

المعهد العربي لإنماء المدن
Arab Urban Development Inst.

TENTH ISSUE
JUNE, 2025

BY THE ARAB URBAN DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

BUILDING BACK BETTER

PATHS TO RECOVERY AND RECONSTRUCTION

THE INTERVIEW
His Excellency the Director General of Mosul Municipality, talks about the city's experience with Recovery and Reconstruction

URBAN INSIGHTS
Experts' insights on Urban Recovery

Toolkits on Recovery and Reconstruction

CITIES IN ACTION
Recovery projects and initiatives to enhance cities' resilience against disasters

MUDUNUNA

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TENTH ISSUE

BUILDING BACK BETTER

PATHS TO RECOVERY AND RECONSTRUCTION

This issue of Mudununa was developed in partnership with the Disaster Risk Reduction Unit, UNESCO

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Front Cover

Source: Muhamed Hamdy | AUDI 'Live the City' Photography Competition

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EDITORIAL

INNOVATIVE RECONSTRUCTION

RE-IMAGINING RECOVERY IN ARAB CITIES

By Dr. Ziad Alameddine- Editor in Chief

Crises, whether caused by natural disasters, conflicts, or economic instability, have long influenced the urban fabric of cities worldwide. They are not just disruptions but integral parts of urban evolution. A city's core resilience lies not only in its ability to withstand such shocks, but also in its capabilities and capacity to respond quickly to crises and overcome them, involve its communities in reconstruction processes, and turn adversity into an opportunity for meaningful, transformative change.

In some Arab cities affected by crises, recovery efforts often focus on technical solutions such as clearing debris, repairing infrastructure, and restoring basic services to revive the economy. While these measures are important, they tend to prioritize investment opportunities and may neglect deeper dimensions such as cultural identity, community belonging, collective memory, and everyday livelihoods. Actual recovery, however, requires a people-centered approach, one that resists turning reconstruction into superficial or localized efforts that distort the city's historical and cultural character.

In this context, many post-crisis recovery efforts have prioritized the reconstruction of physical structures while overlooking the involvement of the local communities who once inhabited these areas. When recovery plans are developed without the active participation of residents and without consideration for local needs and contexts, they often lead to unresponsive urban projects that are eventually abandoned. As a result, recovery can end up reinforcing the crisis rather than resolving it.

Nevertheless, signs of change are emerging in crisis-affected cities across the Arab region, where there is growing awareness that recovery efforts must be inclusive and responsive to local contexts. This involves not only the engagement of residents in planning and decision-making but also addressing the needs of all community members, including displaced individuals, refugees, and female-headed households. Accordingly, recovery is not just a phase that happens later, or a series of technocratic procedures; it is a continuous social process that begins with the immediate response to the crisis and extends through to long-term recovery.

This issue of "Mudununa" delves into innovative visions and experiences related to recovery and reconstruction after natural and man-made disasters, showcasing key efforts in this field. In his interview, H.E. Eng. Abdul Sattar Al-Habu, Director General of Mosul Municipality, shares insights into the city's recovery and reconstruction journey. H.E. discusses Mosul's current development vision, the challenges it has faced, and the significant transformations over recent decades. He also emphasizes the crucial role of partnerships with local and international organizations in the reconstruction process, along with valuable lessons that other cities can learn from Mosul's experience.

In "Urban Insights," Mr. Soichiro Yasukawa, Chief of the Unit of Disaster Risk Reduction, Natural Sciences Sector, UNESCO, emphasizes the importance of integrating disaster risk reduction into reconstruction efforts to build resilience after natural disasters and restore normalcy in affected areas. In his article, Eng. Hassan Al-Attas highlights the key role of the Saudi Development and Reconstruction Program for Yemen (SDRPY) in rebuilding Yemen through impactful development projects. SDRPY's contributions include improving infrastructure, delivering essential services, supporting economic stability and social development, and fostering international partnerships to strengthen reconstruction and development efforts.

Furthermore, this edition of Mudununa features four toolkits developed by international organizations, each underscoring the importance of knowledge exchange in this field and addressing the different dimensions of urban recovery. These guides serve as reference tools to support municipalities in identifying necessary actions and strengthening resilience and sustainable development in the aftermath of disasters and crises.

The newsletter highlights the participatory urban recovery planning process adopted by some Arab cities, which has played a vital role in overcoming various crises. It draws lessons from Jeddah's response to natural disasters, particularly the 2009 and 2022 floods. The city launched extensive infrastructure rehabilitation projects, installed early warning systems, trained specialized emergency response teams, and conducted awareness campaigns for residents and those affected. Similarly, following the 2024 rainstorm, Dubai developed a comprehensive flood defense plan focused on infiltration, sustainable drainage systems, and artificial intelligence applications to mitigate flood risks.

The city of Derna was heavily impacted by the flooding caused by Storm Daniel in 2023, which resulted in widespread destruction of infrastructure. In response, reconstruction efforts focused on rebuilding homes, schools, roads, and bridges, with active participation from both stakeholders and residents. This edition also sheds light on the cities of Shibam and Zabid in Yemen, highlighting the initiatives carried out to restore their architectural heritage and support the revitalization of local economies.

The newsletter explores various recovery programs implemented in the Syrian cities of Al-Tall, Hama, and Maaraba, as well as in Beirut, focusing on how these cities have addressed public healthcare, education, and solid waste management by actively involving local communities to accelerate recovery. It also highlights the experiences of Algeria and Morocco in reconstruction and support for affected communities, emphasizing their efforts in proactive risk reduction and building resilience. These cases offer valuable lessons on integrating innovation, community participation, and sustainability into global disaster management practices. Additionally, the newsletter features the reconstruction of the Nahr el-Bared Refugee Camp in Lebanon, a notable example of participatory planning and design, which was recognized as one of the top ten finalists for the Agha Khan Award for Architecture in 2010.

Moreover, this newsletter covers the Deputy Governor of the Riyadh Region's participation in a Gala Dinner held at AUDI's headquarters for the heads of delegations attending the Arab European Cities Dialogue Forum. It also showcases several key accomplishments of the Arab Urban Development Institute, including the release of its report titled "Bridging Cities: Exploring Solutions for Shared Challenges," developed in partnership with the Boston Consulting Group (BCG). Additionally, AUDI conducted two training workshops: one on "Asset Management and Privatization of Services" and another on "Preparing Executive Plans and Capital Portfolios". AUDI also took part in the 9th session of the "Casablanca Smart City Conference" in Morocco, contributing to regional discussions on digital transformation and participatory governance.

Finally, AUDI hosted the 14th session of the "Cities in Action" webinar series, titled "Urban Primacy in the Arab world: Its Causes, Manifestations, and Consequences of Growth". The meeting explored how a strategic vision can enhance cities by promoting balanced planning, fostering community engagement, and aligning urban policies with Sustainable Development Goals.

INTERVIEW

DIRECTOR GENERAL OF MOSUL MUNICIPALITY

ENG. ABDUL SATTAR KHIDER AL-HABU

In dialogue about Mosul's experience with Recovery and Reconstruction

Eng. Abdul Sattar Khider Al-Habu, Director General Mosul Municipality, is a distinguished administrator with over 25 years of impactful service in government and public administration. He has led the municipality of Mosul on four separate occasions and has held senior roles in various government service entities. His extensive background has provided him with deep expertise in the technical, administrative, and legal dimensions of municipal operations. Driven by a firm belief in modernization, Al-Habu champions a shift from outdated management methods to contemporary systems grounded in good governance, leveraging digital transformation and automation to boost efficiency and service delivery.

Despite his extensive experience, Engineer Al-Habou stands out for his dynamic and forward-looking mindset. He is a strong advocate for young talent, consistently supporting and empowering the next generation to take on leadership roles, guided by his belief that youth are the driving force behind change and the architects of the cities of tomorrow. His vision goes beyond managing current realities; he is focused on reshaping institutional frameworks around modern principles that elevate citizen value and prioritize public service, all within a culture of transparency, efficiency, and long-term sustainability.



Director General of Mosul Municipality, Engineer Abdul Sattar Khider Al-Habu

The city of Mosul has exemplified how reconstruction and recovery initiatives can revive a city's spirit and enhance the quality of life of its residents. As one of Iraq's most culturally vibrant cities, it suffered great destruction during its occupation. In the aftermath of unrest, the city has collaborated with various international organizations and public sector entities to work extensively on rebuilding and recovery. In this issue of Mudununa, we engage in an insightful discussion with the Mayor of Mosul to learn more about the city's recovery and reconstruction journey, as well as its aspirations for the future.

As Director General for the city of Mosul, which has experienced significant challenges and transformation over the last few decades, can you tell us more about Mosul's current development vision?

Established in 1285 Hijri (1869), Mosul Municipality holds the distinction of being the oldest municipal institution in Iraq. Throughout its long history, it has been administered by a succession of mayors and directors whose efforts have left a lasting imprint on the city's development, many of whose works endure to this day. Since its inception, the municipality has seen forty-five individuals at its helm. The first to assume this responsibility was Mr. Hassan Bey bin Muhammad Saeed Pasha Al Yassin Effendi Al Mufti.



An aerial photo of the right coast of Mosul, showing Bab al-Tob Park and the Mosul Municipality building under construction
©2025 Municipality of Mosul

The most recent, Engineer Abdul Sattar Khader Al Habu, has overseen the municipality on four separate occasions, the latest beginning in mid-2021.

Over the course of its long history, Mosul Municipality has undergone remarkable growth and transformation. Today, it employs over 7,000 individuals and has broadened its scope of responsibilities to encompass key sectors such as housing, industry, tourism, and recreation. In recent years, the city has witnessed the establishment of modern tourist resorts, amusement parks, green spaces, and public gardens—initiatives aimed at enhancing community well-being and elevating the standard of urban life.

Guided by a forward-looking vision, Mosul now aspires to emerge as a leading model in Iraq for municipal services and sustainable urban development. At the heart of this ambition lies a commitment to social welfare, driven by quality service delivery rooted in the principles of good governance and institutional effectiveness. The municipality also places great emphasis on fostering integration and coordination with both public and private sectors to realize a vision of comprehensive and inclusive development.

Mosul is far more than a city of services, it stands as a promising hub for tourism, agriculture, and economic growth, owing to its rich and distinctive resources. As one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in human history, Mosul today forms the heart of Nineveh Governorate, which has a population of approximately 5.25 million, with over 3.5 million residing in the city itself. The municipality oversees vast stretches of fertile land, estimated at 7.5 million dunams, and is traversed by the Tigris River, which bisects the city into its eastern (left) and western (right) banks. This unique environmental and geographical character offers immense potential to be harnessed in the city's ongoing reconstruction and sustainable development efforts.

At Mosul Municipality, we are deeply aware that the immense challenges the city has weathered call for a strategic vision and unwavering resolve. It is our duty to lay the foundations for a future that reflects the resilience of its people and upholds Mosul's historical stature as a cradle of civilization and culture.

We understand that there are multiple factors at play when rebuilding a city, including its financing, institutional will, social responsibilities, and environmental sensitivities. What would you say were the most pressing challenges you faced during the reconstruction process, and how did you address them?

We encountered tremendous challenges, as the city was completely devastated, impacting every part of daily life. The obstacles included a severe lack of



funding, massive amounts of rubble and debris, and widespread destruction of infrastructure, particularly in the Old City. Additionally, more than 900 specialized service vehicles were lost due to terrorist attacks. Ten major bridges were damaged, and most government buildings and institutions were nearly destroyed.

