CHINA 2026-2029

UN-HABITAT

COUNTRY PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

“A better quality of life for all in an urbanizing world.”

UN-HABITAT

UN-Habitat China Office Country Programme Overview

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Thanks are extended to national and local government partners and other urban stakeholders.
Cover Image: Shenzhen Bay, David from Red Note

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MESSAGE FROM THE COUNTRY MANAGER

Sheng Ying
Country Manager
UN-Habitat China Office

China's urbanization has entered a new phase—shifting from expansion to quality, from infrastructure provision to integrated, people-centered urban systems.

In this transition, the interlinkages between housing, land use, and basic services (HLBS) are becoming increasingly critical. Sustainable urban development is no longer about isolated sectoral improvements, but about how these three dimensions interact to shape inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities.

The UN-Habitat China Office, aligned with the organization's Strategic Plan (2026-2029) and the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP), is committed to supporting China in advancing integrated urban solutions, while sharing its experience globally.

This Country Programme Overview (2026–2029) presents our strategic priorities and programme pipeline, structured around the HLBS framework to ensure systemic impact.

Fig 1: UN-Habitat China Country Team
Source: UN-Habitat China

Fig 2: Guangzhou, China
Source: Cai from Pixabay

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COUNTRY ANALYSIS

China's rapid urbanization has transformed its economic and social landscape, but it has also created new structural challenges:

1) Housing systems under transition: from ownership-driven to more diversified and inclusive models

2) Land use transformation pressures: balancing urban expansion, ecological protection, and rural revitalization

3) Basic service disparities: especially for smaller cities and rural areas

At the same time, emerging drivers such as digitalization, AI, and decarbonization are reshaping how cities are planned, governed, and serviced.

The HLBS framework provides a critical lens to address these interconnected challenges in an integrated manner.

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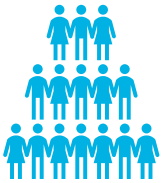
FACTSHEET

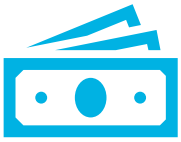


1.40 BILLION

POPULATION (2025)

-2.41 %

POPULATION GROWTH (2025)



13,953 USD

GDP PER CAPTA (2025)

953.80 MILLION

URBAN POPULATION (2025)

67.89 %

URBANIZATION RATE (2025)

10(AVE. 100 CITIES)

HOUSING PRICE-TO-INCOME RATIO (2025)

0.797

HDI INDEX (2023)

23.0% (60+)

AGING RATE (2025)

ABOVE 90%

ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES RATE (2025)

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URBAN CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

CHALLENGE 1: FRAGMENTATION ACROSS HLBS SYSTEMS

Housing, land use, and service provision are often planned separately, leading to inefficiencies.

CHALLENGE 2: CLIMATE PRESSURES ON URBAN SYSTEMS

Urban land use and infrastructure must adapt to climate risks while reducing emissions.

CHALLENGE 3: INEQUALITY IN ACCESS TO SERVICES

Smaller cities and rural areas face gaps in public services.

CHALLENGE 4: GOVERNANCE COMPLEXITY IN LARGE URBAN SYSTEMS

Requires integration of digital tools and cross-sector coordination.

Fig 3: CFCC 2025 EGM2
Source: UN-Habitat China

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HOUSING, LAND AND BASIC SERVICES

China has made remarkable progress in advancing housing provision, optimizing land use, and expanding access to basic urban services. However, as urbanization enters a new phase, the **integration across Housing, Land Use, and Basic Services (HLBS)** has become a critical challenge for achieving inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities.

HOUSING

China's housing system has transitioned from basic provision to a more diversified and market-oriented structure. While homeownership rates are high, emerging challenges highlight the need for a more inclusive approach.

Increasing demand for **affordable rental housing**, particularly in large and megacities

Limited access to adequate housing for **migrant populations and young professionals**

Need to promote **aging-friendly and adaptable housing models**

Transition from quantity-driven development to **quality and livability-oriented housing systems**

LAND USE

Land use in China is undergoing a structural transformation, shifting from expansion-driven development to more efficient, balanced, and sustainable spatial planning.

