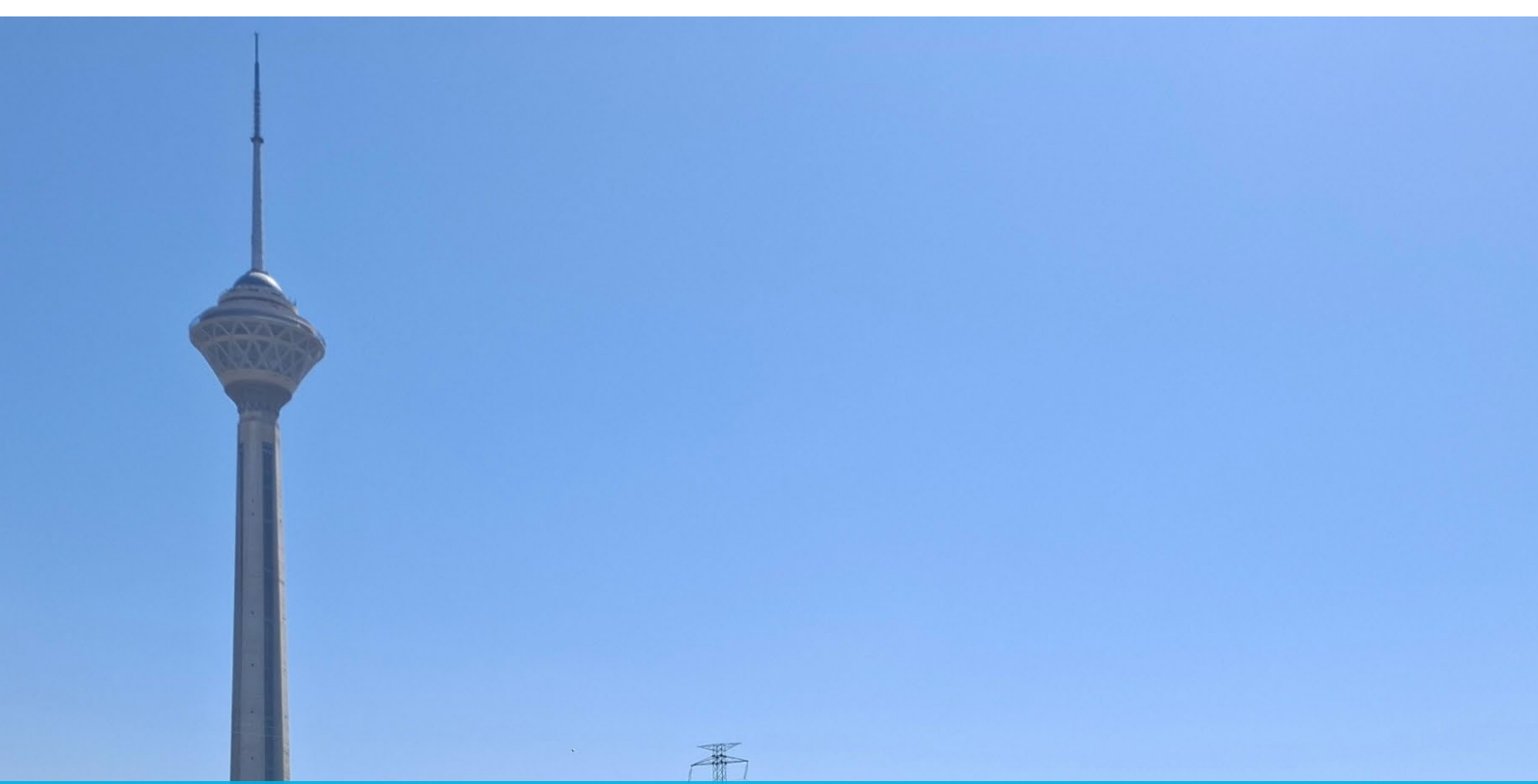
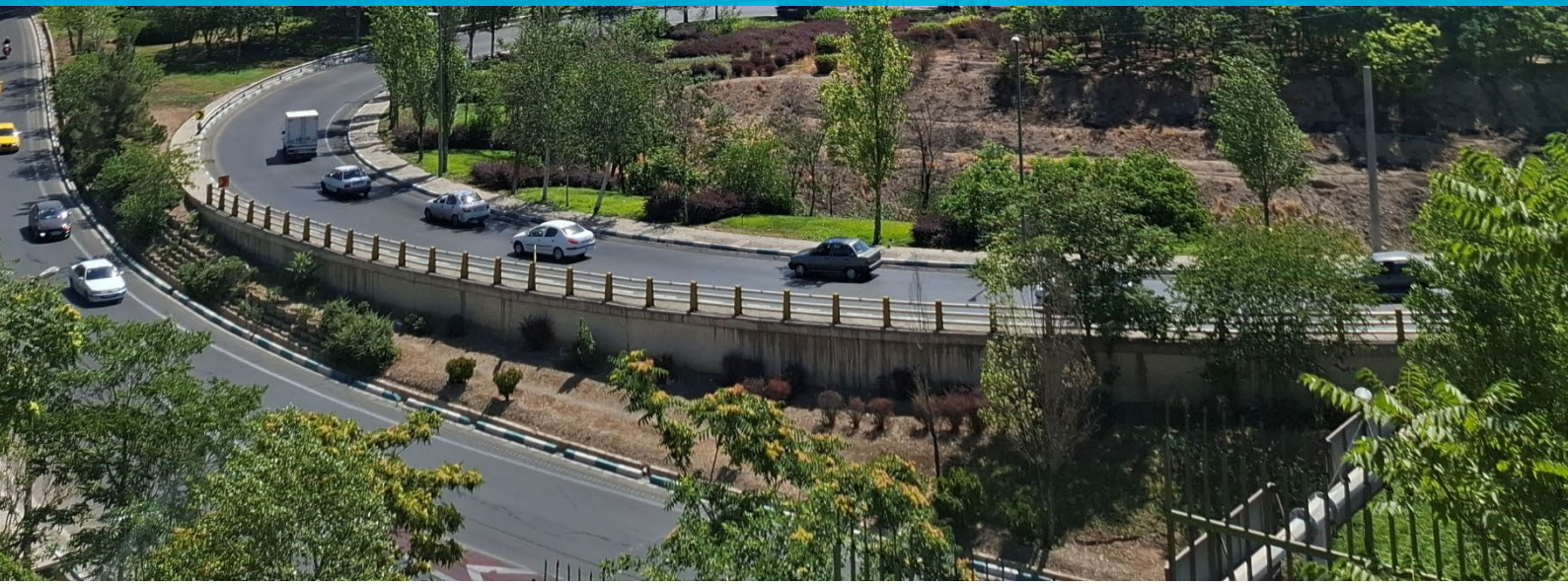


ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN 2026-2029

A tall, slender tower with a spherical observation deck, set against a clear blue sky.

COUNTRY PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

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





UN-HABITAT

UN-Habitat ROAP Country Programme Overview

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OPENING

This Country Programme Overview (CPO) for Iran (2026-2029) is a strategic framework for national and local governments, UN agencies, civil society, and urban stakeholders. It synthesizes UN-Habitat's understanding of Iran's urban context, persistent challenges, and emerging opportunities, providing an evidence-based foundation for planned interventions. The CPO includes a country analysis and factsheet, thematic examinations of housing, land, basic services, climate, and natural hazards, a summary of recent interventions with impact stories, a clear country focus and planned interventions for 2026-2029, and an overview of outreach materials. This is a living guide, reviewed periodically to remain relevant to Iran's evolving needs.

The document marks a milestone, consolidating nearly two decades of partnership and commitment to improving quality of life in Iran's rapidly urbanizing society. UN-Habitat began work in Iran in 2006, initially focusing on disaster risk reduction—particularly seismic resilience, hospital safety (BEHTAB project), and post-earthquake reconstruction. Over time, guided by strong partnerships, especially with the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development (MRUD), our mandate expanded dramatically. Today, we address the full spectrum of sustainable urban development: affordable housing, land governance, basic services, climate resilience, air quality, integrated planning, and inclusive public spaces. We have evolved from a specialized disaster agency into a comprehensive urban partner.