In the face of these harsh realities, we relied first and foremost on our own determination as a local institution committed to fulfilling its responsibilities. We mobilized all available institutional resources while actively seeking and welcoming international support. We received substantial assistance from several key international organizations, including the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), along with support from other international partners and the national government.

Thanks to this cooperation, we fully restored stability to the city by 2020 and promptly began the reconstruction phase. Our efforts included clearing over 9 million cubic meters of rubble, removing more than 7,500 burned vehicles, repairing damage from over 3,000 acts of vandalism across streets and neighborhoods, rebuilding 10 bridges, and constructing two new bridges over the Tigris River to reconnect both sides of the city.

Furthermore, we have paved and tiled more than 7 million square meters of roads, prioritizing damaged areas and the Old City, where we are working to restore its heritage character in line with its historical significance.

This phase has truly tested our capacity as local institutions to persevere and turn challenges into opportunities for progress. The achievements to date are the result of a clear vision, strong determination, and effective partnerships—efforts we hope will continue and grow for the benefit of Mosul and its people.

In addition to man-made disasters, what natural hazards pose significant risks to your city? And what measures is the city taking to address these risks?

Like many cities in the region, Mosul faces a range of escalating environmental challenges and natural hazards—chief among them climate change, rising temperatures, and increasing water scarcity, despite being divided by the Tigris River. Desertification and the loss of vegetation cover are also major concerns, threatening the city's ecological balance and diminishing the overall quality of life.

To tackle these environmental challenges, Mosul Municipality has initiated the development and

implementation of a range of preventive and sustainable measures, including:

- Implementing a major afforestation campaign, which has included planting more than one million square meters of green space over recent years, as part of efforts to restore Mosul's historical title of "the Mother of Two Springs" and provide a more temperate and healthier environment for residents.
- Replacing forest trees lost because of climate factors or neglect during the period of increasing terrorist control over the city, through continuous programs to restore vegetation in forests, parks, streets, and public spaces.
- Creating new public parks and expanding green spaces throughout the city, thus strengthening Mosul's resilience to global warming and enhancing its urban landscape.
- One key preventive health measure is the creation of designated inspection zones for livestock and live animals before they enter the city. This helps reduce the risk of environmental diseases and epidemics, especially as climate change influences how diseases behave and spread.

Through these initiatives, along with additional environmental programs and awareness efforts, we plan to implement, reflect our commitment to transforming Mosul into a healthy, green city—resilient to environmental and climate challenges and dedicated to protecting both present and future generations.

With the growing demographic, Mosul is already under pressure with regards to housing and other municipal services. Can you outline the city's approach to rebuilding critical infrastructure and public services, such as housing, schools, healthcare, transportation, and utilities?

Mosul's fast-growing population is placing mounting pressure on the city's infrastructure and public services, with housing, transportation, education, healthcare, and utilities all feeling the strain. According to recent studies, the city faces an urgent need for at least 400,000 new housing units to meet demand, a challenge driven by both a surge in population and the widespread destruction of homes during years of conflict.

To tackle these challenges, the Mosul Municipality has implemented a multi-pronged approach for urban planning and delivery of services, which is based on:

- Moving toward vertical construction as a strategic choice to ease the demand on horizontal space, allowing more people to live within a limited urban area while protecting green spaces and maintaining environmental balance.
- Updating and expanding the city's basic design, since the current plan is over 25 years old and no longer aligns with recent demographic, social, and economic developments.
- The municipality is developing a modern urban plan that supports city growth and sustainable development while ensuring balanced and well-managed urban expansion.
- Coordinating with relevant sectoral entities and ministries to implement government and investment housing projects, while also encouraging the private sector to take part in real estate development to deliver affordable housing units.

In terms of other services, coordination has been carried out with the central government, relevant provincial state institutions, and international organizations to rehabilitate several schools, health centers, and transportation networks. This also includes the rehabilitation of water, sewage, and electricity systems, all within a comprehensive reconstruction plan.

We believe that balanced development depends on sustainable infrastructure, which we have made central to our future vision of transforming Mosul into a modern, safe city that serves the needs of its residents across all sectors.

Mosul Municipality has partnered with multiple organizations to drive the city's rehabilitation. What role does the municipality play in this process, and how impactful have these partnerships been in supporting Mosul's recovery?

The Mosul Municipality is a key institution at the forefront of urban reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts following the extensive damage caused by terrorism and military operations to liberate the city. The municipality has taken on broad responsibilities—

restructuring the city's planning, services, and environmental management—and has made extraordinary efforts to restore essential infrastructure, despite facing limited resources and challenging conditions.

The municipality's role has been guided by several key pillars, including:

Carrying out large-scale campaigns to clear rubble and debris. Over 9 million cubic meters of debris have been removed, and the damage from more than 3,000 airstrikes on streets and residential neighborhoods has been addressed.

Restoring and paving roads and bridges throughout the city, which includes rebuilding the ten damaged bridges and constructing two new bridges over the Tigris River to improve connectivity between the city's two sides.

Developing and equipping modern streets, along with upgrading infrastructure networks—such as water, sewage, public lighting, and communications—in coordination with the relevant authorities in the governorate.

Overseeing urban planning efforts and working to expand the city's master plan to accommodate population growth and evolving needs.

In this regard, international cooperation has been vital in speeding up progress. Partnerships with organizations such as UNDP, USAID, UN-Habitat, GIZ, and other international bodies have provided essential technical, financial, and logistical support.

This collaboration between the municipality, international and local organizations, and the city's residents has helped speed up Mosul's recovery, setting it on a course toward stability and sustainable development. It has also fostered a more livable environment for citizens and supported the return of normal economic and social activity.

How has Mosul managed to successfully integrate cultural heritage preservation into its broader reconstruction and revitalization efforts?

Mosul is one of the world's oldest historic cities, with a rich cultural heritage shaped by the many civilizations that have inhabited it. As a result, its reconstruction carries a dual responsibility—both material and moral.



Construction of the second lane of the Sennacherib flyover intersection
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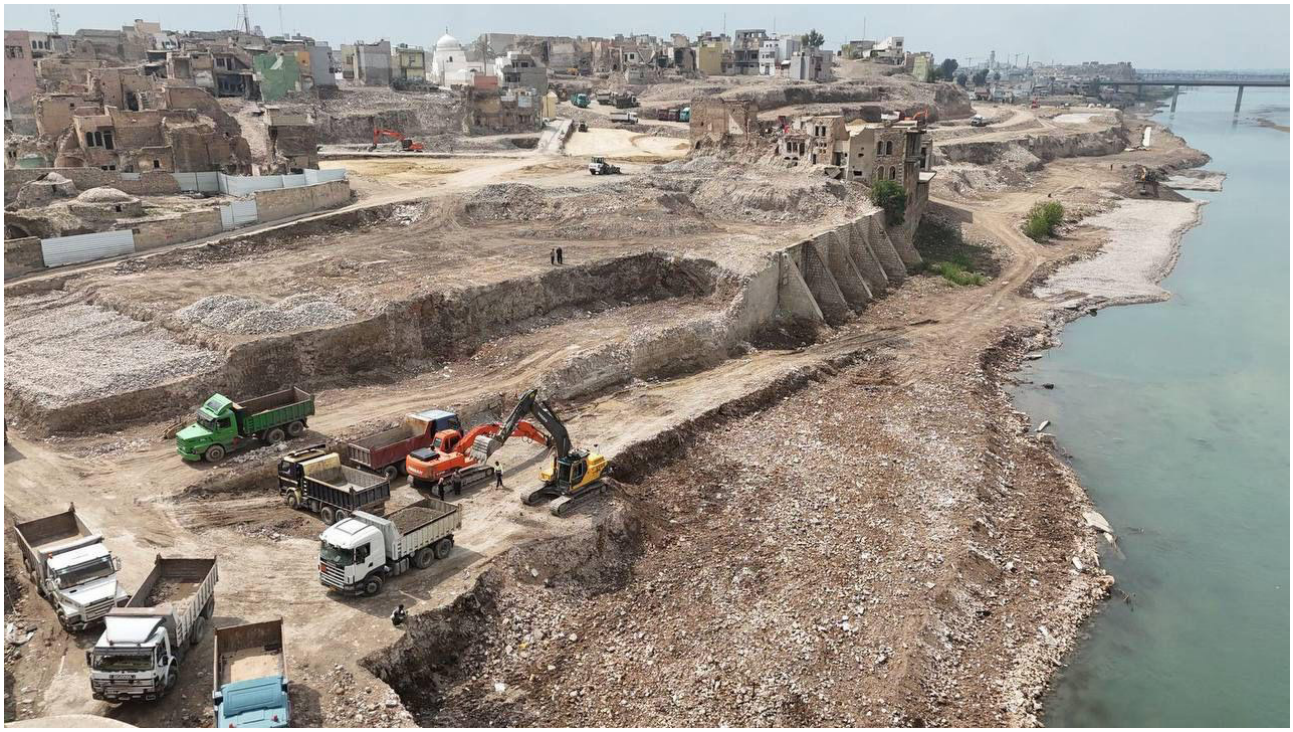

Mosul Old City Riverfront Project
©2025 Municipality of Mosul

Terrorist attacks have caused extensive damage to many religious, historical, and cultural landmarks—including heritage mosques, ancient walls, traditional markets, and globally significant heritage sites. In response to this tragic reality, the Mosul Municipality, in coordination with relevant authorities, has prioritized integrating cultural heritage preservation into the city's broader reconstruction vision. This is being done by applying urban planning and engineering standards that respect and preserve the historical and architectural character of the city center, especially the Old City.

Multiple initiatives have been launched to restore Mosul's traditional urban fabric and support youth-led projects, including:

- Restoring heritage sites following UNESCO guidelines and best international practices for cultural heritage preservation.
- Supporting antiquities and heritage institutions through collaboration with local and international experts to document damage and develop plans for restoring Mosul's architectural identity.
- Improving infrastructure and services within heritage areas in a way that preserves the integrity of historical sites, striking a balance between modern development and maintaining the city's authentic character.
- Engaging the local community in preserving heritage, recognizing the city's residents as the true custodians of its historical legacy.

These efforts, backed by international organizations like UNESCO, UN-Habitat, and UNDP, have created a model for integrated development that respects Mosul's unique cultural identity. They contribute to revitalizing ancient Mosul—not just by rebuilding its physical structures, but also by restoring the city's significance and place in the hearts and minds of Iraq and the wider region.

What are the key lessons other cities can learn from Mosul's journey of rehabilitation and reconstruction?

Mosul's recovery from widespread destruction has become a practical example for other cities aiming to rebuild stronger and more comprehensively. From this experience, important lessons have been identified that can be applied broadly to similar rebuilding efforts, especially:

1. **Integration of institutional, societal, and international roles:**

Mosul's successful recovery was largely due to the strong collaboration between local government institutions and international assistance from active UN agencies and local volunteer groups. This teamwork

sped up the rebuilding process and delivered real, visible progress.

2. **Prioritizing the Needs of the People:**

Reconstruction efforts prioritized people's immediate needs, ensuring access to essentials like water, electricity, shelter, and roads before tackling larger infrastructure projects. They also aimed to rebuild the community's social fabric by encouraging shared religious and national celebrations, helping to heal the social wounds caused during the period of terrorist control. This strategy, embraced by the Directorate after liberation, was grounded in the belief that strengthening the people is the foundation of rebuilding the city. It also opened channels for dialogue between citizens and officials, enabling people to voice their concerns and have them addressed.