Tensions between **urban expansion and ecological conservation**

Need for **compact, transit-oriented, and mixed-use development models**

Urban regeneration of **old communities, industrial sites, and urban villages**

Strengthening **urban-rural linkages** to support integrated territorial development

BASIC SERVICES

China has achieved near-universal access to basic services; however, disparities remain in terms of quality, inclusiveness, and efficiency.

Unequal access to **healthcare, education, and social services**, especially for migrant populations

Pressure on infrastructure systems in rapidly growing cities

Need for **smart, digitalized service delivery systems**

Enhancing resilience of services to climate risks and emergencies

INTEGRATED HLBS APPROACH

A key challenge lies not only within each sector, but in the lack of integration across housing, land use, and basic services. Fragmented planning often leads to mismatches—for example, housing developments without adequate services, or infrastructure investments not aligned with spatial planning.

UN-HABITAT CONTRIBUTION

UN-Habitat supports China in advancing an integrated HLBS approach through:

1. **Policy Advisory:**
   Promoting integrated policies that align housing strategies, land use planning, and service delivery systems

2. **Pilot Projects:**
   Demonstrating innovative models that link spatial planning with infrastructure and community services, particularly in urban regeneration and new development zones

3. **Capacity Building:**
   Strengthening the capacity of national and local governments to implement people-centered, data-driven, and climate-responsive urban systems

4. **Knowledge and Global Exchange:**
   Facilitating South-South cooperation and sharing China's HLBS practices with other countries

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CLIMATE

Climate change is increasingly shaping China's urban development trajectory, with cities both contributing to and being highly vulnerable to climate risks. As extreme weather events become more frequent and intense, the resilience of urban systems—particularly housing, land use, and basic services—faces growing pressure.

China has made strong commitments to peak carbon emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060. However, translating these national targets into integrated, local-level action remains a key challenge. Addressing climate change in cities requires not only technological solutions, but also systemic transformation across urban planning, infrastructure, and governance.

CHALLENGE 1: CLIMATE RISKS TO URBAN SYSTEMS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Urban areas in China face growing climate hazards—flooding, heatwaves, and extreme weather—that directly undermine urban system functionality and resilience.

1) Increasing vulnerability of housing and communities, particularly in flood-prone and high-density areas

2) Climate risks affecting critical infrastructure and basic service delivery, including water, transport, and energy systems

3) Limited integration of climate risk assessments into land use planning and urban design

4) Growing need for nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based adaptation

Strengthening climate resilience across HLBS is urgent to ensure risk-informed, adaptive urban development.

CHALLENGE 2: TRANSITION TO LOW-CARBON URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Cities are central to achieving China's dual carbon goals, yet the transition to low-carbon urban systems requires coordinated action across sectors.

1) High carbon emissions associated with urban land use patterns, industrial activities, and buildings

2) Need for low-carbon urban planning models, including compact and transit-oriented development

3) Limited capacity at local levels to implement integrated climate mitigation strategies

4) Gaps in aligning economic development, land use, and infrastructure investment with decarbonization targets

Achieving a low-carbon transition requires linking climate objectives with urban systems—ensuring that housing, land use, and infrastructure development contribute to emissions reduction.

07

RECENT AND ONGOING INTERVENTIONS

1

2025

Future Cities Advisory Outlook 2025: AI and Cities

The project aims to map the transformative role of artificial intelligence in advancing sustainable urban development, providing a comprehensive technology landscape, strategic roadmap, and actionable recommendations for cities.

Impact: The report contributes to shaping the global agenda on AI for sustainable urban development, providing both strategic direction and actionable pathways, while amplifying China's experience as a reference for other countries—particularly in the Global South.

Partners: Leading tech companies; Chinese cities; academic institutions

2

2025

Beijing Future Science City Project

The project aims to document, systematize, and disseminate the 15-year sustainable development practices of Beijing Future Science City, translating China's innovation-driven urban development experience into globally relevant knowledge.

Impact: The report was officially launched at the 2025 World Cities Day Global Observance, providing globally accessible knowledge and China's experience to support sustainable urban development in other countries, particularly in the Global South

Partners: Beijing Municipal Government; Beijing Future Science City Administrative Committee

3

2025-2026

Collaboration with Wuhan Planning and Design Institute Phase II (WPDI)

To strengthen sustainable urban development in Wuhan, this collaboration aims to deepen engagement with WPDI and support the implementation of SDG 11 and the New Urban Agenda in China. It will further develop tailored international knowledge-sharing and dissemination activities focused on wetland urban development and informal settlements.