The current CPO is anchored in five higher-level frameworks: (1) UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan (2026-2029) and the Regional Implementation Strategy for Asia and the Pacific; (2) the New Urban Agenda; (3) the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Iran; (4) the National Urban Policy (NUP) developed jointly with MRUD; and (5) the Country's National Development Plan. The CPO operationalizes these global norms, regional strategies, and national ambitions into a results-oriented work plan.

Iranian cities face complex challenges—concentrated metropolitan growth, housing affordability, water scarcity, subsidence, and sand and dust storms. No single actor can solve them alone, but through a unified framework built on evidence and mutual accountability, transformative progress is possible. We extend our deepest gratitude to our government counterparts, donor partners, UN sister agencies, civil society, and resilient communities. Together, we will ensure no one, and no place is left behind in Iran's journey toward a sustainable and equitable urban future.



01

COUNTRY ANALYSIS

With a population of more than 86 million, Iran's urbanization has accelerated rapidly, transforming the country from a largely rural society into one dominated by cities. Growth has been driven by natural population increase in urban areas, administrative expansion of city boundaries, and continued rural-to-urban migration.

Metropolitan regions—especially the capital—absorb a disproportionate share of this growth, creating a highly concentrated and uneven urban system.

The number of cities in Iran during 1956 until 2016 increased from 201 to 1,245. The statistics indicate an urban population concentration such that 35% live in 8 metropolises (Tehran, Mashhad, Isfahan, Karaj, Shiraz, Tabriz, Qom, Ahvaz). The most urbanized provinces include Tehran, Qom, and Alborz (>90% urban), while the least urbanized provinces are Sistan and Baluchestan (<50% urban). A spatial imbalance of population is clearly observed, with western provinces more densely populated due to favorable geography.

This pattern places increasing pressure on housing, infrastructure, mobility, and public services, while widening disparities between major cities and smaller urban centers.

Furthermore, the shortage of affordable housing in Iran continues to exacerbate the reproduction of urban poverty. According to the latest statistics, approximately 40% of household expenditure in the country goes to housing. This is while the consequences of recent conflicts in the region have had destructive effects on the housing situation in the country's major cities and settlements.

Considering these, strengthening integrated planning and balanced territorial development is essential to ensure sustainable and inclusive urban growth across the country.

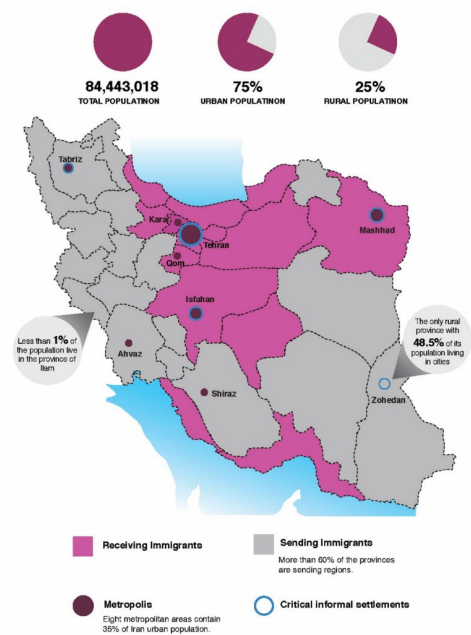
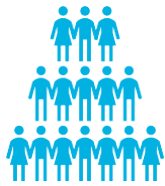


Figure 1. An overview of the population and urban dynamics of I.R. Iran, (National Urban Policy of Iran, 2022)

02

FACTSHEET



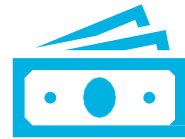
86,869,916

POPULATION



0.8~1.2 %

**POPULATION
GROWTH**



4,264 USD

GDP PER CAPTA



67 M

**URBAN
POPULATION**



77 %

**URBANIZATION
RATE**



40 %

**HOUSING
AFFORDABILITY**



0.779

HDI INDEX



11.85 %

AGING RATE



90 %

**ACCESS TO BASIC
SERVICES RATE**

03

URBAN CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

Iran's cities face interconnected pressures driven by rapid demographic change, concentrated metropolitan growth, and widening spatial disparities. These dynamics strain urban infrastructure, housing systems, and public services, while environmental and climate-related risks further undermine resilience. Addressing these challenges requires strengthened governance, integrated territorial planning, and equitable investment to support sustainable, inclusive urban development nationwide.