3. **Rebuilding Community Trust:**

The reconstruction efforts rebuilt citizens' trust in their institutions by maintaining a strong presence on the ground and delivering visible results. This helped strengthen the community's sense of belonging and encouraged active participation in development initiatives.

4. **Protecting Cultural Identity and Historical Heritage:**

Mosul prioritized safeguarding its heritage and religious landmarks while restoring the Old City, driven by the belief that a city can only revive its spirit by preserving its history and memories.

5. **Adaptability in Crisis Management:**

The municipality showed strong ability to adjust and reorganize priorities as new challenges arose, using effective programs built on phased planning and quick response.

6. **Forward-Looking Planning and Smart Housing:**

Mosul implemented clear strategies for urban growth and vertical development, updating its basic design, first created over 25 years ago, to accommodate population growth and evolving needs.

7. **Mobilizing Community and Youth Energy:**

A key factor in the city's success was drawing on global urban revitalization experiences while actively involving the local community, especially young people, to promote a sense of belonging and volunteerism. This helped encourage public participation in safeguarding the city from negative influences and contributed to creating a beautiful, safe, and stable environment.

In short, Mosul's experience is more than just urban reconstruction; it stands as a powerful example of resilience, cultural renewal, and a call to action for other affected cities. It shows that recovery is achievable when efforts are united and energy is invested with responsibility and hope for the future.

URBAN INSIGHTS

External Article

REBUILDING FOR RESILIENCE: EMBEDDING DRR IN RECOVERY AND RECONSTRUCTION



Soichiro Yasukawa

Chief of the Disaster Risk Reduction Unit at UNESCO Headquarters. He oversees geo-hazards risk reduction and coordination of DRR activities across different Sectors in UNESCO to promote multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder and multi hazard approach. Before joining UNESCO, he worked at the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, and the Cabinet Office of the Japanese government on DRR, building code, urban/territorial planning and international cooperation. He obtained a master's degree in architecture from Kyoto University, Japan and a master's degree in public administration from Columbia University, U.S.A.

In the aftermath of a disaster, the instinct is often to rebuild quickly in order to restore what was lost, and return to normalcy. But in a world where natural hazards are increasing both in frequency and intensity, going back to the way things were is no longer enough. Recovery must be smarter, safer, and rooted in the science of disaster risk reduction (DRR).

This approach reflects the principle of Build Back Better, a cornerstone of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. It's not just about reconstructing buildings, it's about reshaping systems. Risk-informed planning, inclusive governance, and sustainable infrastructure are the pillars of this transformation.

Across the globe, UNESCO has seen how science, policy, and local expertise can converge to strengthen resilience in the most vulnerable regions. Whether it is through supporting the retrofitting of schools, training local engineers, or applying artificial intelligence (AI) to assess risk, the goal remains the same: to ensure that what comes next is stronger than what came before.

In the aftermath of the 2023 earthquakes in Türkiye, the country faced the enormous challenge of rebuilding at scale. But recovery did not just mean pouring new concrete. With support from UNESCO, national authorities drew on lessons from other post-disaster contexts to inform their reconstruction plans. That meant integrating risk-informed planning principles, improving building codes, and understanding which vulnerabilities had made communities unsafe in the first place. Schools weren't just repaired; they were made safer for future generations.

In Morocco, where another earthquake struck that same year, science and technology stepped in as a guide. UNESCO helped strengthen the national earthquake monitoring and early warning system, enabling decision-makers to better understand seismic risks and act accordingly. Here, rebuilding began not with bricks, but with data, a foundation that will continue to save lives long after the reconstruction ends.

In Yemen and Libya, where conflict has compounded disaster risks, UNESCO's work has focused on risk-informed recovery planning with a special focus on education and the protection of cultural heritage. In these fragile contexts, recovery is not just about infrastructure, it's about restoring identity, supporting continuity, and empowering local actors to shape their own futures.

Recovery, when done well, opens a window to shift from reaction to prevention. It offers a moment to reform governance systems, modernize urban planning, and promote inclusive, sustainable development. But only if it is backed by coordinated action.

Too often, DRR experts arrive after the first phase of recovery has begun, leaving critical opportunities untapped. UNESCO works to bridge this gap by engaging across all recovery phases, from the immediate response, through short- and medium-term recovery, and into long-term reconstruction. Throughout, the focus remains the same: reduce future risk, not just repair past damage.

However, recovery cannot be led by technical expertise alone. Local governments are on the frontlines, yet many lack the resources or tools to guide reconstruction. UNESCO supports them with technical advice and policy guidance, helping integrate DRR into urban planning instruments such as land-use plans and building codes. Well-planned open spaces, resilient public infrastructure, and safer building practices don't just improve cities, they save lives.

Another challenge is investment. Prevention remains vastly underfunded. Yet evidence shows that every dollar invested in prevention can save up to fifteen dollars in post-disaster recovery. The case for prevention is clear but it needs to be made louder. UNESCO continues to raise awareness, pushing for policy shifts that prioritize prevention over reaction.

Crucially, UNESCO's work is backed by a global scientific network, from geoscientists to early warning experts that ensures recovery is informed by the best available knowledge. Data sharing, capacity building, and partnerships with local research institutions help turn science into action on the ground.

"Recovery, when done well, opens a window to shift from reaction to prevention. It offers a moment to reform governance systems, modernize urban planning, and promote inclusive, sustainable development"

In the Arab region, these lessons are especially urgent. Cities are growing rapidly, and with that growth comes heightened exposure to earthquakes, floods, and extreme heat. Integrating DRR into recovery is not just a best practice, it is a necessity. Recovery must be guided by risk-informed planning, grounded in local knowledge, and inclusive of the people it affects most.

Ultimately, recovery is not simply about rebuilding structures. It's about rebuilding trust, strengthening institutions, protecting livelihoods, and preserving culture. It's about transforming disaster into an opportunity to create communities that are not only restored but made resilient for the future.

External Article

ADVANCING YEMEN'S RECOVERY: THE ROLE OF THE SAUDI DEVELOPMENT AND RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAM



Eng. Hassan Al-Attas

He currently serves as the Assistant Supervisor General of the Saudi Development and Reconstruction Program for Yemen (SDRPY). A seasoned development expert, he brings extensive experience from both national and international arenas. Throughout his distinguished career, he has represented the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in key initiatives, including the Cooperation Council Program for the Reconstruction of Gaza. Eng. Al-Attas has held several prominent leadership positions, including Director General of the Saudi Real Estate Development Fund (REDF) and member of the Board of Directors of the Agricultural Development Fund (SDF). During his tenure at the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD), he played a pivotal role in overseeing and implementing development projects in more than 90 countries around the world. He holds a master's degree in civil engineering from the United States.

In a continued demonstration of its commitment to regional stability and humanitarian support, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia established the Saudi Development and Reconstruction Program for Yemen (SDRPY) in mid-2018 through a royal decree issued by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. This initiative embodies the Kingdom's strategic and humanitarian investment in Yemen's future, rooted in a long-standing relationship defined by shared history, cultural and religious bonds, and geographic proximity.

Since its launch, SDRPY has served as a cornerstone of Saudi Arabia's direct support to Yemen, with an emphasis on people-centered development. The program prioritizes infrastructure rehabilitation, essential service delivery, social development, and economic revitalization, as well as fostering global partnerships to strengthen coordination in development and reconstruction initiatives.

Through its work, SDRPY seeks not only to address immediate needs and enhance regional settlement,

but also to lay the groundwork for long-term development, in alignment with the Kingdom's Vision 2030 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

(SDRPY) concentrates on eight fundamental sectors

"Through its work, SDRPY seeks not only to address immediate needs and enhance regional settlement, but also to lay the groundwork for long-term development, in alignment with the Kingdom's Vision 2030 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)"

vital to societal progress: education, health, water, energy, transportation, agriculture and fisheries, government capacity building, and development initiatives across various Yemeni governorates. The program operates in continuous coordination with the Yemeni government and local authorities. Field offices conduct studies to identify project priorities, ensuring that initiatives align with the actual needs of the Yemeni population.

The program successfully addressed various challenges in implementing its projects and initiatives, such as poor institutional capacity, restricted access to certain areas, and shortages of materials and equipment. These obstacles were overcome through collaboration with the Yemeni government, enhanced coordination with local authorities and civil society, activation of the private sector roles, partnerships with UN, international, and regional organizations, and the use of innovative solutions to ensure the sustainability and long-term impact of development initiatives.

As a result of these efforts, the program has implemented 264 development projects and initiatives, both complete and ongoing. These efforts have improved connectivity between cities and regions, expanded access to education at all levels, supported universities and vocational institutes in delivering their programs, enhanced the delivery of healthcare and preventive services, boosted agricultural productivity, economically empowered women and youth, and encouraged community involvement through renewable energy and sustainable development initiatives.

Through the Saudi Development and Reconstruction Program for Yemen (SDRPY), the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia remains committed to supporting Yemen's development by implementing people-centered projects that help build a more secure and prosperous future.

TOOLKITS ON RECOVERY AND RECONSTRUCTION

In addition to the growing demands of urbanization and modern infrastructure, cities are constantly required to prepare and plan for drastic events such as natural hazards, conflict, and economic shocks. Municipalities are in need of the right tools and resources to effectively address these challenges.

To facilitate knowledge sharing on this subject, this issue of Mudununa presents four toolkits developed by international organizations that deal with various aspects of recovery and reconstruction. These have been designed specifically to help municipalities better understand the processes required for recovery and reconstruction, while fostering resilience and sustainable development in the aftermath of crises.

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Toolkit 4:
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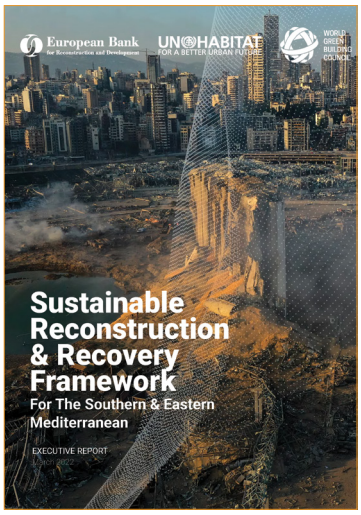


European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, UN Habitat, World Green Building Council, ©2022

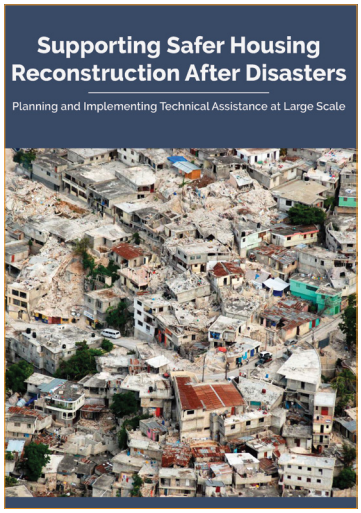
https://worldgbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/SRRF-Report.pdf

Toolkit 1:
Sustainable Reconstruction & Recovery Framework

The document serves as a framework that has been created in response to the built environment reconstruction challenges in the MENA region. It is targeted at multiple stakeholders working in the domain of recovery and reconstruction including local and central governments, donors, international organizations, local communities, and private sector representatives.

