been revised and updated based on the input and experiences from these cities.

### By the end of 2020



**30**

CITIES

carried out city-wide public space assessments



**40**

TRAININGS

conducted with local governments and community members



**1,750+** DATA COLLECTORS

engaged in participatory workshops to assess public spaces

## Eliminating Violence Against Women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Palestine

UN-Habitat, in collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government and the private sector, conducted city-wide public space safety audits in five cities in Palestine: Khan Younis, Jenin, Nablus, Jericho and Bethlehem Cluster of Ad Doha, Beit Sahour, Beit Jala and Bethlehem. The aim was to understand women’s and girls’ safety concerns in public spaces and to develop city-level public space strategies that will feed into the national public space policy development process.

The process of conducting the city-wide public space safety audits in the five cities had its challenges as far as security and violence were concerned, and were related to the combination of restriction of movement and political violence. The most common safety concerns by women and girls in public spaces in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are infrastructure problems, perception of danger, and experiences of crime and harassment in public spaces. For instance, approximately 27 per cent of the public spaces in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have infrastructural problems: these are poor or lack of street lighting, poor road quality, lack of traffic calming measures and overall lack of gender-responsive design. Users of public spaces feel unsafe in 25

percent of the public spaces in the West Bank. This number increases to 49.3 per cent in the Gaza Strip while in both areas, women and girls feel more unsafe compared to men.

Public space strategies that are proposed for Palestine Territory to promote safety and enhance social cohesion include:

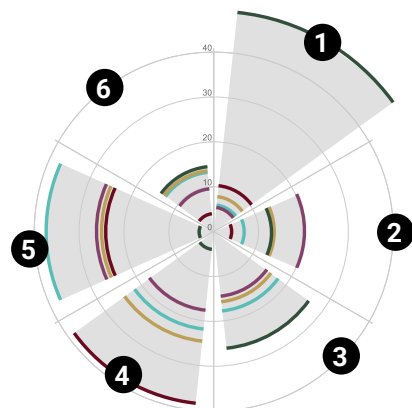
**Spatial:** reducing spatial inequality by ensuring public spaces are equally distributed within the cities

**Social:** re-integration strategies such as improving public spaces and creating shared spaces by reducing car movement, promoting diversity and social programming in public spaces to reduce perception of unsafety and increase “eyes on the street”, improving infrastructure to support the active use of public spaces; and

**Governance:** providing rules of use in public spaces and apply penalties for all forms of violence against women in public space and ensuring maintenance of public spaces in order to avoid them being perceived as abandoned and thus attracting crime and antisocial behaviour.



Percentage of public spaces with safety concerns



- |                                     |               |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Experience of crime / harassment | — Bethlehem   |
| 2. Anti-social behaviours           | — Jenin       |
| 3. Social problems                  | — Nablus      |
| 4. Perception of unsafety           | — Jericho     |
| 5. Infrastructural problems         | — Khan Younis |
| 6. Harassment directed to women     |               |

## Towards child-friendly open public spaces in Sharjah, UAE

The Emirate of Sharjah is committed to providing safe, vibrant, inclusive and resilient open public spaces that are child friendly. A city-wide open public space assessment was conducted for 60 open public spaces within Sharjah City. This is part of the Child-friendly Urban Planning Project by Sharjah Urban Planning Council (SUPC) and Sharjah Child Friendly Office (SCFO) with support from UNICEF and UN-Habitat.

The assessment focused on six main areas: 1) the presence of children in open public spaces, 2) the presence and condition of facilities and services for use in open public spaces, 3) spaces that promote social, emotional, physical and cognitive development for children, 4) accessibility and comfort of open public spaces, 5) safety and security, and 6) climate adaptiveness of the open public spaces. 45 volunteers were trained and conducted the field survey.

When the six dimensions used to assess the open public spaces from a child-friendly perspective were compared, presence of children in open public spaces by gender and

age (42 per cent) and open public spaces that promote social, emotional, physical and cognitive development for children (48 per cent) scored the least. Open public spaces that are not climate adaptive scored the highest (79 per cent). This means that Sharjah needs to put considerations into green networks and nature-based solutions. Additionally, it showed that 45 (75 per cent) open public spaces require moderate upgrading, 15 (25 per cent) require minimal upgrading while none require major improvement. This means that Sharjah could leverage on quick wins and low budget improvement within these spaces and focus on new open public spaces in areas that lack provision while ensuring an interconnection of spaces through streets and green corridors

The assessment informed the development of the Sharjah Child-Friendly Open Public Spaces Guidelines which is intended to act as a starting point for the design and development of child-friendly and family-friendly open public spaces in the Emirate.

### 45 Volunteers

were trained and conducted the field survey

### 60 public spaces

were assessed



## Reclaiming the 'Green City' in Nairobi, Kenya

The first city-wide public space inventory and assessment was piloted in Nairobi in 2015. The 2020 edition is an improvement of the Habitat III Draft, developed in collaboration with the Nairobi City County Government, and has undergone a rigorous review and was subjected to a refined method for City-wide Public Space Assessments. This report highlights the gaps in the distribution, accessibility and quality of public open spaces in Nairobi City County, and provides a starting point to develop an evidence-based strategy and policy for the protection, revitalization, creation, management and enjoyment of public spaces.

