

## PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT FOR RESILIENT PAKISTAN



### Message from Senior Advisor / Habitat Programme Manager

It is with great pleasure that I present the inaugural edition of the UN-Habitat Pakistan Newsletter, a testament to our shared commitment to building resilient, inclusive, and sustainable cities across the country. This first issue showcases the breadth of initiatives being undertaken by UN-Habitat Pakistan in partnership with government institutions, development partners, and communities. These efforts reflect our strategic focus on addressing the growing challenges of urbanization while promoting equitable access to opportunities and services for all. Achieving sustainable urban development requires a unifying vision and strong collaboration. I am confident that, together, we can continue to shape a future where Pakistan's cities serve as vibrant hubs of resilience, innovation, and prosperity. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to our government counterparts, donors, and partners for their steadfast support and continued engagement. Your partnership remains instrumental to our mission. We look forward to your feedback and collaboration as we embark on this journey of knowledge-sharing and impact.

## PAKISTAN URBAN CONTEXT AT A GLANCE



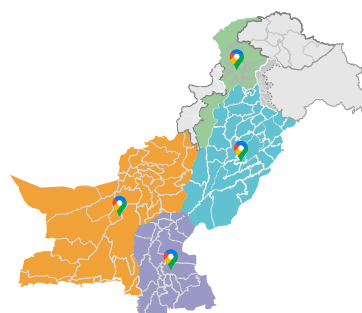
Pakistan's rapid urbanization is reshaping its demographic and economic landscape, with the urban population growing at 3.65% annually. As of 2023, 93.8 million people almost 40% of the total population—reside in cities, a fourfold increase since 1981. By 2050, the total population is expected to surpass 400 million, further straining urban infrastructure and services. Urban sprawl, largely unregulated and informal, has led to severe deficits in housing, water, sanitation, and transport, with growing encroachment. Despite governance challenges, cities remain the economic backbone of Pakistan, contributing 55% of GDP and 95% of federal tax revenue.

Moreover, the devolution of governance under the 18th Amendment has led to fragmented urban management, with multiple agencies holding overlapping mandates, creating inefficiencies in service delivery and infrastructure development.

Addressing these governance gaps through coherent urban policies, streamlined institutional roles, and sustainable financing mechanism is critical to unlocking cities full economic potential.

Pakistan's cities are also at high risk from climate change, ranking among the most climate-vulnerable, globally. Cities, responsible for significant emissions, pollution, and unchecked land use changes, are highly exposed to climate-induced disasters. To build climate resilience, urban planning must incorporate nature-based solutions, flood management systems, and sustainable energy transitions.

A shift toward planned, climate-adaptive urban development is essential to transform cities into livable, resilient, and economically vibrant spaces that drive sustainable national growth. These challenges form the backdrop of UN-Habitat's work in Pakistan, as we support the government and communities to create "a better quality of life for all in an urbanizing world".



UN-Habitat Presence in Pakistan

# UN-Habitat Pakistan Projects



## Enhancing Adaptation Capacity Through Rainwater Harvesting



Woman using harvested rain water domestically  
Donor: Adaptation Fund

UN-Habitat, in partnership with the Government of Pakistan and the Adaptation Fund, is actively working to enhance urban resilience to climate change and promote sustainable development across climate-vulnerable communities in Pakistan. As part of its ongoing efforts, the initiative focuses on improving preparedness for flood and drought risks to strengthen adaptive capacity at both institutional and community levels. To address water scarcity and support long-term urban sustainability, over 5,000 rainwater harvesting units are being installed on individual houses and 50 units on public buildings to provide water for domestic use during times of crisis. In addition, UN-Habitat is developing spatial planning strategies to inform future planning and policy formulation. The program also includes training for local government officials and other relevant stakeholders in climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction, ensuring a comprehensive and practical approach to building resilience.

"After installation of the rainwater harvesting units by UN-Habitat, we are using this water for domestic purposes and saving what used to be wasted,"  
Nasreen Bibi, a community representative from Rawalpindi

## Multi-Hazard Vulnerability Risk Assessment Reports Launched for Three Cities

The Multi-Hazard Vulnerability and Risk Assessment (MHVRA) has been launched for Rawalpindi, Islamabad, and Nowshera to support informed urban planning and resilience-building.

The assessment provides a comprehensive overview of climate-induced risks such as flash floods, droughts, and riverine flooding, and highlights vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure and high risk zones.

Developed in collaboration with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Ministry of Climate Change, PCRWR, WASA, and TMA Nowshera, the MHVRA is intended to inform disaster preparedness and risk reduction strategies at both local and national levels.

With support from the Adaptation Fund, UN-Habitat and its partners continue to contribute to climate resilience efforts across Pakistan.



Launching of MHVRA Reports  
Donor: Adaptation Fund

"The MHVRA's developed in collaboration with UN-Habitat marks a significant step toward evidence-based disaster risk reduction in Pakistan and strengthen the foundation for resilient and safer cities."