It is built around six key themes which address disasters as opportunities. It highlights how disaster risk reduction and sustainable reconstruction can have long term benefits for the physical environment and wellbeing of communities. The themes cover environmental and climate resilience, sustainable mobility, integrative social and economic resilience, health and wellbeing, heritage, and efficient resource utilization.

For each theme, the document also provides a framework that stakeholders can use to identify priorities and needs in the aftermath of crises. However, it outlines three essential conditions that ought to be met prior to the implementation of the framework. These include cessation of violence, good governance, and adequate financing.



UN Habitat, ©2019

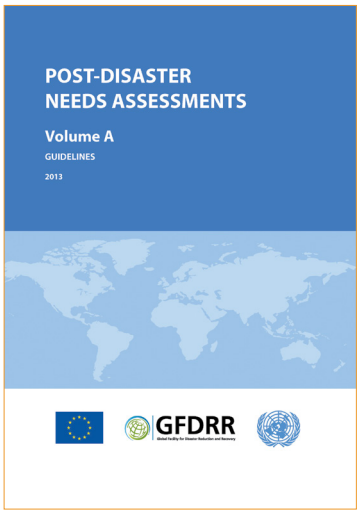
https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/2019-09/supporting_safer_housing_reconstruction_after_disasters.pdf

Toolkit 2:
Supporting Safer Housing Reconstruction After Disasters: Planning and Implementing Technical Assistance at Large Scale

This guide has been developed to support policymakers, practitioners, and organizations in planning and implementing large-scale technical assistance for post-disaster housing reconstruction. Drawing on more than two decades of UN-Habitat's global recovery experience, it aims to help actors improve the quality, safety, and sustainability of housing reconstruction by integrating practical and scalable technical support.

The guide is divided into two main sections. Part A outlines the importance of technical assistance in housing recovery, describing its guiding principles and the evolving context of post-disaster reconstruction. It highlights the critical role of early planning, community engagement, and the use of local capacity. Part B presents eleven thematic chapters offering in-depth operational guidance, covering topics such as institutional arrangements, technical standards, financing mechanisms, capacity building, community outreach, media and communications, monitoring and evaluation, and cross-cutting issues like gender and inclusion.

The guidelines are intended for a wide range of stakeholders. It embraces governments, construction professionals, and affected communities and emphasizes the need for long-term planning, coordination, and learning from past recovery efforts. They promote a people-centered, locally adapted, and iterative approach to ensure safer and more resilient housing in disaster-affected areas.



United Nations, the World Bank (WB) and the European Union (EU), ©2008

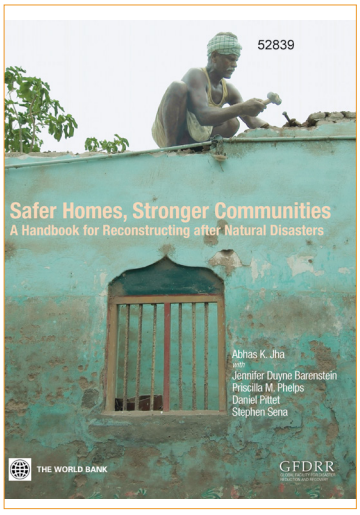
https://www.gfdrr.org/sites/default/files/2017-09/PDNA-Volume-A.pdf

Toolkit 3:
Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA)

The Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) was developed jointly by the UN, the World Bank, and the EU to support governments in leading comprehensive and coordinated recovery planning after disasters and formulate recovery strategies that include physical, social, and economic dimensions.

Structured into several chapters, the guide outlines the PDNA process from initiation and coordination through data collection, impact analysis, and strategy development. It includes detailed guidance on institutional roles, resource mobilization, stakeholder consultations, and the formulation of a recovery framework.

The PDNA is a critical tool for promoting inter-agency and inter-sectoral coordination, aligning governments, development partners, humanitarian actors, and donors around a shared recovery framework. It embeds the principles of Build Back Better and disaster risk reduction into recovery efforts to ensure that reconstruction reduces future vulnerabilities and strengthens resilience. Moreover, the PDNA serves as a vital bridge between humanitarian response and long-term development by facilitating a smooth and strategic transition toward sustainable, inclusive, and risk-informed recovery.



The World Bank ©2010

https://documents.worldbank.org/pt/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/290301468159328458/safer-homes-stronger-communities-a-handbook-for-reconstructing-after-natural-disasters

Toolkit 4:
Safer Homes, Stronger Communities: A Handbook for Reconstructing after Natural Disasters

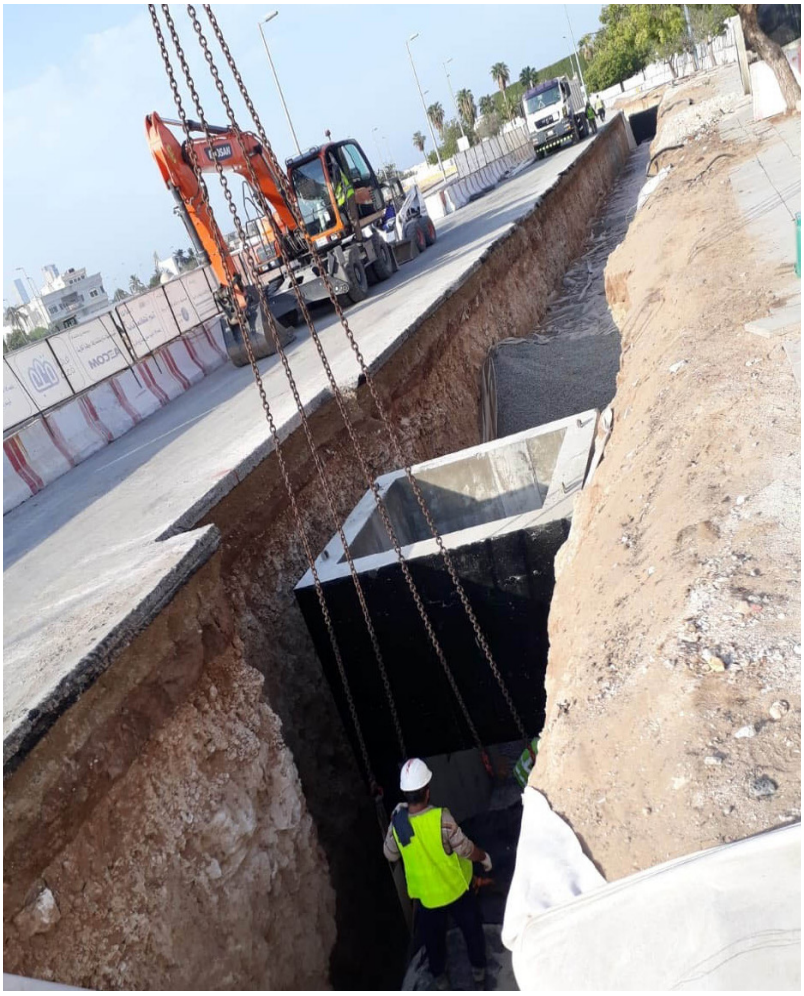
This guide has been developed to facilitate policy makers and project managers make informed decisions on the process of housing and community reconstruction following natural disasters. Underscoring the long-term impacts of decisions taken in the event of emergencies, the guide provides the user with overarching guiding principles which encapsulate the key concepts behind the reconstruction process.

It is structured in four parts, where the first part provides policy and practical advice on key reconstruction issues including assessment, planning, and implementation. The second part discussed monitoring and information management, giving a description of the variety of technologies that are being used in post-disaster assessment and monitoring. The third part highlights the ways through which the World Bank assists governments after disasters and the policies and procedures it adopts in the process. The last part provides technical information, including a glossary and further details on disaster types, disaster risk management, and a matrix of disaster project features that compares policy decisions in various reconstruction projects, demonstrating the range of options available to governments in such situations.

The guide is updated periodically in response to comments received from users as well as in light of the evolving practices in the field of disaster reconstruction.

CITIES IN ACTION

Project 1



Stormwater Drainage Solution Project in Jeddah
©2019 Abuljadayelco

Lessons from Jeddah, Dubai, and Derna
Urban Flood Management

As natural hazards become more frequent, urban infrastructure is increasingly exposed to their effects. In the Arab region, one of the most significant hazards has been in the form of flash floods, affecting several cities and their infrastructure. This article discusses the various measures taken by the cities of Jeddah in Saudi Arabia, Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, and Derna in Libya to address the impact of floods and establish long-term measures to protect themselves against future disasters.

In the year 2009, Jeddah suffered extensive damage due to the flash floods caused by over 70 millimeters of rainfall in a period of just four hours. With over 130 lives lost, and thousands of buildings destroyed, the city responded both through emergency projects, as well as through long-term drainage solution projects. There were 14 emergency projects completed by 2011 within a record time of 110 days that dealt with rainwater and flash floods in Jeddah. They focused on linking the Umm-Al-Khair dam to the northern flood channel and reinforcing the Al-Samar dam by constructing an open drainage channel and linking it to the northern flood channel. The emergency projects also included the construction of 13,000 linear meters of rainwater drainage networks at 12 rainwater collection points, installation of 25 pumps to lift water in tunnels, inspection and cleaning of 70,000 meters of pipes and the establishment of a crisis and disaster management center and 16 support and emergency centers.

The long-term projects, completed in 10 months, include the construction of five dams, with a total length of 2,500 meters and an estimated capacity of more than 24 million cubic meters. These are supported by seven auxiliary dams spanning a length of 1,800 meters in total. Other projects for long-term flood mitigation involve the construction of concrete-lined flood channels, rainwater draining networks for the neighborhoods of Al-Samar, Madain Al-Fahd, Al-Raghama, Al-Nakheel, and Al-Waha, and drainage channels spanning 5,300 meters to service infrastructure near the King Abdulaziz Airport.

Some of the projects also targeted specific neighborhoods, aiming to lower surface water levels and drain rainwater. These were implemented in several neighborhoods including Al-Muhammadiyah, Al-Huda, and Al-Ajawid covering an area of approximately 24 square kilometres.

Similarly, in the aftermath of the storm that flooded the city of Dubai in 2024, the city engineered an extensive flood defence plan. The project, known as Tasreef, aims to enhance the emirate's draining system, and increase its capacity by seven times to manage over 20 million cubic metres of water per day. The project focuses on the improvement of infiltration, sustainable drainage systems and artificial intelligence applications, and the upgrade of stormwater systems as well installation of stormwater tunnels in Deira, Bur Dubai, and Jebel Ali. This involves the construction of 36 kilometres of new drainage lines, linking them to the main Tasreef tunnel, which will ultimately connect drainage systems across the emirate.

The project is scheduled for completion in 2033 and is designed to meet the city's needs for the next 100 years. It employs advanced tunneling technology with automated control systems that enable continuous monitoring and data analysis, along with comprehensive safety systems to ensure the safety of workers and equipment.

Another city in the region that was severely affected by flooding is Derna, in Northeastern Libya. Hit by Storm Daniel in 2023, the city suffered from destruction to key infrastructure such as roads, electricity and communication lines, as well as water and sanitation networks. In response to this, a Libyan Reconstruction and Development Fund was set up, undertaking massive construction efforts across the city. These included the rebuilding of homes, schools, roads and bridges. Within a year, 3,500 homes were rebuilt, and maintenance work had been carried out on the city's power grid and schools. In 2024, official announcements confirmed that 70% of the reconstruction projects in Derna had been completed. In the same year, the first commercial ship arrived at the port of Derna, marking a significant step in the reconstruction efforts and reviving the city's economy.