RAPID URBANIZATION

Very rapid urbanization (77 percent of the population lives in urban areas)

HOUSING

Lack of sufficient affordable houses for vulnerable groups.

A considerable share of family income is allocated to housing costs.

SANCTIONS

Sanctions and inflation are increasing the population of vulnerable groups.

INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

Increasing informal settlements and dilapidated urban areas

REFUGEES

Considerable population of refugees

CLIMATE CHANGE

Highly affected by climate change

URBAN GOVERNANCE

Lack of integrity in different levels of urban governance and appropriate implementation

NATURAL HAZARDS

Vulnerability against natural hazards

04

HOUSING, LAND AND BASIC SERVICES

HOUSING FOR ALL

Iran's housing sector continues to face structural pressures that limit access to adequate and affordable housing. Although the national housing stock has expanded, supply remains misaligned with demand, particularly for low- and middle-income households in major metropolitan areas. Affordability constraints, uneven spatial distribution of new construction, and quality gaps in existing units reinforce urban inequality. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated policies that expand **affordable housing options**, strengthen **regulatory frameworks**, and support **inclusive urban development**



HOUSING

40% housing affordability.



OWNED LAND AND BUILDING

60.47%



BASIC SERVICES

90 % access to basic service.



CLIMATE

Iran is increasingly affected by a range of climate-related hazards that place significant pressure on its urban systems. Declining precipitation, recurrent flooding, and widespread land degradation are undermining the reliability of water resources, disrupting essential services, and accelerating the deterioration of critical infrastructure. Coastal changes are affecting urban settlements along the Caspian, while intensified sand and dust storms are reducing air quality, impairing mobility, and straining public health systems in several regions. Expanding desertification and more frequent extreme heat events further compromise the functionality of urban environments, heighten energy demand, and exacerbate vulnerabilities among low-income and informal settlements.

WATER SCARCITY & DROUGHT

The average annual precipitation has declined from a historical average of 281.6 millimeters to 170.85 millimeters in 2021.

SUBSIDENCE

Land subsidence has reached up to 30 centimeters per year in some areas, while the Caspian Sea has experienced a one meter drop in water levels between 2018 and 2025.

EXTREME HEAT

Desertification affects 30 million hectares of land, and heat waves in southern provinces have recorded temperatures above 50°C.

AIR POLLUTION AND SDS

Iran faces persistent air pollution and recurring **sand and dust storms** that threaten public health, reduce visibility, and intensify urban vulnerability nationwide. Mobility patterns in Tehran reveal that approximately 20 million daily trips are undertaken, with 55 percent of these trips are made by private cars. Air quality remains a serious concern, with Air Quality Index (AQI) levels reaching between 155 and 159 in major cities.



NATURAL HAZARDS



Iran is exposed to a wide spectrum of **natural hazards**, while **earthquakes** remain the most consequential threat to lives, infrastructure, and urban continuity. Major cities face elevated risk due to dense populations, aging building stock, and the concentration of critical facilities within seismically active zones. Because major earthquakes in Iran often strike densely populated areas—such as Manjil–Rudbar (1990), Bam (2003), and Kermanshah (2017)—each event affected **hundreds of thousands to millions** of people through displacement, loss of housing, service disruption, and required long-term recovery. As a result, seismic resilience—spanning building safety, emergency preparedness, and urban planning—remains a central priority for risk reduction in Iran.



>100,000

**AFFECTED
POPULATION**

RECENT AND ONGOING INTERVENTIONS

1

2017 - 2021

Development of National Urban Policy (NUP) in the Islamic Republic of Iran

NUP refers to a government-led process that coordinates diverse actors around a shared vision to promote transformative, inclusive, and resilient urban development. The initiative created a collaborative platform to develop national urban policies and smart city strategies, while fostering coherence, capacity building, synergy, and mutual learning at national and global levels.