Mr. Raza Iqbal, Senior Director Plan, NDMA



# UN-Habitat Pakistan Initiatives



## Strengthening School Infrastructure

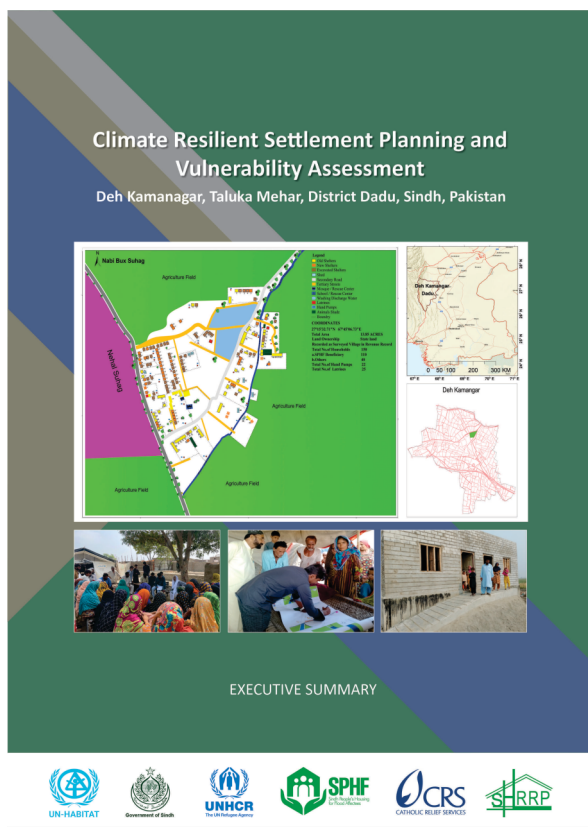
Across earthquake-affected districts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, efforts are being made to strengthen the resilience of school infrastructure to ensure safer learning environments for children. In collaboration with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Department and UNDP, and with funding support from JICA, UN-Habitat is working to retrofit and rebuild schools to withstand future disasters, while also ensuring access to essential WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) services.

Currently being implemented, a total of 150 schools are being retrofitted using disaster-resilient designs, aligning with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, specifically the goal of minimizing loss of life and damage to educational facilities. However, many schools across Pakistan remain vulnerable, and bridging the resource gap through continued international support remains critical to protecting the country's 40 million school children from the growing risks of earthquakes.



Children learning safely in retrofitted school  
Donor: Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

## Climate-Resilient Planning and Housing, Land and Property Rights Advocacy



As part of its commitment to climate-adaptive recovery, UN-Habitat prepared a detailed report on Climate-resilient Settlement Planning and Vulnerability Assessment for Deh Kamangar, providing guidance for safer, more sustainable reconstruction in flood affected communities. These efforts build on decades of experience in post-disaster recovery, including support for large-scale reconstruction after the 2005 earthquake and the 2010 floods. Through this work, UN-Habitat continues to promote the "Build Back Better" approach rebuilding communities that are safer, more inclusive, and more resilient to future climate risks.

UN-Habitat supports disaster risk reduction (DRR) and recovery efforts across Pakistan in close coordination with government stakeholders. Following the 2022 floods, technical support was provided for the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA), ensuring that housing, land, and property (HLP) issues were adequately reflected in recovery planning. The organization has also advocated for the HLP rights in collaboration with UNHCR of displaced populations and co-led the Land Entitlement Working Group under the Sindh flood reconstruction program.

# UN-Habitat Pakistan Projects



## Public Spaces for Sustainable Cities

In collaboration with the Korea Land and Housing Corporation, UN-Habitat has inaugurated Khuda Ki Basti Park in Surjani Town, Karachi, turning a neglected wasteland once filled with garbage and stagnant water into a vibrant and safe public space. The initiative aims to demonstrate the importance of well-designed public areas in advancing sustainable urban development and improving quality of life in underserved communities. The park has already made a notable impact. A survey conducted by RDO shows that over 85% of local residents

now use the park regularly, and more than 70% reported significant improvements in their physical and mental wellbeing. This transformation was achieved by reclaiming underutilized urban land and creating a clean, inclusive, and recreational environment accessible to all. The initiative illustrates how thoughtful investment in public spaces can strengthen community resilience, promote environmental health, and foster social inclusion—key pillars in building sustainable and livable cities.



Khuda Ki Basti Park in Surjani Town, Karachi  
Donor: Korea Land & Housing Corporation

## Promoting Peaceful Coexistence and Social Inclusiveness in Urban Slums

To address the pressing challenges in Pakistan's urban slums such as overcrowding, lack of housing and basic services, and the threat of evictions for refugees, UN-Habitat with support from the Government of the Netherlands, has launched a project aimed at improving living conditions and promoting peaceful coexistence.

The Introductory Workshops were held in Peshawar, Quetta and Karachi bringing together local and provincial authorities, civil society, and development partners to align efforts. Stakeholders stressed the need for improved interdepartmental coordination and the inclusion of women, youth, and marginalized groups.

The project applies a community-centered approach, beginning with a baseline assessment that includes service gap analysis, mapping, and identification of economic and environmental opportunities. UN-Habitat's "people process" model will ensure that community members are actively involved in planning and implementation.



Community consultations for action planning  
to improve living conditions  
Donor: Government of the Netherlands