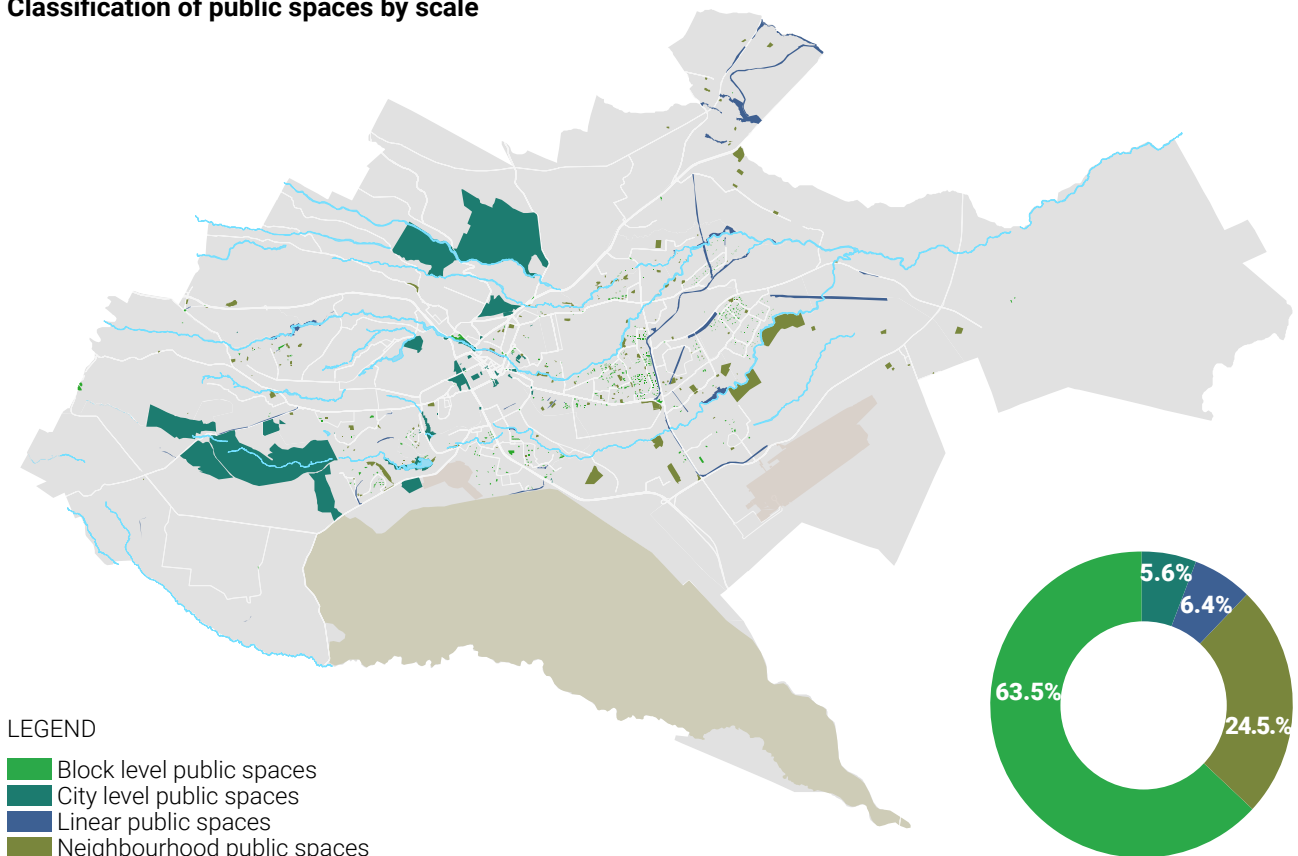
The inventory found that overall, there are 826 public open spaces in Nairobi City County. They occupy a combined area of 3106.4Ha, and include 99 playgrounds, 51 sports fields, 15 parks and 19 gardens. This is equivalent to 5.32 percent of the built-up area. Studies have shown that successful cities have a minimum percentage of 15-20 percent of urban land allocated to public open spaces. This suggests that access to public space across

the urban fabric remains disproportionate. There is a clear need for Nairobi to work towards improving the amount of urban land designated, used and experienced as public space.

The report has been published at a time when Nairobi is taking unprecedented steps in becoming a pioneer for safe, inclusive and accessible green and public spaces among African cities. The restoration and revitalization of green, and public spaces is one of the chief priorities for the city and is led by both the Nairobi Metropolitan Services and the Ministry of Environment and Forestry. The Cabinet Secretary also acknowledged the need to improve accessibility at the neighbourhood level.

**“As we lead the green renaissance, we will shift focus to neighbourhood level green, and public spaces to connect neighbourhoods and open up informal settlements, taking the co-benefits of green and public spaces where they are needed the most.”** -- Cabinet Secretary of Nairobi

### Classification of public spaces by scale



#### LEGEND

- Block level public spaces
- City level public spaces
- Linear public spaces
- Neighbourhood public spaces

# PUBLIC SPACE SITE-SPECIFIC ASSESSMENT

## ACHIEVING QUALITY PUBLIC SPACES

The Public Space Site-specific Assessment aims to assess the quality of a selected public space and its five-minutes-walking radius (equivalent to 400 meters). The process uses innovative and participatory activities and tools to gather data on safety, inclusivity and accessibility. The result from the assessment is a collection of qualitative and quantitative information gathered by and with the community, and a set of recommendations that inform the final design.

UN-Habitat has now anchored the site-specific assessment methodology into the planning process for public space upgrading. All projects, including the ones funded by the Block by Block Foundation, are encouraged to properly evaluate the quality of public spaces, both before the co-design phase and after implementation. Involving citizens from early stage allows the integration of empirical data and users' perception into the assessment, leading to better contextualized design solutions.

### Driven by digital - Improving the ways we work during COVID-19

The role of digital technology in development has amplified during the pandemic. Open source and digital tools such as Kobo Toolbox, online questionnaires, collaborative online platforms and smartphone applications have allowed us to reach a larger group of stakeholders and analyse data virtually during COVID-19. Local governments and partners have been able to keep the momentum going, assessing public spaces with the community from their homes. This proves how innovation enables governments to keep functioning in a sustainable and inclusive manner even during periods of pandemic, crisis or emergency.

In 2020



12

### ASSESSMENTS

were conducted in 5 countries to measure the quality of public spaces



4

### TRAININGS

were conducted with local governments and community members



### 200+ DATA COLLECTORS

were engaged in the process to assess public spaces



**Community-led public space assessment in Suleja, Nigeria**

Suleja faces several urban challenges, including inadequate provision of basic services, a poor mobility system, an absence of urban data and lack of policies and urban strategies. In its effort to create more sustainable cities, the Suleja Emirate have been strengthening their city redevelopment programmes including public spaces.

To enhance the public space network, the city carried out two types of assessments; at the city and the neighbourhood level. The objective was to assess the availability and the quality of open spaces in order to frame contextualised strategies and recommendations.

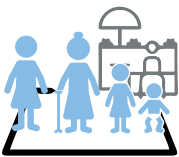
Over a period of seven days, the data collectors applied the [site-specific assessment](#) activities

by visiting the site six times a day during different hours. Some of the documented data captured the behavioural changes of the users, the shift in activities and the condition of amenities amongst others. Following the data analysis, recommendations were proposed such as:

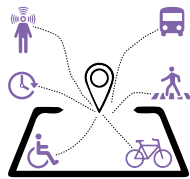
- improving accessibility for women and girls and persons with disability by employing design sensitive solutions
- increasing livelihood opportunities in public spaces for youth
- adding urban amenities to increase comfort in public spaces like solar lighting, waste bins and others
- benefitting from the urban landscape to create an attraction

**Five dimensions to measure good quality public space:**

Use and user



Accessibility



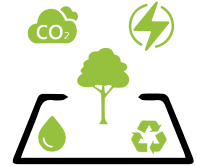
Amenities & furniture



Comfort & safety



Green environment



Women designing a public space on Minecraft in Suleja, Nigeria © UN-Habitat

**“Fair shared city”, towards better quality public spaces in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan**

Bakai-Ata is a new residential settlement in Bishkek with a population of 5,141 people. In 2020, we started a new project entitled “Fair shared city” in collaboration with Urban Initiative with the objective to co-create public spaces that address road safety, sustainability and energy efficiency, safety and inclusion of vulnerable and invisible groups.