371,000\$



Republic of Korea



Ministry of road and urban development



2

2018 - 2019

Inventory, Earthquake and Multi-Hazard Performance Evaluation of Existing Health Facilities in the Islamic Republic of Iran (BEHTAB-I)

The project aimed to save lives and lessen the socio-economic impact of future earthquakes by strengthening the health sector's preparedness, response, and risk reduction. It took a holistic approach, integrating technical surveys, risk assessments, infrastructure design and retrofitting, and capacity building to improve the resilience of hospitals and health centers.



700,000\$



Government of Japan



Ministry of Health and Medical Education



3

2019 - 2021

Humanitarian Protection and Community Restoration, Kermanshah, I.R. Iran (BAZTAB)

The BAZTAB Project was initiated in response to the devastating Kermanshah earthquake, aiming to restore communities, strengthen resilience, and provide humanitarian protection. Despite delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the project delivered significant outputs in community empowerment, infrastructure resilience, and disaster response guidelines.



357,011\$



Government of Japan





2020 - 2021

Piloting of Alternative, COVID-19-compatible, Solid Waste Management Tools and Technologies

Initiated during the COVID-19 pandemic to address urgent public health risks, the project was designed to improve solid waste management in Tehran by piloting alternative, COVID-19-compatible tools and technologies. Its primary aim was to reduce exposure of waste sorters, collectors, and other personnel to infection risks during COVID-19 and future pandemics, while enhancing recycling systems.



61,974\$



UNDP & Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency



Tehran Municipality



2021 - 2024

Emergency Support for Safer Hospitals and Settlements (BEHTAB II)

Initiated in continuation of the BEHTAB I project, the BEHTAB II project was developed to enhance the resilience of hospitals and settlements against natural disasters, building upon the foundations of BEHTAB I. In addition to studies for seismic assessment, it focused on retrofitting construction of mainly nonstructural components as the most vulnerable elements of a health facility at the time of earthquakes. The initiative also focused on software development in a national scale as well as institutional and personal capacity development.



1,851,463\$



Government of Japan



Ministry of Roads and Urban Development



2023 - 2025

Report on Emergency Support for Post-Earthquake Reconstruction of Human Settlements in Hormozgan Province (PERHOPE)

Initiated in response to the 2022 earthquakes in Lengeh County, Hormozgan Province, the PERHOPE Project is a comprehensive recovery initiative designed to address both immediate and long-term needs of earthquake-affected villages in Hormozgan Province. Guided by the "building back better" framework, the project integrates disaster resilience, sustainable development, and community participation.



493,935\$



Government of Japan



Ministry of Energy



08

IMPACT STORY



“Over the past year, we were asked to join project activities, and we realized we could play an important role in restoring our settlement.”

A few years after the earthquake that shook her village, one resident says the hardest damage wasn't only to their housing but to their sense of possibility. “We lost so much in the quake,” she recalls. “Our houses were damaged, water was scarce, and with work and public services disrupted, life became extremely difficult. Many of us felt hopeless.”

Her outlook began to shift when the PERHOPE project invited local women to take part in recovery activities. For the first time, she says, they felt not just like beneficiaries but contributors to rebuilding their own community. “Over the past year, we were asked to join project activities, and we realized we could play an important role in restoring our settlement.”

With support from project staff, the women established a small tree nursery that uses recycled water from the village mosque's washbasins to irrigate seedlings. They also joined training courses in handicrafts and local spice production—skills that now help supplement their income.

According to the project's final report, at least 55 women participated directly in these empowerment and community-based initiatives. Many now hope that the nursery, along with their growing craft and spice enterprises, will allow them to improve life for their families and strengthen the village's resilience.



PLANNED INTERVENTIONS



Emergency support to Learning Spaces and Schools, after June 2024 Earthquake in Khorasan Razavi Province

Addressing the needs of improving the education infrastructure of the affected area after the earthquake and building the damaged facilities back better, the project specifically brings its contributions towards responding to urgent needs in learning spaces, including educational buildings and schools, empowerment of communities, and urban resilience against natural disasters with a Building Back Better vision. The beneficiaries of the Project will be the students and related families, the people who will use the learning spaces as a community gathering centre, specifically residents of the affected areas, and the experts and government officials who are engaged in planning, design, and management of such facilities.