Imapct: This project establishes a global platform for knowledge exchange on informal settlements and wetland urban development, researches and creates the action plan on the governance of informal settlements in Preach Sihanouk Province, Cambodia, and demonstrates Chinese solutions in global urban governance through South-South cooperation.

Donor: Wuhan Planning and Design Institute

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IMPACT STORY

Toward thinking solutions for urban management and governance

Fig 4&5: CFCC 2025 EGM2
Source: UN-Habitat China

"Participating in CFCC of UN-Habitat EGM on "AI and Cities" is an opportunity for me to exchange and learn. It has greatly enhanced my understanding of AI and other relevant new technologies applications. The issues we discussed are very valuable references for my work on sustainable urban development."

Chen Xueye, Director of Natural Resources Data Management Center at Shenzhen's Urban Planning and Natural Resources Bureau.

Established in April 2019, the UN-Habitat China Future Cities Council (CFCC), as a pioneering platform brings together CEOs and visionary entrepreneurs from China's digital technology sector to contribute forward-thinking solutions for urban management and governance. CFCC champions people-centered urban sustainable development and it demonstrates how technological advancement can serve humanity's urban future while addressing pressing sustainability challenges. The platform's significant global reach is demonstrated by the Future Cities Advisory Outlook (FCAO) 2023 and 2024 online launches, each attracting over 1.3 million viewers worldwide.

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COUNTRY FOCUS

URBAN MANAGEMENT TRANSFORMATION THROUGH INTEGRATED PLANNING AND ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY

Key Action Focus

1. Advance technology driven urban digital management;
2. Improve the equity and accessibility toward inclusive Urban-Rural Linkage and regional integration.

Target

1. Promote digital twin cities using the digital technologies to manage their cities;
2. Strengthen the equity and balance of urban-rural areas and regions;
3. Enhance multi-stakeholder Capacity and Dialogue.

RAPID DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE INCLUDING AGING POPULATION INCREASE AND URBANIZATION

Key Action Focus

1. Promote inclusive urban renewal for renovation of urban old residence areas and urban villages;
2. Empower the people centered public spaces for the vulnerable groups;
3. Utilize digital technology to promote the equal access;
4. Build the multi-stakeholder partnerships to contribute the regional cooperation.

Target

1. Guide the orderly movement of people and ensure the rational distribution of public spaces;
2. Build the inclusive public service network, focused on the aging and low-income groups;
3. Optimize the transportation, energy and risk response resources allocation using the digital technology.

RESILIENT, RISK-INFORMED AND CLIMATE-SENSITIVE BASIC SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Key Action Focus

1. Food waste and Resource Efficiency;
2. Urban Agriculture and Green Roof;
3. Solid Waste and Circular Economy;
4. Walkability and Health Cities.

Target

1. Improve the capacity of central and local governments for the resource efficiency and the recycling;
2. Enhance the quality of life for the citizens, reduce the impact of environmental pollution on the people;
3. Promote the social inclusiveness for the vulnerable groups, and encourage the public participation;
4. Facilitate knowledge exchange for multi-stakeholders related to the basic service.

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PLANNED INTERVENTIONS

1 AI-Enabled Urban Governance and Service Delivery

Project's Aim: Developing UN-Habitat China Future Cities Council (CFCC) as a globally influential knowledge center and cooperation platform for people-centered smart cities, and empowering cities worldwide to leverage digital technologies and innovative governance models to address urban management transformation challenges.

Relevance to Regional Implementation Plan: Urban management transformation through integrated planning, participatory governance and advanced technology.

Aditional Priorities: Resilient, risk-informed and climate-sensitive housing and community for all.

TOTAL BUDGET: 1.5 M USD

TIME FRAME: 2026 - 2029

LOCATION: CHINA

OUTPUT, OUTCOME AND IMPACT:

Outputs:
1. AI-based service delivery platforms in 5 pilot cities;
2. Training for local government officials, urban managers and technical experts;
3. Development of national guidelines.

Outcome:
Improved efficiency and inclusiveness of urban services.

Impact:
Scalable model for smart service delivery.

HLBS Contribution:
Directly strengthening basic services systems.