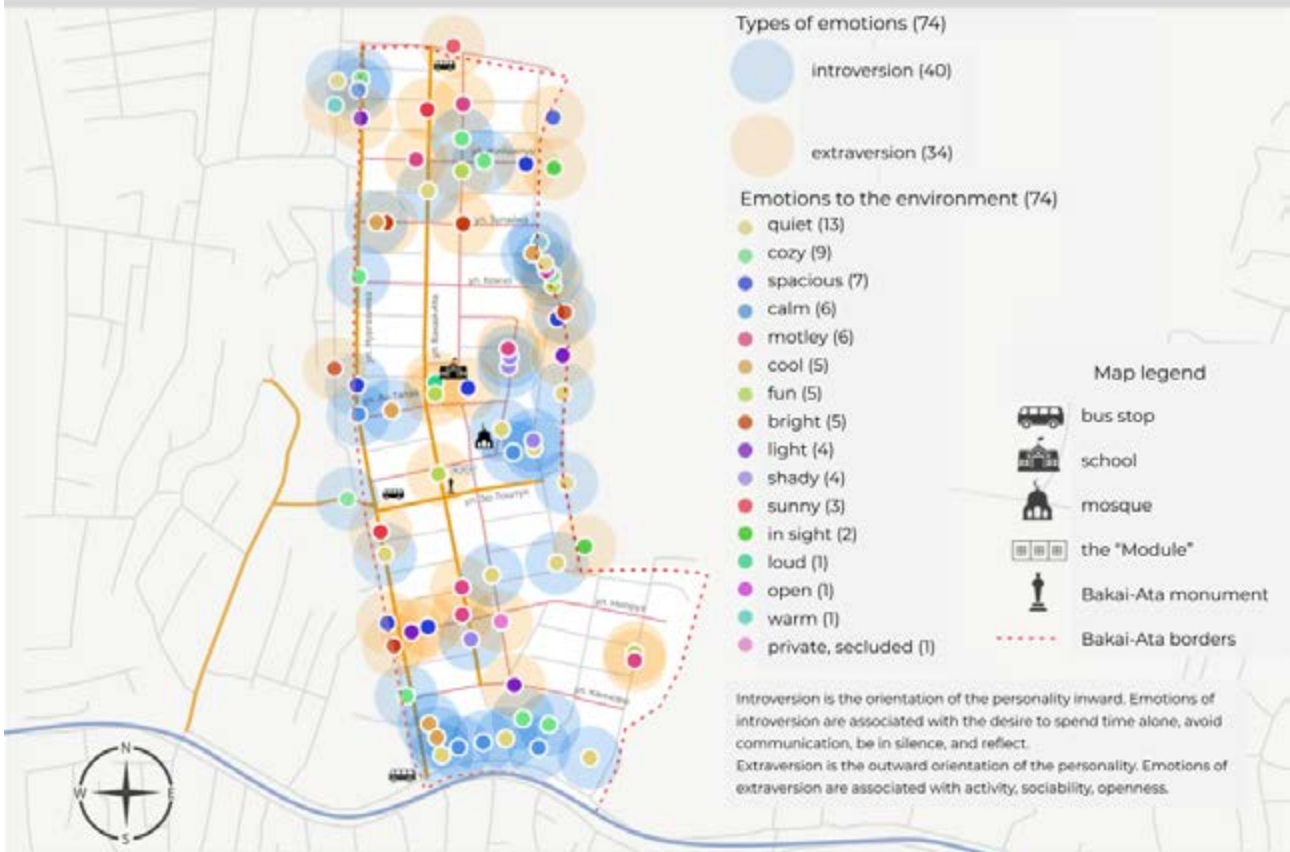
One of the first activities was the site-specific assessment to measure the quality of four public spaces and their 5-minutes walking radius. The local team developed a comprehensive participatory process, involving a women’s committee, youth, children, students, and professionals in urban

conversations, in-depth interviews, interactive games, mental mapping, exploratory walks and participatory clean-up sessions. Two Minecraft workshops were also conducted with the community to co-design the public spaces.

The findings were disseminated during a plenary session identifying key priorities and next steps on a 3D model. The results were compiled into a report and, one month after the community meetings, new signages and street lighting at main Bakai-Ata entrance were already installed. The process is being thoroughly documented in order to develop a toolkit on participatory public space upgrading to be shared with other districts in Bishkek.



Interactive game with teenagers - emotions analysis









# COVID-19 RESPONSE

---



## We supported 10 cities with their Covid-19 response



**10**  
CITIES



**88**  
WORKSHOPS



**6,230**  
PEOPLE  
ENGAGED



**40,000+**  
PEOPLE  
IMPACTED

## LEVERAGING PUBLIC SPACES DURING COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed our relationship with our streets, public spaces and public facilities. The imposed restrictions are disrupting normal life, though are absolutely necessary to prevent the worst public health outcomes from becoming a reality. They are, nonetheless, impacting on people's quality of life and more disproportionately hurting the urban poor, many of whom have lost their livelihoods, and threatening the economy, safety and security, peace and stability of the city. The fight against coronavirus has brought many cities to a standstill.

Physical distancing is reducing intimate personal connections which is exacerbating social isolation and exclusion in our cities. As research shows us, there is a direct correlation between social isolation, loneliness and poor health such as heart disease, dementia and immune dysfunction. The problem with physical distancing and limiting access to public space is that it doesn't reduce demand. People still need to go outside, for essential grocery shopping, to work and study, for play and leisure as well as to socialize and improve their mental health. The need to support cities and local governments in making public spaces part of the response is greater than ever: whether to limit the spread of the virus, or by implementing inclusive and health-minded practices in the best interests of ensuring we do not "leave anyone behind".

The pandemic has demonstrated how unevenly public space is distributed throughout many cities, especially in poor neighbourhoods, where there are few shared spaces such as green spaces, parks or playgrounds. These are important in contributing to reducing stress levels, improving mental health and wellbeing and contributing to children's development.

The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted several gaps in public space including accessibility, flexibility, design, management and maintenance, connectivity and equitable distribution across a city. UN-Habitat has stressed the need to re-prioritise the benefits of public spaces both during and after the pandemic through its *key message on COVID-19 and public space*.

### Key areas of focus for an effective urban response for COVID-19

There are 11 key areas that local and national governments should focus on to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to develop resilience to and preparedness for events of a similar nature. Some of the **short-term interventions** include:

- 01 | **Public spaces are an important asset in a time of crisis** - public spaces are essential in providing space for the swift and rapid establishment of temporary and secondary facilities (e.g. for provision of health care and for food and resource distribution) which may be used longer than originally expected so therefore need to be flexible, multi-functional and adaptable.
- 02 | **Well-connected and integrated system of public spaces including streets** - with roughly half of the global population under lockdown or coming out of lockdown, vehicle traffic has reduced dramatically on our streets and public transit ridership has dropped by as much as 80% in some cities. Cities are temporarily and some even permanently reallocating road space from cars to provide more space for people to move around safely, creating a network throughout the city, easing movement and respecting physical distancing rules. Creating more walkable streets and investing in greening the city results in reduced CO2 emissions and better air quality, which also impacts on people's health and well-being and reduces COVID mortality.
- 03 | **Expand the amount of land allocated to public space including streets** - physical distancing requires the possibilities to leave adequate space between people when out in public space. The amount of land in cities allocated to public space will have to be



extended to be able to create more resilient cities. The expansion of streets for active mobility is seen as an impactful measure to make physical distancing possible on sidewalks, particularly in countries which already have high shares of pedestrians walking on inadequate footpaths, such as in informal settlements and slums.