TOTAL BUDGET:
500.000 USD



TIME FRAME:
2026



LOCATION:
KASHMAR,
KHORASAN RAZAVI

OUTPUT, OUTCOME AND IMPACT:

Outcome: Providing safe and sustainable schools and learning spaces and support for resilient community focusing on the damaged area after June 18, 2024 earthquake in Khorasan Razavi Province

Output 1: Effective urban risk mitigation and response in the educational infrastructures

- focuses on improving the safety and resilience of educational infrastructure through hazard assessments, retrofitting and rehabilitation of schools, technical training, earthquake drills, and updated guidelines for multi-hazard-resistant design.

Output 2: Strengthened climate action in the educational infrastructures and communities

- strengthens climate action by conducting climate studies, integrating green school standards into reconstruction, raising community awareness on disasters and climate change, and updating guidelines for environmentally sustainable school

Impact: Overall, the program enhances preparedness, response, recovery, and reconstruction by combining risk assessments, training, and community awareness with resilient and climate-adaptive rebuilding, resulting in safer, more sustainable schools and reduced future disaster risks.

PLANNED INTERVENTIONS



Project for Strengthening Disaster Resilience of Critical Medical Infrastructure in I.R. Iran (BEHTAB III)

Project lies at the core of the humanitarian-development nexus, bridging together some agendas including disaster risk reduction and mitigation management, environmental conservation, sustainable use of natural resources, and the capacity to address climate challenges, and building capacity by engagement with principal players like local communities, experts, and authorities.

The beneficiaries of the Project will be nationwide, in particular the people who will use the health care facilities, specifically residents and local community of the prone to hazard areas and the experts and government officials who are engaged in planning, design and management of such facilities



TOTAL BUDGET:
5.813.850 USD



TIME FRAME:
2026 - 2028



LOCATION:
TEHRAN

OUTPUT, OUTCOME AND IMPACT:

Outcome 1: Improvement of disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery, through integration into development planning and programmes, and institutional capacities by provision of an updated framework for safe and resilient hospitals and health facilities against multi-hazard in I.R. Iran, based on the implementation experience of one particular hospital retrofitted by the incremental approach, considering the application of green energy, in the urban context

Outcome 2: Enhancement of integrated natural resource management and strengthening the institutional and local community capacity to address climate change challenges through the support for environmentally friendly facilities, and sustainable use of natural resources in the health sector.

Impact: Preparedness and response are enhanced through an updated multi-hazard resilient hospital framework and incremental retrofitting experience, enabling faster, more effective emergency action. Recovery and reconstruction benefit from integrating this framework into development planning and institutional capacities, ensuring that rebuilt health facilities are safer, more resilient, and supported by green energy solutions. Simultaneously, environment and climate action are strengthened by advancing environmentally friendly facilities, sustainable natural resource use in the health sector, and building institutional and community capacity to address climate change challenges.

PLANNED INTERVENTIONS



Rebuilding Community and Critical Urban Infrastructure in Post-Conflict Iran: A People-Centered Recovery Program

Establishing required communications with the relevant partners and stakeholders, UN-Habitat has identified the following priorities for post-conflict recovery: Urban Recovery Planning, Comprehensive post-conflict damage assessment, Reconstruction and restoration of critical urban infrastructure and identity, Community Reconciliation and Social Cohesion, Integration of “Build Back Better” principles. Meanwhile, the Project operationalizes the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus by linking emergency infrastructure repair with long-term resilience building and the critical dimension of social psychology. During the implementation a direct collaboration between the national government partners (through MRUD) and local governments (Municipalities) is vital and will be followed.