While the experiences of Jeddah, Dubai, and Derna indicate that there are several avenues for recovery, they also highlight the urgent need for disaster risk mitigation and preventative measures in cities. Without such measures, cities are at the risk of losing significant capital and resources for emergency response measures, which in turn impacts day to day municipal service delivery and the general well-being of citizens.



Overturned cars lay among other debris caused by flash floods in Derna, eastern Libya on September 11, 2023
©2023 AFP/Getty

Project 2



Rehabilitation of historic Shibam and Zabid, Yemen as an impulse for community and economy
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Heritage Preservation and Urban Rehabilitation in Yemen
Shibam and Zabid

Cities in Yemen are rich in living heritage, with ancient monuments, traditional urban form, and vibrant community life in historic districts. However, the pressures of population growth, sprawl, and prolonged conflict have impacted Yemeni cities and their urban heritage. This article looks at the case of two cities, Shibam and Zabid, and the various activities undertaken to restore and rehabilitate not just built heritage but also local economies.

Shibam, located in Wadi Hadhramaut in eastern Yemen, is home to some of the most unique buildings in the world, standing six to eight stories tall and built primarily from mud bricks. Often cited as the 'Manhattan of the desert', it has been on the world heritage list since 1982. While the city's buildings have a maximum life span of 300 years, it is vulnerable to flooding, as was seen during the 2008 storm that demolished over 600 houses. In addition to this, the buildings are frequently threatened by wind, rain, and heat erosion, and need constant upkeep to maintain their structural integrity.

Reconstruction efforts in Shibam, therefore, have focused on preserving the unique mud-brick architecture while also ensuring that the living heritage, of which the community is an integral part, stays active. Under the umbrella of a project launched in 2000, titled the Shibam Urban Development Project, local and national entities in Yemen and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) led historic conservation while developing the economic, social,



Reconstruction work for the Project for the Development of Historic Cities in Yemen
©2004-2007 NNDesign Studio | GIZ Yemen

and administrative base in the city to ensure its vitality and continuity. The primary aim of the project was to strengthen the local community's capacity to preserve its cultural heritage and in doing so ensure that the community shares the economic returns and benefits of having preserved this heritage.

The project had four primary components: heritage conservation, economic development, community initiatives, and infrastructure development. The implementation of these components was done over three phrases. The first phase was completed by 2004 and focused on organizing and mobilising the community as well as initiating interventions in alignment with community priorities. The second phase ended in 2007 and targeted the strengthening of local capacities for the management and implementation of interventions.

By 2007, the project had rehabilitated almost 200 buildings, with an average height of six stories and 500 square metres of floor space. In addition to this, the project also set up a Monuments Fund to restore key public buildings. Some of the monuments restored through this fund include the minaret of Al-Harah Madrassa, Ba Ziad Mosque, Bilad al Gharib mosque, and the five historic fountains in and around Shibam. During the restoration process, the project focused on supporting local economic development activities by creating employment opportunities, hosting community workshops, designing training modules, as well as providing technical assistance to local non-governmental organizations.

Following the Shibam Urban Development Project, in 2007, the first phase of the MEDINA project was launched for the urban renewal of both Shibam, and Zabid, a city in Yemen situated in the Tihama coastal plain near the Red Sea. It consists of rich folk art and crafts, and its vernacular architecture is reminiscent of the Rasulid period when Zabid was the capital of Yemen. Today, it is a small market consisting of approximately 20,000 inhabitants, and the spread of informal modern buildings has threatened its heritage value.

The program focused on three primary components, namely housing, urban management plan, and local economic development. It granted technical assistance and financial incentives to residents in order to encourage them to restore historic residential buildings using locally available materials and traditional skills and construction techniques. In doing so, it also provided training to artisans in mud, stone, and timber construction techniques, enabling them to participate in the construction industry outside of the program as well. Furthermore, an Urban Rehabilitation Forum was established to enable joint decision making and foster dialogue across the diverse group of stakeholders in the city. To promote the local economy, the program led the revitalization of a central souk in Zabid, and provided various microfinance and business promotion opportunities to the locals.

By 2012, 66% of Shibam's historic high-rise buildings had been restored and 228 homeowners in Zabid had taken part in the housing programme, employing approximately 2,000 skilled and unskilled workers. Parts of the old souk in Zabid were also revitalized, and support given to small-scale entrepreneurs to establish their businesses in the market. Following the first phase, the management of the renovation program in Shibam and Zabid was handed over to the respective municipalities as well as the Organization for the Preservation of Historic Cities of Yemen (GOPHCY). The process is being adapted for a second phase that is to be carried out in other cities in Yemen, indicating the significance of the work done in Shibam and Zabid in facilitating recovery and reconstruction activities across the country.

Project 3



Beirut Port
©2020 Jo Kassis | Pexels

Rebuilding Lives
Urban Recovery in Syria and Lebanon

Urban recovery initiatives, in addition to focusing on physical reconstruction, also see significant success when their aim is to transform communities through other interventions such as enhancing the quality of education, municipal services, urban environment, and general well-being. This article discusses various programs across Syria and Lebanon, in particular in Al Tell, Marba, and Beirut, to gain deeper insight into how these cities have intervened in areas of public health, education, and solid waste management to drive the recovery of communities.

The city of Al Tell, and its neighboring village of Maarba, both lie north of Damascus in Syria. A combination of environmental degradation, conflict-driven damage, and limited upkeep of municipal infrastructure has made both the city and the village vulnerable to degradation. In response to this, from 2021 to 2024, a European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) funded project was implemented across several governates in Syria. Known as the 'Resilience in Emergency Context and Opportunities for the Vulnerable Enabling Recovery (RECOVER)' project, it aimed to help approximately 130,000 people recover from crises in the country. It did so by focusing on upgrading the quality of water, sanitation, and hygiene systems as well as investing in education services by ensuring children return to and stay in school. Some of the activities under the umbrella of this project include repairing water and

sewage infrastructure, installing solar panels to increase water pumping operation in buildings, adminisering informal education and remedial classes for out of school children, creating teacher workshops, and providing emergency services.

In Al Tell and Maarba specifically, the project repaired two schools, provided additional classes to students who were struggling with academics, offered psychosocial support and counselling for children affected by the crisis, and hosted various informative sessions for parents on priority issues faced by their children. By focusing on education and basic services such as water and sewerage, the project envisioned grassroots progress and improvement in both the city and the village.

In the case of Beirut in Lebanon, following the port explosion, there was an immediate need to not only restore built heritage but also revive key municipal services. The blast inflicted significant damage to key municipal infrastructure including the Karantina Sorting facility and Coral Composting facility, rendering them non-functional and adding additional burden on the city's landfill sites.

In light of this, the Beirut Critical Environment Recovery, Restoration, and Waste Management Program was launched in the year 2022. It aimed to respond to the emergent environmental issues that arose following the blast in 2020, including those that posed a risk to public health. It includes three components, rehabilitation of damaged solid waste management infrastructure, policy and institutional support for greening Beirut's Reconstruction Agenda, and other project management involving the UNDP as an intermediary agency.

For the rehabilitation of waste management infrastructure, the project dealt specifically with the management and disposal of waste generated from damaged buildings as well as waste that has been contaminated by asbestos. It also includes the rehabilitation of solid waste infrastructure and facilities and the associated technical assistance required for its sustained operation. For the component on supporting Beirut's Reconstruction Agenda, the project prepared a national inventory for hazardous waste and chemical stockpiles and conducted an assessment of national environmental laboratories. The UNDP played a role in the project by facilitating overall project management, fiduciary, and safeguards compliance, conducting necessary technical, financial and environmental studies, as well as through other forms of technical assistance and strengthening measures.

The project also paid particular attention to gender equality and social inclusion and ensured the involvement of both men and women in the implementation of the works. It did so by coordinating with women-led NGOs and offering a range of opportunities, including participation in pilot projects, technical training, and awareness campaigns.

In both Syria and Lebanon, urban recovery initiatives have demonstrated the transformative power of targeting community needs through education, public health, and sustainable infrastructure. From the rehabilitation of schools and water systems in Al Tell and Maarba to the restoration of waste management facilities in Beirut, these efforts have not only rebuilt physical spaces but also fostered social resilience. Projects like RECOVER and the Beirut Critical Environment Recovery Program highlight the importance of holistic, inclusive approaches, ensuring that recovery impacts are long-lasting and equitable. By addressing immediate and systemic challenges, they pave the way for sustainable urban regeneration.



Celebration at Al tell School following the RECOVER project
©2024 ADRA

Project 4



2003 Boumerdes Earthquake
©2011 Magharebia | Flickr

Algeria and Morocco
Urban Resilience in the face of Earthquakes

As building technologies and construction processes modernize, there is potential for greater protection against natural hazards and subsequently, stronger and more resilient infrastructure that has the capacity to withstand unforeseen disasters.

Of these disasters, earthquakes have posed significant damage to urban infrastructure in cities across the world. This article takes a closer look at the 2003 earthquake that hit Boumerdès in Algeria, and the 2023 earthquake that affected various parts of Morocco, and the steps taken by both to recover from the extensive damage caused by these events.

The city of Boumerdès, located in the north of Algeria on the Mediterranean sea, suffered from a high intensity earthquake in 2003 that affected over 12,000 lives, more than a 1,000 buildings, and damaged significant infrastructure. It also left 200,000 people homeless, and in response to this mass displacement, the government initiated a recovery program to rebuild 49 communities. It did so in three parts, where the first focused on the construction of new dwellings, the second supported the repair of slightly and moderately damaged houses, and the third on the provision of temporary dwellings. The government aimed to construct 20,000 new housing units by the end of 2003.

Other reconstruction activities were supported by international agencies such as the European Investment Bank that focused on rebuilding urban

infrastructure and social amenities. These included water supply and treatment facilities, electricity and gas services, public transport systems, hospitals, schools, clinics, and other public buildings.

Furthermore, the Algerian government also took several regulatory steps to ensure greater resilience against any future hazards. It improved the National Seismic Building Code, making it compulsory for implementation on both public and private construction. It also introduced a compulsory natural hazard insurance scheme, standardized teaching about disaster risk reduction across all levels of education, adopted a disaster prevention law, and encouraged informal disaster education by the Algerian Red Crescent and the civil protection agency.

Nearly 20 years later, in 2023, Morocco was also hit with the worst earthquake in its history, affecting over 7,000 lives, and reducing several settlements into rubble. Within a year of this, the government revealed that over 40,000 construction projects were initiated, aiming to reconstruct homes that suffered damage during the event. The public reconstruction program focused on three priority areas: rehabilitation of schools, hospitals, and road networks, improvement of seismic standards, and integration of sustainable energy solutions to enhance climate adaptation. The government also established a Special Fund for the Management of Earthquake Effects and a High Atlas Development Agency for greater efficiency in the management of the recovery process.

Furthermore, reconstruction was supported by international funding entities such as the European Investment Bank that facilitated the rehabilitation of public infrastructure, primarily schools, hospitals, and road networks. In addition to this, a cooperation with the German and Danish embassies in Morocco also initiated a program titled 'Sustainable Territories: Sustainable Land and Resilient Lifestyles in Morocco' in the High Atlas region that suffered significant damage from the earthquake. The program aimed to enhance water availability and support local economic development activities in the region, by focusing on four key areas. These include water resource governance, reconstruction, economic recovery, and promotion of skills necessary to carry out the activities under the program.