**04 | Embrace flexibility of functions** – to be resilient in times of crisis, public spaces need to be multi-functional, flexible and continually adapt to the situation. We need to build resilience through agile adaptation, for example, incorporate (temporary) food markets into neighbourhood/community-spaces such as parking lots or streets to decongest existing markets. Transform small neighbourhood spaces into pop-up community health centres, spaces for food distribution or providing space for food gardens in marginalized communities and slums. Programming streets and spaces to allow for organized street vending on select days or times of day, ensuring multi-use and shared use of the spaces. Repurposing street space by expanding sidewalks to facilitate safe walking, skating and jogging, and introducing (temporary) bike lanes to enable safe mobility.

**05 |** Public space and public facilities can **provide essential services** required for marginalized communities during a pandemic – providing clean restroom facilities, water points and handwashing facilities and/or appropriate cleaning products that can help people without access to clean, running water and sanitation facilities to protect themselves.

**06 |** For many, especially the poor, public space is **important for their livelihoods** - some of the most affected in the pandemic are poor families, many of whom depend on public

space for earning a living. Over 60% of urban employment in Africa is in the informal sector. Informal workers produce goods and services that are essential to the functioning of the economy. During a lock-down, it is therefore important to provide a space and allow street vendors to continue to operate. Streets can be adapted to provide space for vendors at a sufficient distance from each other to sell their wares, and protective gear can be provided to allow vendors to continue to earn a living.

**07 |** Public space can be a **platform for sharing** (connecting places and people) - public spaces that remain open for use provide opportunities to share information about prevention measures such as the importance of physical distancing and hand-washing hygiene. Governments can provide clear and accessible information in these public spaces to reduce the spread and impact of disinformation. These spaces can also provide a platform for dialogue and negotiation to enable government and poor and informal workers to discuss and jointly formulate relevant frameworks to prevent the spread of the Corona virus.

### Medium and long-term interventions:

**01 | Equitably distribute public spaces across all scales** -the pandemic has demonstrated how unevenly public space is distributed throughout many of our cities, especially in poor neighbourhoods, where there are few shared spaces such as parks, gardens and playgrounds within a 10-minute walk from home. Whilst parks, green areas and playgrounds are so important in contributing to reducing stress levels, improving mental health and wellbeing and contributing to children's development, they are still considered a privilege. Local governments need to ensure that open spaces are evenly



distributed across the city, connected through a web of streets promoting walking and cycling whilst facilitating physical distancing and guaranteeing the multi-functional, flexible use of public space and streets so as to reduce the spread of the virus but still ensuring that we are not leaving anyone or any place behind.

## 02 | **Plan for the self-sufficient neighbourhood or “15-minute compact city neighbourhood”**

– with the pandemic and restrictions on movement, the self-sufficient and 15-minute compact city is a model that could contain the spread of the virus as all residents can have all their needs met—be they for work, school, shopping, health, leisure or culture—within 15 minutes of their own doorstep. This can only function if there is an equitable distribution of essential services, streets and public spaces.

## 03 | **The design, materials used and management and maintenance of public space**

is key in fighting the spread of the Corona virus. As COVID-19 is an airborne virus, and may be passed through contaminated surfaces, public space should be designed so as to allow for physical distancing and public space managers need to ensure that these spaces can be cleaned frequently and thoroughly, particularly high-touch surfaces like doors, handles, and furniture.

## 04 | **Build “social resilience”** - The COVID-19 virus has both negative and positive impacts on how people interact with each other in public, and as part of a social fabric. The pandemic and nature of the virus affects the way we socialise, challenging existing cultural and familiar practices, which can create tensions in public spaces. The social and connection elements of public

spaces remain important and can serve to strengthen resilience in communities, i.e. balconies above streets, where community members gather to socialise with one another, neighborhood streets being transformed into cinemas, theatres or gym-classes.

Finally, the experience from the COVID pandemic, may lead to richer partnerships across sectors, from health care to public housing authorities, to community development finance and community-based organizations, to philanthropy and research which can influence policy. Systemic change doesn't happen without supportive policy. Creating a shared policy agenda where urban planning, community development, architecture, green building, public health — all have incentives to work toward better policies to reduce the spread of the COVID virus.

## Block by Block Foundation supporting cities with Covid-19 response

This year, the Block by Block Foundation reallocated a percentage of the 2020 funding to support ten cities in their fight against Covid-19. The small-scale projects are in Mexico, Brazil, Ecuador, Vietnam, Niger, Kenya, India, Indonesia and Bangladesh and addresses a variety of challenges like decongestion and digitization of local markets, increasing hygiene and sanitation in slums, creating livelihood opportunities and raising awareness through culture and art.

The impact of the COVID-19 relief projects can be measured in the short and long-term. The implementation of these small interventions have supported the re-opening of these cities and have allowed communities to regain confidence in being out in the public realm and use public spaces safely for economic and social purposes. Local and national governments have embraced the potential of public spaces as flexible and resilient spaces during emergencies and crisis and understood the need to adopt policies and regulations and invest in scaling up interventions at the city level.

### Why Block by Block decided to fund and support projects for covid-19 response?



Message from James Delaney  
Block by Block chair

This year, more than ever, public spaces have played a vital role in the health and sustainability of urban communities around the world. It is essential that we protect and support these public spaces and equip them to face the unprecedented challenges of Covid-19.

Civic engagement and empowerment are at the heart of our mission. In addition to implementing good quality public spaces, we strive to inspire and enable communities to improve their local areas on their own terms. All ongoing Block by Block projects can direct a portion of their budgets to immediate Covid-19 response activities, allowing local communities help the most people with pressing health, safety, and economic security issues.

For millions around the world, public spaces are key to people's livelihoods, safety and health. Access to and use of quality public spaces is a civic right which must be upheld, particularly in the face of the covid-19 threat. Working with local partners is essential for this process; by supporting networks on a local level, such as street vendors and waste pickers, we are able to provide help to those who need it the most.

## Mobile pop-up playgrounds for children in response to COVID-19 in Hanoi, Vietnam

### Partners:

HealthBridge Vietnam (HBV), Think Playgrounds, Women's Unions, Youth Unions and community leaders.

**In Vietnam, the government has committed to ensuring proper sanitation in public spaces in response to COVID-19. However, the pandemic is having a negative impact on children, both physically and mentally. Hanoi has eased the social distancing order; however, primary school children are still not allowed to go back to school.**

The objective of the joint project with Healthbridge Vietnam was to increase safety and inclusiveness of community playgrounds by promoting physical activities and social connections, mitigating impacts of COVID-19 among children in disadvantaged neighbourhoods; and building capacity for local residents to manage and develop a mobile playground model in their community.