TOTAL BUDGET:
4.333.500 USD



TIME FRAME:
2027 - 2029



LOCATION:
IRAN

OUTPUT, OUTCOME AND IMPACT:

Component 1: Urban Infrastructure Recovery

Focuses on urban infrastructure recovery through damage assessments, inclusive replanning, and phased reconstruction using resilient and green standards. It combines pilot and full-scale rebuilding of public infrastructure with transparent processes and local job creation, while strengthening disaster preparedness through an expanded AI-driven early warning system.

Component 2: Social Recovery

Centres on social recovery by promoting community-led planning, restoring services and public spaces, and supporting livelihoods, alongside psychosocial healing initiatives. It also provides targeted mental health and support services for vulnerable groups, helping rebuild social cohesion and dignity.

Component 3: Capacity Building and Advocacy

Supports capacity building and advocacy by strengthening technical, institutional, and community capabilities through training, guidelines, and knowledge sharing. It promotes international best practices and ensures lessons learned are documented and scaled up to support long-term resilience and risk-informed development.

Impact: Overall, the project enhances preparedness, response, recovery, and reconstruction by improving early warning systems, enabling coordinated damage assessments, restoring communities and livelihoods, and delivering resilient, inclusive infrastructure, ensuring systems are better protected against future disasters.

PLANNED INTERVENTIONS



Environment and Climate Action for Urban Resilience: Addressing Groundwater Depletion and Land Subsidence in Iran

Given the systemic nature of the challenge—where water scarcity, groundwater overextraction, and land subsidence reinforce one another—an integrated and multi-sectoral approach is required. The proposed intervention aligns with the principles of risk-sensitive urban planning, climate adaptation, and urban resilience, and supports national and local partners in developing scalable solutions that can be replicated in other high-risk regions.

This project proposes a comprehensive approach that addresses both the drivers (groundwater depletion, climate pressures, urban water mismanagement) and the impacts (subsidence, infrastructure fragility, community exposure) through spatial diagnostics, climate-smart solutions, and institutional and community capacity development.



TOTAL BUDGET:
3.500.000 USD



TIME FRAME:
2027 - 2029



LOCATION:
IRAN

OUTPUT, OUTCOME AND IMPACT:

The intervention strengthens the ability of local authorities and communities to understand and manage the interlinked risks of groundwater depletion, water scarcity, and land subsidence through improved diagnostics, climate-smart and nature-based solutions, and enhanced preparedness.

Output 1: Spatial Diagnostics and Risk Assessment

Provides high-resolution analysis of land subsidence and vulnerability of critical infrastructure, supported by monitoring systems for groundwater and land deformation, and integration of risk-sensitive measures into urban planning for informed decision-making.

Output 2: Climate Smart and Nature-Based Solutions

Pilots practical measures such as aquifer recharge, stormwater infiltration, and permeable surfaces to reduce water stress and subsidence, improving groundwater balance in high-risk areas.

Output 3: Institutional and Community Capacity Strengthened

Builds technical and institutional capacity through training, awareness, and operational guidelines, strengthening monitoring, early warning, and coordinated response while enhancing community resilience.

Impact: Overall, the intervention contributes to long-term urban resilience by addressing both the root causes and impacts of water depletion and land subsidence, reducing infrastructure risks and improving coordinated urban management.

PLANNED INTERVENTIONS



Urban Regeneration for Inclusive Prosperity: Piloting NUP Aligned Upgrading in Iran

Aligned with NUPP in I.R.Iran, the project aims to accelerate urban regeneration and inclusive prosperity in the country by upgrading informal settlements and deteriorated inner city areas through participatory, climate sensitive, and area based approaches. It will expand access to essential services, strengthen local livelihoods, and reduce spatial inequalities, including contribution to basic services micro upgrading and contribution to community infrastructure nodes as tangible, small scale pilots.

It further aims to enhance local institutional capacity for integrated regeneration, community engagement, and inclusive planning, while applying light touch improvements in coordination and municipal budgeting that directly support regeneration without requiring major structural reforms.



TOTAL BUDGET:
5,000.000 USD



TIME FRAME:
2027 - 2029



LOCATION:
IRAN

OUTPUT, OUTCOME AND IMPACT:

The initiative improves living conditions and service equity in informal areas through participatory, climate-sensitive regeneration. It strengthens local capacities and supports small-scale upgrades—such as community infrastructure and basic services—enabling inclusive, scalable, and community-driven urban transformation.