Fig 6: Coordination Meeting of CFCC Partners and Cambodia Smart Cities Project
Source: UN-Habitat China

Fig 7: Share Chinese innovative solutions to AP region partners
Source: UN-Habitat China

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PLANNED INTERVENTIONS

2 The Aging Opportunity Initiative: Co-creating Aging-Inclusive Cities

Project's Aim: To enhance the resilience and governance capacity of Chinese cities and communities in response to population aging by leveraging rural revitalization and integrated urban-rural development.; and translate China's practices into public knowledge products for global reference, particularly for cities in the Asia-Pacific region facing similar challenges.

Relevance to Regional Implementation Plan: Response to rapid demographic change including population increase and aging.

Aditional Priorities: Resilient, risk-informed and climate-sensitive housing and community for all; and urban management transformation through integrated planning, participatory governance and advanced technology.

TOTAL BUDGET: 1.5 M USD

TIME FRAME: 2026 - 2029

LOCATION: CHINA

OUTPUT, OUTCOME AND IMPACT:

Outputs:
1. An aging-inclusive communities guideline and 3 good practice report;
2. A toolkit or assessment report for aging-inclusive cities/communities;
3. Support for 30 old persons to engage in urban regeneration decision-making activities.

Outcome:
Equitable public services and social welfare for inclusive and sustainable development.

Impact:
more inclusive and sustainable urban living environment for all residents.

HLBS Contribution:
Improve elderly-related basic services.

Fig 8: Industrial empowerment in rural revitalization contributes to the improvement of residents' life satisfaction
Source: UN-Habitat China

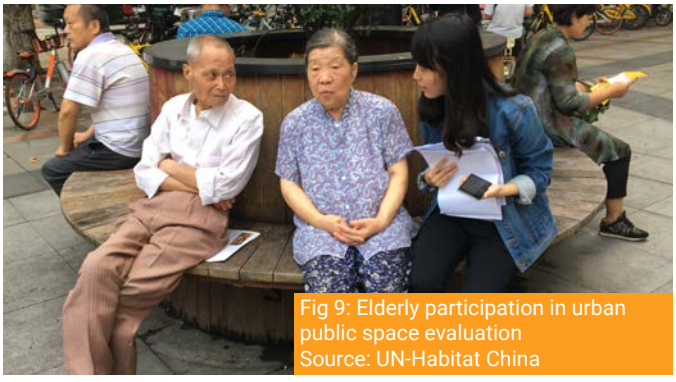

Fig 9: Elderly participation in urban public space evaluation
Source: UN-Habitat China

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PLANNED INTERVENTIONS

3 Rooted Resilience: Leveraging Local Knowledge for Globally Shared Models of Urban-Nature Harmony

Project's Aim: To establish a robust international knowledge exchange and peer-learning platform that facilitates two-way dialogue between Chinese cities and their global counterparts; and to leverage UN-Habitat's global expertise and normative frameworks as key resources to enhance the capacities of Chinese stakeholders in ecological restoration, resource circularity, healthy urban environments, and sustainable spatial planning.

Relevance to Regional Implementation Plan: Harmonized co-existence of cities and nature and preservation of cultural diversity.

Aditional Priorities: Universal access to resilient, risk-informed and climate-sensitive basic services and infrastructures.

TOTAL BUDGET: 1 M USD

TIME FRAME: 2026 - 2029

LOCATION: CHINA

OUTPUT, OUTCOME AND IMPACT:

Outputs:
1. 3 Good practice reports and 1 guidelines/toolkit that summarizes innovative and ecological solutions for waste management, food waste, urban agriculture;
2. Dialogues and/or seminars that exchange knowledge with stakeholders from 15 cities.

Outcome:
Increased dissemination and awareness of knowledge on sustainable urbanization.

Impact:
Replicable experiences shared.

HLBS Contribution:
Improved basic service for all residents.

Fig 10: International partners visit Chaoyang Circular Economy Park
Source: UN-Habitat China

Fig 11: UN-Habitat's workshop in Beijing on municipal solid waste management.
Source: UN-Habitat China

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PUBLICITY AND OUTREACH

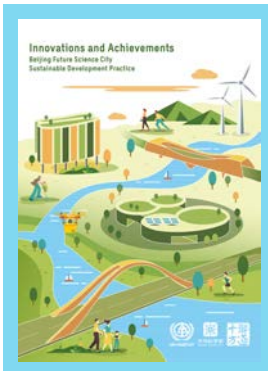
These knowledge products translate China's urban development experience into globally relevant solutions, supporting cities worldwide in advancing inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable urban futures.