Kids playing in the newly built mobile playground in Hanoi, Vietnam © Healthbridge Vietnam



The model of mobile pop-up playgrounds with recycled and natural materials is very new in Hanoi. At the beginning, it was challenging for residents and the community to accept the idea. The partners had to organize several meetings with 20 community leaders and ward authorities to communicate the benefits of these models. Healthbridge also provided training to 58 playworkers on Covid-19 prevention measures when designing mobile playgrounds. This led to the development of a training curricula that provides information on how to organize and maintain playgrounds during pandemics as well as safety principles.

The mobile pop-up playground is most suitable in small neighbourhood public spaces in highly dense cities where children can easily access the playgrounds while parents watch them from proximity. The use of recycled materials and simple play equipment requires minimum maintenance effort. The community came up with new measures for Covid-19 prevention like requesting kids to wash their hands prior using the playgrounds, identifying zones for individuals and smaller groups and sanitizing the equipment after events.

**Results**



**7**

**MOBILE  
PLAYGROUNDS  
COMPLETED**



**58**

**PLAYWORKER  
TRAINED**



**20**

**COMMUNITY  
LEADERS  
ENGAGED**



**400**

**CHILDREN  
BENEFITED**

Community members engaged throughout the lifecycle of the project in Hanoi, Vietnam © Healthbridge



**Improving livelihood for street vendors in Dhaka and Khulna, Bangladesh**

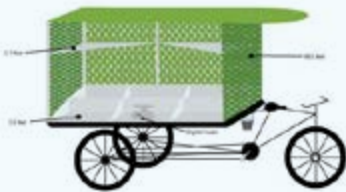
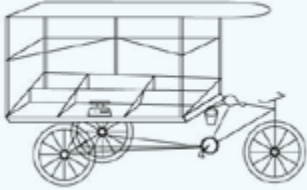
**Partners:**

Prottasha-Anti Drug Club, Ward Councilor Offices, Dhaka North City Corporation, Dhaka South City Corporation, Come for Road Children, Paraa

**Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, congested markets in Dhaka have been relocated into open fields, to enable physical distancing. The temporary markets are currently visited by over 7,000 people per day. Local representatives have been working in the field to raise awareness of the pandemic, however hygiene measures are still poorly maintained, and vendors are facing difficulties operating in open fields.**

Millions of people live in Dhaka’s informal settlements and work in the informal sector. Besides lacking basic services and tenure security, the urban poor lack access to nutritious, safe, and affordable food. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has intensified these vulnerabilities of low-income urban dwellers. Due to the stoppage of work during the lockdown, urban dwellers who survive on daily wages are now living without food and other necessities. The aim of the project was to provide immediate livelihood support to the extreme poor who lost their jobs due to pandemic and to promote health and safety measures among customers and vendors in open/street markets.

One major impact from the intervention is that it helped change the mindset of the community and many partners pledged to replicate similar activities in other neighbourhoods in Bangladesh.



A street vendor receiving a vegetable selling cart © UN-Habitat / Sohel Rana



**Intervention-1: Support to livelihood, healthy measures for customers in temporary markets in Dhaka and Khulna**

UN-Habitat, together with “Pratyasha”, Come for Road Children and city councillors conducted several consultations to understand the needs of the relocated street vendors in Dhaka and Khulna. Based on a needs assessment, 200 umbrellas were distributed to protect vendors from the scorching heat of the sun and rain along with hand soap, masks and awareness building leaflets. Beneficiaries suffering from extreme poverty were also identified and provided with vegetable selling vans to support their economic situation.

**Intervention-2: Livelihood support through urban agriculture in Korail Slum in Dhaka**

Korail Slum is one of the largest slums in Bangladesh with more than 50,000 people. Many slum dwellers use the unused land along the lakeside for small scale vegetable farming to support their livelihoods. UN-Habitat together with Paraa, a voluntary research organization, provided a variety of seasonal vegetable seeds to the extreme poor coupled with training on farming.

**Results**



**9  
COMMUNITY  
WORKSHOPS  
CONDUCTED**



**200  
SHADING UNITS  
DISTRIBUTED**



**200  
PEOPLE  
ENGAGED**



**9,600  
BENEFICIARIES**



Open field street vendors using the umbrellas provided by UN-Habitat © UN-Habitat / Sohel Rana





Women receiving vegetable seeds for agriculture in Korail Slum, Bangladesh © UN-Habitat / Sohel Rana



## A kit to feed children's imaginations in Sao Paulo, Brazil

### Partners:

AVINA, Movimento Boa Praça,  
PAC Foundation

## 470 families

received kits to stimulate cognitive and emotional development of children living in confined spaces

## 30 people volunteered

to prepare and deliver the kits to 473 families in Pirituba, Sao Paulo.

**The Pirituba neighbourhood, in the north of São Paulo, is one of the most populated in the city. A large portion of household heads lost their jobs due to the pandemic and hundreds of boys and girls are found isolated in precarious, overcrowded houses. Also, the adults were unable to give care and attention, and do activities with the kids. The project aims to feed children's creativity by distributing kits that stimulates cognitive and emotional development of the youngest in confined spaces.**

Baskets were assembled and delivered by 30 volunteers to 473 families in Sao Paulo. Each basket contained (i) materials to express (wax pencils, coloured pen, markers, scissors, glue, etc); (ii) materials to invent (elastic bands, string, cloth, cardboard, wooden sticks and hooks, and pieces of wallpaper); (iii) a booklet containing stories, activities and a diary for kids to express their thoughts and (iv) a "nature kit" with flowers, logs, seeds and natural elements, as well as a doll made of birdseed that, when watered, grows green "hair". A manual is being digitalised and distributed online for free so that other families have access to quality information and recreational activities to do with their children.

The materials allowed children to express and occupy themselves in a playful way and stimulate their imagination. The reaction and the use of the Kits by the children proved that low-cost, creativity-boosting materials are highly effective to fight anxiety and stress among confined children.



Family receiving a "kit to feed children's imaginations" in Sao Paulo © Movimento Boa Praça



## Covid Proofing of Public Spaces in Bhopal informal settlements, India

### Partners:

Healthbridge, CFI Trust

# 3,000+

## people engaged

through community consultation, volunteer training, mask distribution, vendor engagements.

**The city of Bhopal in India, with over 1,7 million inhabitants, has been affected by the pandemic, particularly threatening the congested informal settlements. The project targets several informal settlements around the city and aims to improve accessibility to public spaces, to sustain livelihoods and to maintain social cohesion during times of physical distancing.**

The project was implemented over a period of 3 months, with specific objectives to provide opportunities for socializing during the COVID-19 pandemic, by improving public spaces and making them safe for people in 10 informal settlements. The objectives were achieved by providing hand washing kiosks as hygiene centers, providing face masks to high risks populations and increasing the number of meeting spaces in the slums by installing benches in prominent public spaces within the settlements to encourages social distancing practice.

Maintaining physical distancing during the lifecycle of the project was challenging, especially during community consultations. The partners had to restrict the number of gathering to 10 people per meeting, therefore increasing the numbers of consultations in order to reach out to more community members.