Output 1:

Local authorities and communities apply integrated, area-based regeneration approaches using participatory planning, inclusive design, and neighborhood diagnostics to guide socially responsive, climate-aware interventions aligned with equitable development.

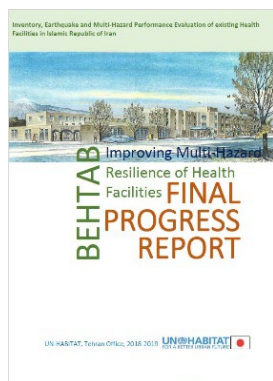
Output 2:

Target neighborhoods benefit from community infrastructure nodes that create accessible spaces for participation, skills development, and social support, strengthening cohesion and expanding opportunities for women and youth through small-scale, replicable pilots.

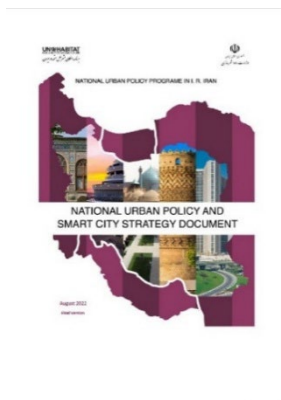
Output 3: Basic urban services are improved through micro-upgrading interventions such as drainage, water access, waste management, and sanitation, reducing health risks, enhancing resilience, and demonstrating scalable, low-cost upgrading solutions.

Impact: The initiative contributes to long-term inclusive prosperity by reducing urban poverty and inequality, improving resilience and safety, and embedding participatory, climate-sensitive approaches in sustainable urban development.

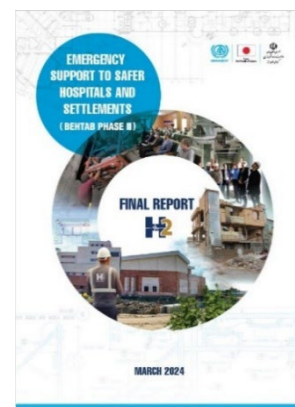
PUBLICITY AND OUTREACH



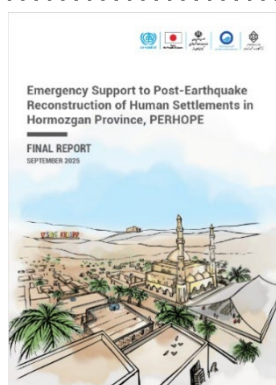
**IMPROVING MULTI-HAZARD
RESILIENCE OF HEALTH
FACILITIES. FINAL REPORT**



**NATIONAL URBAN POLICY
AND SMART CITY
DOCUMENT**



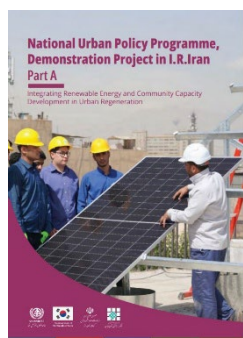
**EMERGENCY SUPPORT TO SAFER
HOSPITALS AND SETTLEMENTS-
FINAL REPORT**



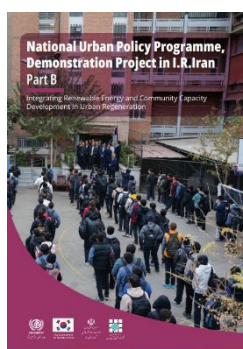
**EMERGENCY SUPPORT TO POST-EARTHQUAKE
RECONSTRUCTION OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS IN
HORMOZGAN PROVINCE, PERHOPE, FINAL
REPORT**



**UN-HABITAT
COUNTRY OFFICE 2025 BROCHURE**



**NATIONAL POLICY URBAN
PROGRAMME,
PART A**



**NATIONAL POLICY URBAN
PROGRAMME,
PART B**



**NATIONAL URBAN POLICY PROGRAMME,
DEMONSTRATION PROJECT IN I.R. IRAN
PROJECT BROCHURE**



UN-HABITAT

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