Report 1: Future Cities Advisory Outlook 2025: AI and Cities (2025)

Provides a forward-looking analysis of how artificial intelligence is transforming urban development, offering a comprehensive technology landscape, strategic roadmap, and actionable pathways for sustainable cities.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Introduces a comprehensive AI technology landscape for urban sustainability;
- Proposes a strategic roadmap for AI-enabled urban transformation;
- Promotes people-centered and data-driven urban governance models;
- Features global initiatives and Chinese case studies, supporting scalable solutions.



Report 2: Beijing Future Science City Sustainable Development Practices: Innovations and Achievements (2025)

Documents 15 years of sustainable development practices in Beijing Future Science City, showcasing an innovation-driven model integrating technology, ecology, and urban systems.

HIGHLIGHTS:

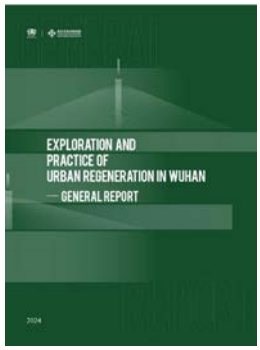
- Systematizes 15 years of integrated development experience, aligned with SDGs;
- Provides a full-cycle indicator and implementation framework;
- Demonstrates green building and sponge city practices;
- Presents a replicable model for innovation-driven, low-carbon urban districts.

Report 3: Municipal Solid Waste Integrated Disposal "Chaoyang Practice" (2024)

Presents Beijing Chaoyang's innovative and scalable approach to circular urban solid waste management, contributing to global environmental sustainability.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Addresses urban waste management challenges in line with SDGs and climate goals;
- Introduces an integrated circular waste management model;
- Demonstrates multi-source treatment and resource recovery systems;
- Provides replicable solutions for low-carbon urban environmental management.



Report 4: Exploration and Practice of Urban Regeneration in Wuhan - General Report (2024)

Analyzes Wuhan's urban regeneration practices, offering adaptable models for inclusive, sustainable, and locally grounded urban renewal.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Defines six typologies of urban regeneration with targeted strategies;
- Promotes minimal intervention and community participation approaches;
- Integrates heritage conservation with livelihood improvement;
- Advances whole-life-cycle governance models across planning, implementation, and operation.

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PUBLICITY AND OUTREACH

Fig 12: Global dissemination of 2024 flagship report of UN-Habitat China Future Cities Council
Source: UN-Habitat China

Fig 15: UN-Habitat China Future Cities Council Expo
Source: UN 80

Fig 13: Country Manager of UN-Habitat China Office attended the First Western China Low-Altitude Economy Expo and delivered a speech, empowering urban sustainable development with smart city technologies.
Source: UN-Habitat China

Fig 14: Country Manager of UN-Habitat China Office participated in the UN 80 event, exchanged views with other UN agencies, and practiced the One UN principle
Source: UN in China

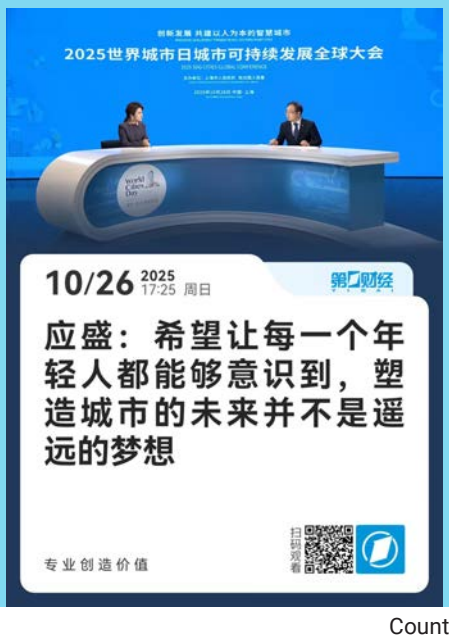

Fig 16: Country Manager of UN-Habitat China Office participated in the 2025 World Cities Day Global Conference on Urban Sustainable Development and gave an interview to the media.
Source: Yicai

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