While this project was a relief, at a time of uncertainty and confusion, and was critical in reclaiming open public spaces and addressing fears of social distancing, the main takeaways identified by the partner were twofold. The first being a clear gap in people from lower income groups being able to access public spaces and the second being the lack of quality public spaces in informal settlements.



Volunteers distributing facial masks in one of the informal settlements in Bhopal, India © Healthbridge





Door to door capacity building on hygiene practices and Covid-19 prevention measures © Healthbridge

**Supporting market vendors' relocation to open fields in Kisumu, Kenya**

**Main partners:**

Humanity for Children, City of Kisumu

**Other partners:**

Kenya Red Cross services, Artist group, Nyalenda Young Turks, Dawn of Obunga, Youth for sustainable development, Lela Multipurpose youth group, Maseno University School of Urban Planning and Architecture, The Assistant County Commissioners, Kondele Social Justice Center, Branded solutions, Janafa Foundation, Kisumu Caritas, Kefeado, Grassroots foundation, Governance Watch, Radio Sky, Josra foundation, Market leaders, Shofco.

**Kisumu is one of the hardest-hit areas in Kenya with a twin tragedy of the pandemic and flooding. The city, in collaboration with a wide range of partners, is currently implementing a raft of measures including creation of temporary bicycle lanes and temporary public markets to facilitate physical distancing and safe movement of people. The aim of the project is to build on the current effort of the city to decongest markets, sensitize the public on Covid-19 and use public art as awareness raising.**

UN-Habitat, together with Humanity for Children, conducted seven sensitization meetings, engaged with 8 local artists who have completed a graffiti mural that portrays a message on covid-19 and provided shading facilities for vendors. Street vendors are considered 'informal' in Kisumu, for that, the Global Public Space Programme is supporting the establishment of a street vendors governance structure. The process to formalise street trading often requires time, however both the city and the county assembly acknowledge the necessity to legitimise alternative employment for livelihood support during covid-19.

Collaboration and partnership were key to reducing duplication while encouraging resource sharing and increasing response coverage. The engagement of different partners in the process has enhanced delivery of awareness campaigns against covid-19. Another main takeaway that was highlighted by partners, is the importance of protecting open public spaces to decongest markets including streets which offer a safe space for traders.

**Results**



**15  
SENSITIZATION  
MEETINGS**



**8  
ARTISTS ENGAGED**



**512  
PEOPLE  
VOLUNTEERED**



Distribution of hand sanitizers to community members © YSD-Kisumu





Artist painting a Covid-19 awareness message on a mural in Kisumu, Kenya © Humanity for Children

## Increasing Hygiene in local markets in Niamey, Niger

**Partners:**

Public Spaces for All (PSA),  
HealthBridge, 5 local markets

**In Niger, the government has enacted several actions in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 including compulsory hygiene measures in markets, shops, restaurants, and public and private services. The markets are now being closed at early hours to allow the Municipality to disinfect and thoroughly clean the markets. Unfortunately, except for the Grand Marché, there were no hand washing facilities at the entrance and exits of the local markets across Niamey.**

**Results**



**30**

**WASHING FACILITIES  
MANUFACTURED**



**1250**

**PEOPLE RECEIVED  
AWARENESS  
TRAINING**



**23**

**MARKET  
COMMITTEES  
ENGAGED**



**150**

**USERS PER  
DAY PER  
MARKET**

One of the challenges faced during the project implementation was the lack of trust in the government-imposed prevention measures. Community members expressed their confusion around the ban of gatherings yet keeping markets open knowing people come in bigger numbers to buy food from these facilities. For that, it was important to launch a campaign for 23 days to communicate to users and vendors about the pandemic and the importance of practicing good hygiene to prevent the spread of the virus.

The project targeted five local public markets that were selected through an engagement process with market managers across Niamey. Following the identification of gaps and needs, several meetings were held with users and vendors to educate them on the modes of contamination and how to use the 30 handwashing stations that were manufactured. Located at the entrance and exist of the five markets, the stations are accompanied with infographics, a box of soap, a bucket to collect water and sanitizers.



*Washing facilities with hygiene infographics; Niamey, Niger © PSA*





Women washing her hands at the entrance of a local market in Niamey, Niger © PSA



**Faces of COVID-19: Providing safe spaces for LGBTQI+ community in Quito, Ecuador**

**Partners:**

Dialogo Diverso, Ministry of Culture, Secretariat of Social Inclusion, Local artists, Trans Memories Contemporary Art Center of Quito, City Museums Foundation, LGBTQI+ Community



**COVID-19 has had an unprecedented effect on the daily lives of everyone. The impact of the virus is widespread and individuals from marginalised or disadvantaged groups who already experience poorer outcomes in healthcare are often disproportionately affected by the current situation. Aside from the risk of contracting COVID-19, the health and wellbeing of LGBTQI+ people may be affected by the safety measures which have been implemented. Strategies such as social isolation can have a greater impact on some LGBTQI+ people who are more likely to be socially isolated. The project aims to advocate and share key messages on COVID-19, raising the voice of the LGBTQI+ community in the neighbourhood of La Mariscal, Quito (Ecuador), creating urban art and providing protection masks.**

“Faces of COVID-19” project leverages on the use of public spaces to make vulnerable groups visible. The illustrations on the mural were the outcome of an engagement process with citizens, including the LGBTQI+ community, who expressed their ideas to a local artist. As a result, two murals were painted, one entitled “Faces of Covid-19” and the other “Trans Memories” that highlights the daily challenges of LGBTQI+ community, making them more visible and considered in the public realm. Art is a process by which reality can be represented. It is a social and advocacy manifestation and an important means to raise the voices of the most vulnerable groups.”

**Results**



**100**  
**PROTECTION**  
**LGBTQI+ MASKS**  
**DELIVERED**



**22,100**  
**PEOPLE REACHED**  
**ON SOCIAL MEDIA**



**66**  
**PEOPLE ENGAGED**



Trans Memories Mural in Quito, Ecuador © Dialogo Diverso





# GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE

New normative and operational tools were added in 2020 to support local and national governments and other partners in scaling up efforts to achieve Goal 11.7, making public spaces more safe, inclusive, accessible and green. The Global Public Space Programme believes that normative and operational work delivers greater impact when multi-stakeholder partnerships underpin tool development, testing innovative approaches and project implementation.

The role that local authorities play in utilizing UN-Habitat normative products is vital in supporting

country and city level projects that result in transformative change. Member states and urban managers are now better informed and have access to normative products to help their cities develop inclusive public spaces at the city and neighbourhood level. The HerCity Digital Toolbox is being tested in South Africa, and the Public Space Assessment Framework and City-wide Strategies are being applied in UAE, Palestine, Uruguay, Colombia and Dominican Republic.

## UN-HABITAT GUIDANCE ON COVID-19 AND PUBLIC SPACE

As part of the agency's COVID-19 response, the Global Public Space Programme prepared a guidance note on COVID-19 and public space. It provides 11 key areas that local and national governments should focus on to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to develop resilience to and preparedness for events of a similar nature.