By October 2024, across the affected sites, 42 health centers were upgraded, and 127 schools were rehabilitated and reopened. Reconstruction was also carried out at affected heritage and cultural sites. The Great Mosque of Tinmel of the 12th Century, that lay in pieces after the earthquake, was rebuilt using original materials, by a team of local experts, local authorities, and the community.

The experiences of Algeria and Morocco highlight the transformative power of resilience and recovery in the face of natural disasters. Local authorities across both countries undertook coordinated efforts to rebuild infrastructure, support affected communities, and enhance disaster preparedness. With improved seismic standards, sustainable development plans, and international collaborations, their recovery journeys emphasize the significance of proactive measures in mitigating risks and fostering resilience. As global disasters increase, these lessons serve as important models for integrating innovation, inclusivity, and sustainability into disaster management strategies worldwide.



Damages on Tinmel Mosque after the 2023 earthquake in Morocco
©2023 Lucyin | Wikimedia Commons

Project 5



Repair of school desks in Hama
©2025 Yahya Maraka | UNDP Syria

Participatory Community Recovery in Hama
Building Resilience and Inclusivity

One of the key components of an effective urban recovery strategy is related to the role of the community and civil society stakeholders. In cases where there is effective coordination between municipalities and the communities, reconstruction and recovery efforts see long-term success. This article explores Participatory Local Recovery Planning in Syria, particularly for the neighborhoods of Al-Madinah, Al-Bashoura, Al-Baroudiyah, Al-Shahabaa, and Al-Faihaa in the city center of Hama, and the comprehensive approach the city is adopting for early recovery and resilience-building for the people of Syria.

Hama is one of the four largest cities in Syria and is part of the Hama governorate that has been affected by prolonged crisis. As a result of this, there has been a significant increase in migration from rural areas to the city of Hama, adding undue burden on the housing stock and other municipal services. In 2021 and 2022, the Governorate and City Council of Hama, along with UNDP and a diverse group of community members, international organizations, local NGOs, and representatives of the private sector, led the process of preparing a Participatory Community Recovery Plan. This process sought to foster resilience in neighborhoods through a holistic approach that reflects the complexities of the situation on ground and is driven by the priorities of local communities in order to meet their basic needs.

Therefore, the Participatory Community Recovery Plan 2022-2025 was formulated, and designed to reflect five key pillars: institutional organization, community organization, infrastructure and basic services, economic vitality, and the healthy neighborhood. During the course of the planning process, key stakeholders defined several main priority areas under each pillar. For institutional organization these priority areas focused on fostering participatory local governance and strengthening ties between the community and local authorities. It highlights the need to enhance the responsiveness of local governments and building administrative capacities. Key areas include training on laws, participatory planning, accountability, and inclusiveness. Priority areas for community organization include enhancing participation, reducing inequalities, building capacities of vulnerable groups, promoting dialogue and volunteerism, and supporting community-based organizations to sustain local recovery efforts. For infrastructure and basic services, the plan stressed on improving water, electricity, and sewage networks to alleviate strain on resources and enhance community resilience. It also focused on waste management, public transportation, and telecommunications to ensure accessibility and sustainability. Furthermore, the plan emphasized gender equity, social cohesion, and community engagement in maintaining services.

The city of Hama plays a central role in the economic life of the governorate, as home to some of the main and traditional markets of the region. To ensure economic vitality of the city, stakeholders identified a range of priority areas. These include rehabilitating local markets, empowering women and youth through tailored training, financial support, and the implementation of decent work policies. Additionally, supporting the private sector and small businesses was marked as vital to revive industries and crafts that have the potential to enhance a sense of community responsibility. Under the pillar of a Healthy Neighborhood, the plan focused on fostering inclusivity by addressing the needs of marginalized groups such as women, youth, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) through community protection networks, psychosocial support programs, and empowerment initiatives. It emphasized promoting equitable access to services, raising environmental awareness, and improving hygiene and waste management practices to build a healthier, cohesive community. Additionally, the plan aimed to enhance local governance by encouraging diverse representation and participation in decision-making processes for sustainable recovery and resilience.

The participatory recovery planning process for the city of Hama had various impacts, primarily in amplifying the role of the community in taking ownership of reconstruction activities. These included mobilization of residents for rehabilitation of parks, removal of rubble from neighborhoods, and other activities that otherwise relied on international external aid programs. However, the process does acknowledge the importance of incorporating support from other local, national, and international actors. One of the key implications of this planning process is that it gives all humanitarian and development actors working for recovery in Syria a common framework through which they can align their interventions with local priorities. Following its piloting in Hama, UNDP Syria planned to scale-up the approach for other areas in the country.



Participants from both city council and local committees on the same table in Hama
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Nahr el-Bared Refugee Camp before reconstruction
©2011 Aga Khan Award for Architecture

Reconstruction of the Nahr al-Bared Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon

One of the most pressing concerns in the aftermath of a conflict is mass displacement, where entire communities are often uprooted and left to seek refuge and rebuild their lives under challenging circumstances. This article explores the case of Nahr el Bared, a refugee camp in Lebanon, as a poignant example of the challenges and complexities that arise in the midst of ambitious reconstruction plans and the ongoing struggle to restore stability and dignity for displaced populations.

Nahr el Bared is a refugee camp located in northern Lebanon, on the Mediterranean coast, and was originally established by the Federation of Red Cross Societies in 1949 to provide accommodation to Palestinian Refugees from the upper Galilee and northern coastal region of Palestine. While it began as a tent settlement, it was later upgraded to include concrete block sheds and houses. In 2007, conflict in the country caused extensive damage to Nahr el Bared, completely destroying what was the second largest camp in Lebanon at the time. It housed a United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA) health center, schools, and a relief office, which also faced severe destruction.

In 2009, UNWRA commenced the reconstruction of Nahr el-Bared camp and the management of its

approximately 27,000 displaced refugees. This initiative represented the largest project of its kind ever undertaken by the organization. The reconstruction plan was prepared in close coordination with Lebanese public sector entities, the World Bank, the local community, as well as other UN agencies and NGOs. Although UNRWA led on-the-ground reconstruction, the Lebanese government and relevant municipal agencies played a central coordination and regulatory role from approving designs, clearing land and debris, to supervising infrastructure works and integrating the camp into broader municipal systems. This ensured that the project reflected both community vision and state-level requirements.

The refugees played a significant role in the reconstruction of the camp, through the creation of a local entity known as the Nahr el Bared Reconstruction Commission for Civil Action and Studies (NBRC). It consisted of a diverse network of professionals and activists from both inside and outside the camp. Despite not having a formal role in the reconstruction process initially, the NBRC began its own documentation process and developed a community informed vision for the reconstruction of the camp. With the help of affected families, it surveyed the area, and within a time period of three months, produced detailed maps illustrating the location and sizes of all of the camp's 1,697 buildings. Over 150 volunteers assisted with this exercise, which also included the creation of a database of dwellers, owners, and apartments in the camp. The NBRC partnered with the Camp Improvement Unit in UNRWA, where the latter advocated for the inclusion of refugees in the reconstruction process. As a result, the work done by NBRC was adopted and they were included in future dialogue on the reconstruction, subsequently formalizing their participation.

Following two years of extensive work and countless dialogue between stakeholders, with over twenty-four different versions of the reconstruction master plan, a preliminary plan was approved by the government in 2009. The plan involved the reconstruction of over 1,000 shops, residential units for almost 5,000 families, the UNWRA compound, and the entirety of the camp's infrastructure. It consisted of eight reconstruction packages and commenced with the removal of approximately 500,000 cubic meters of rubble from the camp site. While the reconstruction was taking place, the refugees were relocated to another camp in the same area.

By 2011, the first reconstruction package was completed, housing 317 families and inaugurating three UNRWA schools. By 2013, two other packages had been rebuilt, however, the project faced delays due to challenges in management and funding. Nevertheless, work continued and by 2017, nearly half of the housing units had been completed with another 370 under construction.

Despite the various complexities surrounding the process, the reconstruction Nahr el Balad is considered a milestone in the participatory planning and design of a refugee camp. It was also selected as one of the ten finalist projects for the Agha Khan Award for Architecture in 2010. The reconstruction process it adopted serves as a testament to what can be achieved when all stakeholders, particularly the refugees themselves, are actively involved in shaping their futures.



Residents discussing the Masterplan on a walk-in map
©2011 Aga Khan Award for Architecture

OUR NEWS

AUDI SIGNS A HEADQUARTERS AGREEMENT WITH THE SAUDI MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

As part of Saudi Arabia's ongoing support for regional and international organizations, the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI) has embarked on a new chapter by signing a headquarters agreement with the Saudi government. This milestone represents a key element of the broad transformation strategy led by the Institute's President, His Highness Prince Dr. Faisal bin Ayyaf.

The signing ceremony took place on Monday, April 28, 2025, coinciding with Shawwal 30, 1446 Hijri, at the headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Riyadh. The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Multilateral International Affairs and Supervisor General of the Public Diplomacy Agency, H.E. Dr. Abdulrahman bin Ibrahim Al-Rassi, signed the headquarters agreement on behalf of the ministry, while it was signed on behalf of AUDI by its Director General, H.E. Dr. Anas Al-Mughairy.

This agreement underscores Saudi Arabia's influential role in both regional and global contexts, as well as its dedication to advancing urban development in Arab cities. It also reaffirms the Kingdom's commitment to supporting member states by fostering innovative urban policies, enhancing institutional capacity, developing municipal leaders' skills, and increasing cities' international visibility through a more active role in urban diplomacy.



The Arab Urban Development Institute Signs a Headquarters Agreement with the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs
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RIYADH SUCCESSFULLY CONCLUDES THE ARAB EUROPEAN CITIES DIALOGUE

The Saudi capital, Riyadh, concluded the inaugural edition of the Arab European Cities Dialogue Forum, hosted by the Riyadh Region Municipality in collaboration with the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI), under the theme "Bridging Cities, Building Futures." This landmark forum saw high-level participation from mayors, governors, and city leaders, as well as an elite of urban experts and representatives from international organizations, development banks, and municipal unions from both the Arab world and Europe.

Over three days, Riyadh became a dynamic platform for meaningful urban dialogue. Participants addressed key challenges facing cities today, including climate change, rapid population growth, and the demands of digital transformation. The discussions highlighted the importance of strengthening urban diplomacy and establishing long-term cooperation networks between cities to enhance the quality of life and advance progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals.

In-depth Dialogue and Interactive Field Visits

The forum included a series of dialogue sessions and specialized workshops that explored critical issues such as climate change and strategic planning, innovative urban financing, digital transformation in municipal governance, and fostering cultural and knowledge-based cooperation between cities. A dedicated "Cities Leadership" session was also held, chaired by H.H. Prince Dr. Faisal Bin Abdulaziz Bin Ayyaf, Mayor of Riyadh Region and President of AUDI. The session concluded with the announcement that Madrid, the capital of Spain, will host the next edition



Attended by over 100 Cities and 50 Global Organizations, Riyadh concludes AECD Forum with an International Consensus on Fostering Sustainable Urban Partnerships

of the forum in 2027, underscoring the forum's commitment to ongoing dialogue and strengthening urban connections.

As part of the event program, city leaders and participating delegations toured several major projects and notable landmarks in Riyadh, including the Sports Ploulevard Project, the Historical District, and the King Abdullah Financial District (KAFD). These visits provided insights into the city's urban development initiatives and showcased Riyadh's experience in modern urban planning and transformation.

Signing Strategic Partnership Agreements

The forum featured the signing of three significant strategic agreements between the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI) and various international partners. These agreements reflect AUDI's ambition to serve as a leading regional platform for fostering coordination and collaboration in urban development. The three agreements are as follows:

- The first agreement was signed with Metropolis International to launch the International City Diplomacy Program, aimed at strengthening municipal leadership and advancing urban governance through capacity building and international collaboration.
- The second agreement was concluded with the Smart City Expo World Congress to support the implementation of specialized scientific programs focused on digital transformation, extending till 2027.
- The announcement of a Regional Project for Urban Greening in Partnership with the Municipality of Tunisia, Green Activities in some Arab Cities - Participatory Greening of Neighborhoods in Arab Cities and supported by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development. The project focuses on enhancing public spaces by converting them into participatory green areas, contributing to more sustainable and community-centered urban environments.

Recommendations and a Roadmap for Integration

During the closing session, participants put forward several key recommendations. Chief among them were the consolidation of sustainable cooperation networks between Arab and European cities, the development of more flexible urban financing mechanisms, and the promotion of community engagement in decision-making processes. They also highlighted the significance of city twinning and the exchange of practical expertise in infrastructure and public services.

H.H. Prince Dr. Faisal bin Ayyaf emphasized that Riyadh's hosting of the forum underscores its commitment to positioning itself as a leading city in the development of sustainable and smart urban futures. He noted that the gathering served as a valuable opportunity to forge strategic relationships among capitals and major cities.

For his part, H.E. AUDI Director General Dr. Anas Mofarreh Almughairy, described the forum as a pivotal moment in Arab European urban dialogue. He noted that the outcomes and partnerships established during the event will be translated into practical programs and initiatives in the upcoming phase.

Global Recognition and Planning for the Next Edition

The forum ended with strong praise from participating delegations, who commended its excellent organization, the wide range of topics covered, the depth of discussions, and the quality of the outcomes. Participants highlighted the need to establish the forum as a recurring platform for urban dialogue between decision-makers and experts from the Arab world and Europe. Such a platform would foster knowledge exchange, strengthen cooperation, and support cities in pursuing balanced and sustainable development at both regional and international levels. With the successful conclusion of the forum's first edition, Riyadh has reinforced its role as a regional hub for urban dialogue and a platform for sharing innovative experiences and leading initiatives. These efforts aim to reshape cities into smarter, more human-centered, and environmentally and socially connected spaces.

AUDI SIGNS THREE STRATEGIC AGREEMENTS DURING AECD

Highlighting the expanding role of the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI) in urban development and global collaboration, AUDI signed three key strategic agreements during the Arab European Cities Dialogue Forum (AECD 2025). The forum, held from May 11 to 13 at the Hilton Hotel in Granada, was hosted by the Riyadh Region Municipality in partnership with AUDI, under the theme "Bridging Cities, Building Futures." The signing of these agreements was part of the forum's agenda—an unprecedented regional event designed to foster meaningful urban dialogue between Arab and European cities. The forum aims to encourage collaboration and facilitate the exchange of expertise among mayors, governors, international urban organizations, municipal unions, donor institutions, and development banks.

In this context, and alongside the forum, AUDI signed three strategic agreements with international and regional organizations to advance urban transformation, promote sustainability, and foster knowledge and technology partnerships in Arab cities.



An Agreement with Metropolis International to launch the International City Diplomacy Program
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An Agreement with METROPOLIS International to Launch International City Diplomacy Program

As part of these agreements, AUDI partnered with Metropolis International to launch the International City Diplomacy Program. This program aims to build the capacities of Arab city leaders in urban diplomacy, city governance, and the development of institutional cooperation networks. The program emphasizes strengthening knowledge partnerships among member cities and coordinating efforts to attract and tap into external funding for collaborative initiatives, thereby enhancing the Arab presence on global urban platforms. Metropolis International represents over 160 major cities worldwide, encompassing more than 700 million people.

A Partnership Agreement with Smart City Expo World Congress (SCEWC) to Enhance Knowledge and Urban Innovation

As part of its commitment to digital transformation and the development of smart cities, AUDI signed a partnership agreement with the Smart City Expo World Congress—one of the leading global events dedicated to smart cities and sustainability. This agreement includes support for the activities of the conference, with an emphasis on enriching its scientific content and hosting specialized dialogue sessions. The partnership aims to facilitate the exchange of best practices and the development of innovative smart solutions to enhance the quality of life in Arab cities. It also encompasses joint efforts in organizing the Arab European Cities Dialogue Forum (AECD2027).

A Regional Project for Urban Greening in Partnership with the Municipality of Tunisia, Green Activities in some Arab Cities - Participatory Greening of Neighborhoods in Arab Cities

AUDI also announced the launch of a regional urban greening project in collaboration with the Municipality of Tunisia and with support from the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD). This project centers on three key areas as follows:

Green Lung of the Neighborhood: Revitalizing urban areas by transforming them into community-driven green spaces.



A Partnership Agreement with Smart City Expo World Congress (SCEWC) to Enhance Knowledge and Urban Innovation

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Short-Term Urban Initiatives: Carrying out extensive tree-planting and greening campaigns.

Knowledge Dissemination: Developing training materials and documenting experiences to create a valuable knowledge resource that supports the sharing of expertise.

The project is carried out with active involvement from universities and local communities, organizing workshops and design studios that engage residents in both planning and implementation.

A Strategic Approach to Building More Resilient and Sustainable Cities

The three agreements signed by AUDI demonstrate a strategic commitment to forging robust international partnerships and advancing innovative urban policies. These efforts aim to boost the resilience of Arab cities in tackling growing environmental, social, and economic challenges, while promoting an integrated urban model focused on inclusivity and sustainability.



A Regional Project for Urban Greening in Partnership with the Municipality of Tunisia, Green Activities in some Arab Cities - Participatory Greening of Neighborhoods in Arab Cities
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GALA DINNER IN HONOR OF AECD DELEGATION HEADS

His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Abdulaziz, Deputy Governor of the Riyadh Region, attended a gala dinner hosted, this evening, by the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI) at its headquarters, in honor of the heads of delegations participating in the Arab European Cities Dialogue Forum, currently underway in the Saudi capital.

His Royal Highness was welcomed upon his arrival by H.H. Prince Dr. Faisal Bin Abdulaziz Bin Ayyaf, Mayor of Riyadh Region and President of AUDI and Chairman of the Forum's Organizing Committee.

His Royal Highness, the Deputy Governor of Riyadh Region welcomed the city leaders and heads of delegations, highlighting that Riyadh's role as host of the forum's inaugural edition underscores its growing prominence in the regional and international urban landscape. H.R.H emphasized the city's commitment to supporting municipal initiatives and strengthening effective urban partnerships.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, His Royal Highness joined the traditional Saudi "Ardah" dance —also known as Najdi Ardah, performed with swords— alongside several city leaders and mayors from various Arab and European cities. This event is part of a series of activities accompanying the forum, designed to strengthen ties and foster cooperation between Arab and European cities through urban partnership and integration.



AUDI Gala Dinner
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AUDI PARTICIPATES IN THE 9TH EDITION OF CASABLANCA SMART CITY CONFERENCE

The Arab Urban Development Institute participated in the ninth edition of Casablanca Smart City Conference, reinforcing its regional presence and commitment to driving digital transformation and promoting smart, inclusive governance across Arab cities.

At the panel discussion titled "Towards Participatory and Connected Governance," Dr. Montaser Hiyari, Director of Capacity Development and Training at AUDI, highlighted key findings from the Institute's latest Urban Policy Report series, "Municipalities and Digital Transformation in Arab Cities: An Institutional Development Perspective."

The discussion focused on the rapid changes shaping digital governance in Arab cities, underscoring the critical need for municipal institutions to be prepared and to develop citizen-centered digital platforms. It also highlighted the importance of strategic reforms that foster participatory urban governance.

Dr. Hiyari emphasized that disparity in digital transformation go beyond the gap between highly advanced cities and those in earlier stages; it also exists between local governments and the communities it serves. This reality calls for inclusive digital urban policies that bridge societal and technological divides, ensuring no segment of society is left behind in the path toward sustainable development.

The session featured several experts from various cities and international institutions, including representatives from Casablanca, Rabat, France, India, and Luxembourg. Their participation created a dynamic platform for sharing experiences and exploring innovative digital solutions in urban governance.



Dr. Montaser Hiyari, Director of Capacity Development and Training at AUDI, presenting at the Casablanca Smart City Conference
©2025 Casablanca Smart City Conference

BRIDGING CITIES: EXPLORING SOLUTIONS FOR SHARED CHALLENGES

The Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI), in collaboration with Boston Consulting Group (BCG), unveiled a new report titled "Building Bridges Between Cities: Exploring Solutions for Shared Challenges" on the sidelines of the Euro-Arab Cities Dialogue Forum. The report aims to foster cooperation and address common urban challenges faced by cities across the two regions.

The report explores how Arab and European cities can strengthen cooperation by applying six practical models of urban connectivity. It focuses on three main priorities: building climate resilience, advancing digital transformation, and improving municipal finance. Drawing on case studies from cities like Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Amsterdam, Sofia, and Riyadh, the report presents actionable solutions for promoting sustainable urban development.

Positioned as a key reference for shaping comprehensive urban policies, the report calls for strong partnerships and forward-thinking strategies to build more balanced and interconnected cities for the future.



Bridging Cities: Exploring Solutions for Shared Challenges
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TRAINING WORKSHOP: ASSET MANAGEMENT AND PRIVATIZATION OF SERVICES

The Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI), in collaboration with Jeddah Municipality, held a tailored workshop titled "Asset Management and Privatization of Services" from April 22 to 24, 2025. The event aimed to boost institutional capacity and improve the efficiency of resource and service management within municipal institutions, as part of AUDI's ongoing commitment to advancing urban governance across the region.

Over the course of three days, the workshop delivered 18 hours of in-person training to 37 staff members from the municipality. The sessions combined theoretical insights with practical applications, equipping participants with essential skills in asset and service management.



AUDI holds Training Workshop titled "Asset Management and Privatization of Services"
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The workshop featured the following objectives:

- Enabling municipalities in creating and implementing modern asset management strategies in an efficient and sustainable manner.
- Encouraging investment partnerships as a sustainable approach to privatization.
- Equipping participants with the skills to assess and categorize municipal assets and analyze their investment feasibility.
- Improving knowledge of asset management practices and fostering partnerships with the private sector.
- Building capacity to design and implement transformation plans for municipal services, aligning with national priorities for local development.

The workshop is part of a broader series of training programs organized by AUDI to support institutional transformation and promote best practices in urban service management across Arab cities



AUDI holds Training Workshop titled "Asset Management and Privatization of Services"
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TRAINING WORKSHOP: PREPARING EXECUTIVE PLANS AND CAPITAL PORTFOLIOS

As part of ongoing efforts to enhance urban governance and strengthen institutional capacity, the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI), in collaboration with Jeddah Municipality, held a specialized training workshop titled " Preparing Executive Plans and Capital Portfolios" from April 27 to 29, 2025.