## BLOCK BY BLOCK TRAINING KIT

The Block by Block Training Kit outlines the Global Public Space Programme's approach to using Minecraft as a participatory tool for co-designing public spaces. The publication provides the user with a step-by-step approach to plan, design, develop, implement, monitor and evaluate public spaces with and by the community. Training Kit emphasis on how to do engagement processes using gaming, making the silent voices in the community heard.

## HERCITY DIGITAL PLATFORM (TESTING)

HerCity is a digital and innovative platform that improves citizens' participation in planning processes, starting with girls. Developed in collaboration with Global Utmaning, the toolbox provides users with best practices, digital tools and a methodology to prioritise, plan, develop and implement public spaces for and with girls.

## THE HIDDEN WEALTH OF CITIES: CREATING, FINANCING, AND MANAGING PUBLIC SPACES

The Programme contributed with three chapters to the publication led by the World Bank. The purpose of the publication is to learn how city leaders, policymakers, and urban practitioners can better plan, finance, and manage both government- and privately owned public spaces to achieve liveable cities for all.

# GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE

## **CITY-WIDE PUBLIC SPACE ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT**

### A GUIDE TO COMMUNITY-LED DIGITAL INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC SPACES

The toolkit's purpose is to guide cities when conducting a city-wide public space assessment. It illustrates the steps that should be followed within the process to ensure that public space assessments meet the objectives of the city. By applying this tool, cities can understand the network, distribution, accessibility, quantity and quality of their public spaces.

## **CITY-WIDE PUBLIC SPACE STRATEGIES**

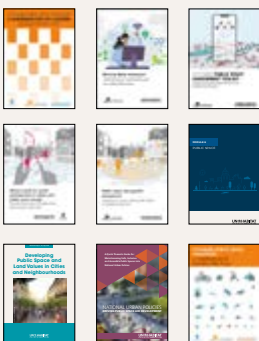
### A GUIDEBOOK FOR CITY LEADERS

This guidebook provides city leaders and decision-makers with the knowledge and the necessary tools to develop and implement city-wide public space strategies. A thorough strategy offers cities an action-oriented approach encompassing not only spatial goals, but governance arrangements, implementation plans, budgetary needs, and measurable indicators.

## **CITY-WIDE PUBLIC SPACE STRATEGIES**

### A COMPENDIUM OF INSPIRING PRACTICES

The compendium offers summaries and assessments of 26 strategies from different cities around the world. It helps to understand the approach that cities across the world have taken when developing public space strategies, including spatial scales, financial mechanisms, governance, alignment with planning documents and monitoring approaches.



## **PUBLIC SPACE TRAINING MODULES**

Throughout the years, the Global Public Space Programme developed a set of principles, guidelines and tools to assess, plan, implement and manage quality public space using innovative and inclusive processes and methodologies. The latter were compiled in modules to train, build capacity and share knowledge with local authorities, partners, academia and/or grassroots organisations amongst others.



# GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE

## THE JOURNAL OF PUBLIC SPACE

The [Journal of Public Space](#), launched at Habitat III in Quito, is a research project developed by City Space Architecture, a non-profit organization based in Italy, in partnership with UN-Habitat. The Journal is a dedicated open access journal, providing a platform for researchers, showcasing promising practices and informing discussion about issues related to public space.

In 2020, two special volumes were released, one on Placemaking in Arab Cities and the other on public health and wellbeing in public spaces. The Journal also launched a series of Webinars jointly developed by City Space Architecture and the School of Architecture at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, under the title "A Year without Public Space under the COVID-19 Pandemic" (Link [here](#)).

### [Placemaking in Arab Cities](#)

### [Public Health and Well-being in Public Open Spaces through Climate Responsive Urban Planning and Design](#)

## MEDIA COVERAGE

### ARTICLES

[UN-Habitat convenes virtual workshop on improving air quality and public space monitoring in European cities](#)

[Nairobi's share of Green Public spaces less than Global average](#)

[Kenyan industries hastening swift to energy efficiency](#)

[Citizens must be involved in planning, building our cities](#)

[Gamification in Urban Planning: Participation through Minecraft](#)

[Doppelganger and digital twins, urban glimpses and drawing data](#)

[The digital building blocks of better communities](#)

[Designed in Minecraft, built IRL](#)

[Nairobi's Disappearing Public Spaces - UN Report](#)

# GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE



Archdaily, one of the most visited architecture weblog worldwide, has teamed up with UN-Habitat to bring weekly news, articles, and interviews that highlight the Global Public Space Programme's work, processes and methodologies, developed by Archdaily's editors.

- 01 | [11 Steps to Achieve Quality Public Spaces at a Neighbourhood Level: UN-Habitat's guideline](#)
- 02 | [Lessons from UN-Habitat: how to design spaces for and with the People](#)
- 03 | [How to Design Spaces for Kids in Marginalized areas? 3 examples from UN-Habitat](#)
- 04 | [How can One public space transform an entire Neighbourhood? UN-Habitat's Model Street Initiative](#)
- 05 | [Charaani public strais: emergent vernacular architecture](#)

## VIDEOS

[Block by Block Kosovo: Five years after implementation](#)

[Meet a Minecrafter: Ethiopian Park Project](#)

[Tactical interventions with Bakai-Ata neighborhood residents in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan](#)

[Pontus Westerberg: How Video Games Can Push Community-Led Urban Planning](#)



Minecraft workshop in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan © Urban Initiative



# GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE

## EVALUTATION OF MINECRAFT AS A PARTICIPATION TOOL TO CO-DESIGN PUBLIC SPACES

After working with Minecraft as a public participation tool in around 100 projects since 2013, UN-Habitat has significant amounts of observational evidence that the process is effective and makes participation in visioning and urban planning, design of public space more accessible and understandable for citizens.

The purpose of this evaluation was to independently assess the usefulness of Minecraft as a public participation tool in public space projects. The

evaluation informed improvements and changes in the delivery of participatory workshops and the public space programme as a whole.

The evaluation relies on the analysis of three in-depth case studies, 31 key informant interviews, an extensive literature review, assessment of 15 key documents related to the initiative, and feedback from a workshop debriefing exercise. It is guided by 33 questions developed by UN-Habitat and the evaluators.

### Key findings

- 01 |** Block by Block/Minecraft has generated a wide interest and has promoted competencies in participation and urban planning and design among citizens, government officials and professionals from other disciplines thanks to its popularity and creative nature.
- 02 |** Block by Block/Minecraft allows people who are not trained in spatial visualisation to contribute their ideas and to produce physical designs in a more efficient way than other participatory design tools. The game allows participants to better understand urban space than with maps and aerial pictures and provides an alternative to drawing and model building.
- 03 |** The approach is most successful at including the voices of children and youth (as groups that are normally excluded from civic engagement processes). But the tool has also proven to be powerful in the integration of diverse groups of stakeholders, boys and girls, youth and elderly, residents and migrants etc. This refers to including everyone's voices in the process as well as developing public spaces that are inclusive and adequate for all types of users, and that are equipped to protect and empower vulnerable groups.
- 04 |** Minecraft demonstrated that it is a good tool to promote participatory processes. It serves as a catalyst and transformative trigger.
- 05 |** While inclusivity has been successfully promoted by Minecraft, the tool cannot promote this goal in the long term alone. Integration with other methods and monitoring of the nature of the problem of exclusion and self-segregation is needed.
- 06 |** The programme's partnership strategy is very successful. It promotes efficiency, sustainability, and mainstreaming.

# GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE

## TRAINING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS: THE ARAB STATES REGIONAL WORKSHOP

The Global Public Space Programme organized regional trainings targeting local governments and relevant partners to increase awareness and technical skills regarding public space definitions, principles, methodologies and tools. Two Regional Workshops for the Arab States were delivered with the participation of local governments, UN agencies, academia, practitioners and relevant stakeholders.

The objectives of the training were:

- 01 |** Understand the current situation and identify challenges from a regional and local perspective for quality public spaces
- 02 |** Link Public Space regional agendas to achieve both Agenda 2030 and New Urban Agenda
- 03 |** Increase awareness about the importance of accessible, safe and inclusive public spaces to achieve sustainable communities and cities
- 04 |** Provide practical tools and good practices to regional practitioners and local government officials to improve accessibility, safety and inclusivity of public spaces at the city-wide level

Some topics highlighted during both trainings were around the issue of maintenance and management and the need to shift mindsets to preserve public spaces in cities. Moving forward, the trainees recognized the need for more policies and regulations that address those issues and allow better public and private partnerships to facilitate the development and improvement of public spaces.



# GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE

## 70% women's participation

*in both trainings delivered by the Global Public Space Programme. Participants were trained on how to develop actionable ideas to improve the availability, quality and distribution of good public spaces in their cities.*



Trainees working on an online collaboration platform, Jordan © UN-Habitat



Trainees during the opening session in Amman, Jordan © UN-Habitat

## 160 participants

*attended the two workshops including participants from local governments, UN agencies, academia, urban practitioners and relevant stakeholders. Due to Covid-19 restrictions on travel and gatherings, majority of the participants attended the trainings virtually.*



# LIST OF DONORS

The Global Public Space Programme is funded by an innovative mix of traditional development aid funding, foundation finance and contributions by the private sector.

UN-Habitat would like to extend the deepest gratitude to our funders, partners and co-financiers who support us to grow the Global Public Space Programme’s portfolio and improve the lives of millions of urban residents across the world.



## CO-FINANCIERS



## CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED (2019–2020)

	DONOR	COUNTRY	PROJECT NAME		BUDGET	CO-FUNDING
Funding received in 2019	Block by Block	Kosovo	rePublic Spaces	EC Ma Ndryshe + municipality	\$84,970	\$25,000
	Block by Block	Bangladesh	Reclaiming small public spaces in Dhaka	WBBT	\$80,750	\$44,165
	Block by Block	Vietnam	Low-cost, safe, inclusive public spaces	Healthbridge, municipality	\$90,385	\$84,984
	Block by Block	Guinea	Regaining rights to Conakry City	Ministry (MVAT)	\$85,000	\$50,000
	Block by Block	Nepal	Public space management through local efforts	LWF, Municipality	\$85,000	\$114,286
	Block by Block	Ethiopia	Implementation of Peacock public space	SIDA	\$150,000	\$1,000,000
Funding received in 2020   Co-funding (2020-2021)	Block by Block	Mexico	Food Security and Economic Reactivation	AVINA	\$10,000	\$3,000
	Block by Block	Brazil	A kit to feed children's imaginations	AVINA	\$10,000	\$3,000
	Block by Block	Vietnam	Ten pop-up or mobile playgrounds		\$10,000	
	Block by Block	India	Accessing public spaces in informal settlements		\$6,000	
	Block by Block	Niger	Increasing Hygiene in local markets		\$4,000	
	Block by Block	Bangladesh	Improving livelihood for street vendors	DNNC	\$6,000	\$3,000
	Block by Block	Indonesia	Ketandan Peoples Learning Centre		\$6,000	
	Block by Block	Indonesia	Digitalise Traditional Market		\$8,000	
	Block by Block	Kenya	Supporting market vendors' relocation		\$10,000	
	Block by Block	Ecuador	Supporting LGBTQ community		\$8,000	
	Block by Block	South Africa	Indlela Yabafazi- Women's Way	JDA	\$62,000	\$92,000
	Block by Block	Mozambique	Supporting Post Disaster Recovery	UNH	\$78,976	\$40,900
	Block by Block	Ethiopia	Ethiopia national programme	City	\$150,000	\$100,000
	Block by Block	Bangladesh	Activating streets and footpaths as public spaces	WBBT	\$77,768	\$34,230
	Block by Block	Kyrgyzstan	Inclusive Public Spaces – Fair Shared City	Urban initiative	\$65,920	\$3,860
	Block by Block	Vietnam	Redesigning open street market in Tan Mai ward	Healthbridge	\$55,507	\$28,689
	UNH Somalia	Somaliland	Beachfront design in Berbera, Somaliland		\$15,000	
	IDB	Montevideo Santo Domingo Monteria	City-wide public space assessments in 3 cities		\$125,000	
	UNICEF	UAE	Sharjah child-friendly spaces project		\$75,000	
	SIDA		Support to staff time 2020		\$81,200	
UNH Palestine	Palestine	city-wide public space assessments in 5 cities		\$19,500		
UNH Afghanistan	Afghanistan	city-wide public space assessment in Kabul		\$19,500		
UN-Habitat	Nigeria	Site specific assessment and Block by Block workshop in Suleja		\$14,600		
Global Utmaning and Vinnova	Multi	HerCity digital Toolbox (2020-2021)		\$110,000		
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>\$1,027,971</b>	<b>\$1,627,114</b>





Reclaiming streets as public space in Hanoi, Vietnam © Healthbridge Vietnam



# PROGRAMME STAFF 2020

A gender-balanced, geographically diverse team of experts supported by local partners now leads the Programme in and across the 49 countries and territories we currently serve.

## Team in Nairobi

---



**Cecilia Andersson**  
Programme Manager



**Pamela Carbajal**  
Urban Health Planner



**Jose Chong**  
Programme Officer



**Lucy Donelly**  
Urban Planner



**Christelle Lahoud**  
Programme Officer



**Chiara Martinuzzi**  
Architect



**Joy Mutai**  
Landscape Architect



**Mark Ojal**  
Urban Designer



**Maia Smillie**  
Architect



**Mario Tavera**  
GIS Analyst



**Mitiku Woldensenbet**  
Architect

in Mexico city

in Dhaka

in Barcelona

---



**Eugenio Gastelum**  
Digital Technologies  
Specialist



**Sohel Rana**  
Capacity Development  
Specialist



**Pontus Westerberg**  
Programme officer  
(Advisor role)

Cecilia Andersson

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

P.O. Box 30030, GPO Nairobi 00100, Kenya

Tel: +254 20 762 4570

Email: [cecilia.andersson@un.org](mailto:cecilia.andersson@un.org)

[www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org)