The three-day event, which included 18 hours of in-person training, brought together 35 municipal staff members. It is part of a broader initiative to strengthen institutional capacity and advance effective urban planning across municipal sectors. The sessions were specifically designed to meet the practical demands of fieldwork, focusing on real-world applications and hands-on learning.

The workshop set out to accomplish several key objectives, including:

- Empowering participants to grasp the fundamentals of capital planning and recognize the importance of preparing executive plans for municipal projects.
- Developing skills to organize capital portfolios aligned with the strategic priorities of local authorities.
- Applying practical methodologies to prepare effective executive plans that enhance efficiency and sustainability in project implementation.
- Providing tools for analyzing and evaluating capital projects to improve their alignment with sustainability objectives.

This workshop is part of the AUDI's ongoing commitment to delivering impactful training programs that align with the ambitions of Arab cities to elevate municipal performance and boost efficiency in project management.



Training Workshop Titled Preparing Executive Plans and Capital Portfolios
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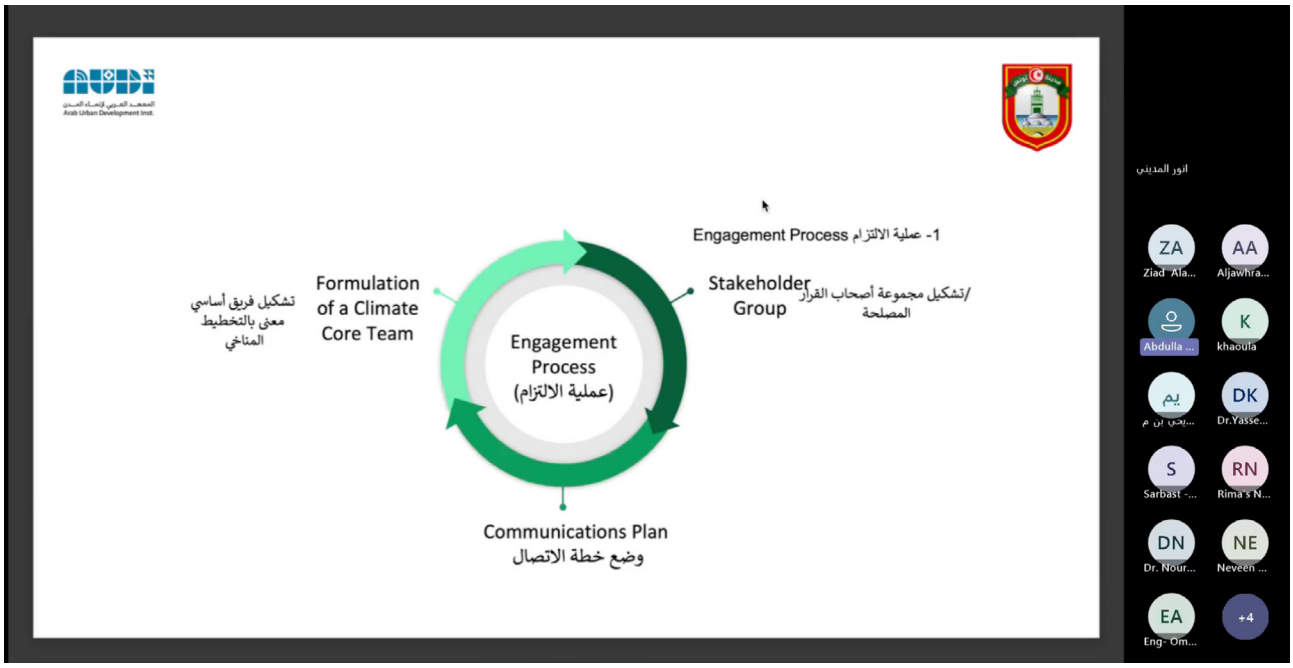
Cities in Action: Webinar Series

TUNIS MUNICIPALITY'S EXPERIENCE WITH ENERGY TRANSITION AND CLIMATE PLANNING: A MODEL FOR OTHER CITIES

The Arab Urban Development Institute held the thirteenth session of its Cities in Action webinar series on Wednesday evening, 2 Dhul-Qi'dah 1446 AH (corresponding to 30 April 2025), with the participation of numerous specialists and professionals engaged in urban development.

Dr. Abdulla Difalla, moderator of the webinar and Professor of Urban Planning, began the session with an overview of the webinar series and highlighted its importance in enriching the discussion on urban development across all Arab cities. He also stressed that the benefit of these sessions lies in identifying pioneering urban development projects and exchanging ideas on mechanisms and the elements of success.

The meeting began with a presentation by Engineer Anouar Medini, a chief civil engineer currently serving as the acting head of the General Administration of Roads, Green Areas, and Parks in Tunisia. With over 35 years of experience in public works and infrastructure



Webinar on Tunis Municipality's experience with Energy Transition and Climate Planning
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management, he has held numerous leadership roles within the Municipality of Tunisia and has played a key role in planning and executing major infrastructure and development projects across the city.

Engineer Anouar showcased the Municipality of Tunisia's experience as a leading example in energy transition and climate planning, highlighting its commitment to international climate agreements and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. He discussed the local climate plan, emphasizing efforts to cut carbon emissions, use energy more efficiently, and expand the adoption of renewable energy sources.

Engineer Anouar outlined the major accomplishments of the Municipality of Tunisia's energy and climate transition plan, including the installation of solar panels on public buildings, the establishment of electric vehicle charging stations, and the integration of electric vehicles into municipal service operations.

He emphasized the crucial role of multilateral partnerships in integrating governance between local and central authorities, highlighting the need for strong coordination between municipalities and ministries to ensure successful implementation. He also noted that the Municipality of Tunisia has drawn on international best practices, particularly in green building regulations and rainwater harvesting technologies.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Dr. Abdulla Difalla expressed his gratitude to the attendees for their engagement and valuable contributions. He praised Dr. Saleck Moulaye Ahmed for his exceptional leadership in guiding the project and emphasized the importance of continuing such meetings to foster collaboration and knowledge exchange among urban development professionals.



Webinar on Tunis Municipality's experience with Energy Transition and Climate Planning
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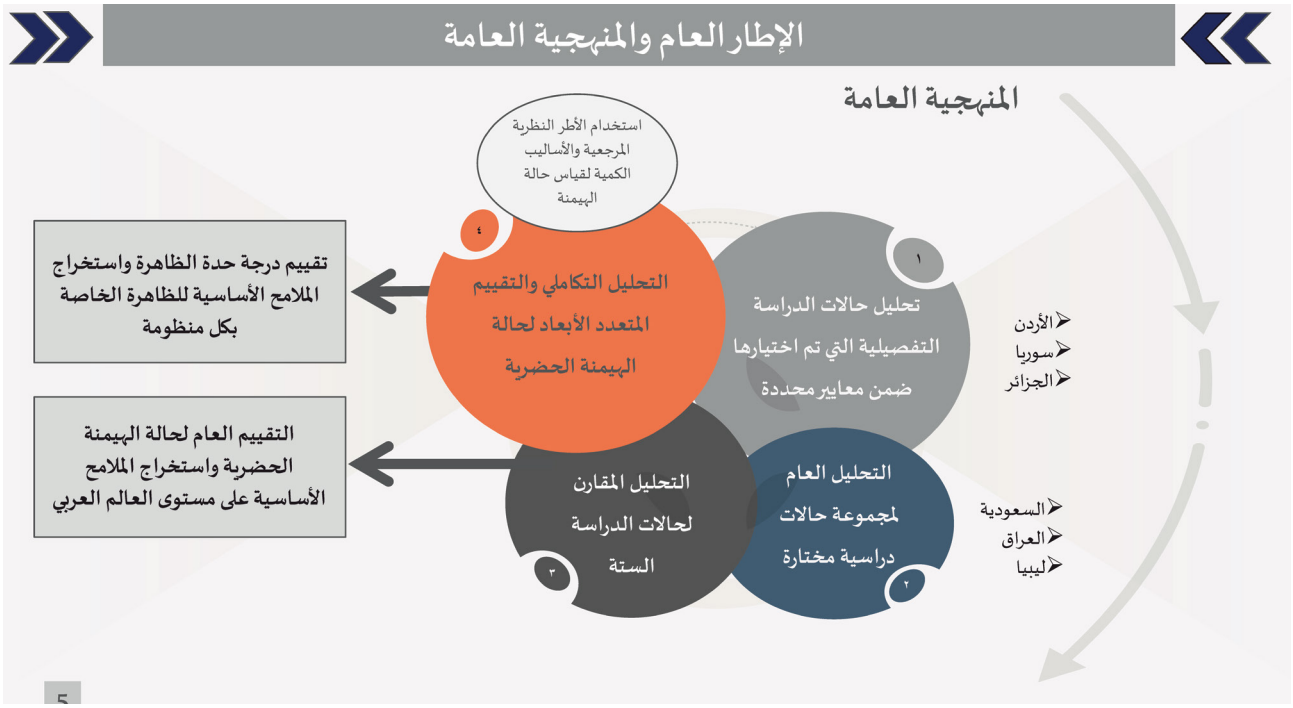
Cities in Action: Webinar Series

URBAN PRIMACY IN THE ARAB WORLD, ITS CAUSES, MANIFESTATION, AND CONSEQUENCES OF GROWTH

The Arab Urban Development Institute "AUDI" held the fourteenth session of its Cities in Action webinar series on Monday evening, June 30, 2025, bringing together a diverse group of specialists and professionals dedicated to urban development.

Dr. Abdulla Difalla, webinar moderator and Professor of Urban Planning, opened the session by providing an overview of the Cities in Action series. He emphasized the series' role in advancing urban development discussions across Arab cities and highlighted the value of these sessions in showcasing innovative projects and fostering the exchange of ideas on key success factors and effective approaches.

The meeting began with a presentation by Engineer Eiman Ibrahim Malkawi, an urban planning researcher. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Urban Planning and Design from Jordan University of Science and Technology and a Master's degree in Urban Planning from Cairo University. Her work focuses on urban studies as well as the development of architectural plans and projects.



Cities in Action: Urban Primacy in the Arab World, its causes, manifestation, and consequences of growth
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Engineer Iman showcased the historical and political factors behind urban primacy, which is characterized by the excessive concentration of resources and opportunities in major cities, especially metropolises, often at the expense of medium and smaller cities. She explained that the causes go beyond just economic reasons, including centralized governance, poor regional planning, and a tendency to prioritize investments in major urban centers.

She added that this urban primacy is reflected in several visible ways, such as uneven population distribution, the concentration of institutions and employment opportunities in major cities, disparities in service quality and infrastructure, and the migration of skilled individuals from outlying areas to urban centers—all of which contribute to widening development gaps.

She further emphasized that tackling urban primacy requires a strategic approach that strengthens the role of secondary cities, promotes balanced planning, and encourages investment in underdeveloped areas. She also highlighted the importance of involving local communities and aligning policies with each city's sustainable development goals.

Following the meeting, Dr. Abdulla Difalla thanked the participants for their active engagement and valuable input. He commended Eng. Eman Ibrahim Malkawai for her outstanding leadership in steering the project and underscored the importance of holding similar gatherings in the future to promote collaboration and the exchange of knowledge among urban development professionals.



Cities in Action: Urban Primacy in the Arab World, its causes, manifestation, and consequences of growth
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