



# Habitat Partner University Initiative

Charter and Terms of Reference

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*The Charter and Terms of Reference of the Habitat Partner University Initiative are based on experiences from the first phase of the Initiative, the recommendations of the evaluation of this first phase, inputs from universities at the World Urban Fora in Nanjing and Rio de Janeiro, the Habitat Partner University Initiative e-forum, January-March 2011 and the first Global Meeting in London, May 2011. This is a living document.*

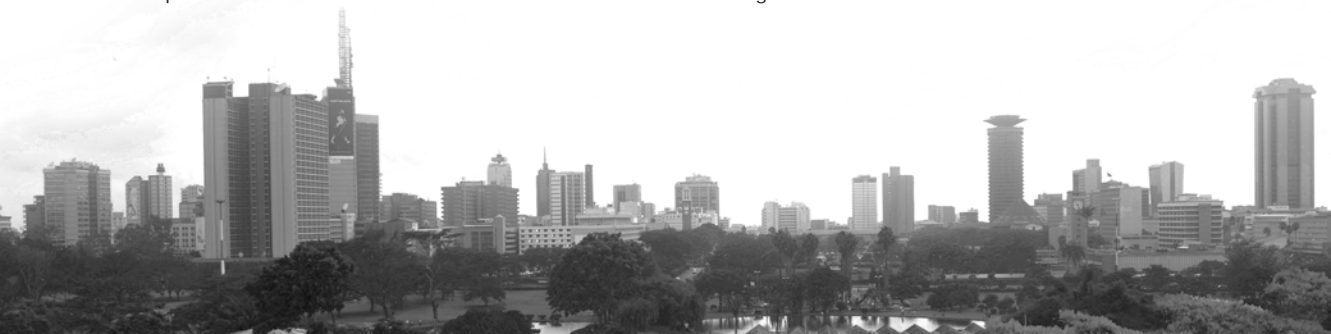
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*The Habitat Partner University Initiative was introduced as a means of promoting cooperation between UN-HABITAT and institutions of higher education, as well as facilitating exchange and cooperation among universities globally. The Initiative promotes the idea of universities becoming closer partners of cities and actively engaged in problem solving, thus closing the gap between academia and practice and encouraging collaborative learning.*

*The Habitat Partner University Initiative aspires to create the next generation of urban leaders, managers, researchers and practitioners. Universities are the key to the success of the initiative and UN-HABITAT will act as a catalyst, facilitating partnerships with them and other agenda partners.*

## Aim

The aim of the Habitat Partner University Initiative is to harness the strengths of universities and promote cooperation in the fields of education, research, professional development and policy advice towards progressive university-city collaborations on sustainable urban development.

## Vision

To create the next generation of urban leaders, managers, researchers and practitioners and promote the global exchange of knowledge. To encourage and support the global dissemination of ideas on sustainable urbanization, enhancing the quality and relevance of university work.

## Strategic objectives

To achieve its aim and vision, the Habitat Partner University Initiative will:

- Be at the centre of a global inter-disciplinary network that will be the partner-of-choice in urban education and research activities. This global network will lead change and influence practice and policy in sustainable urban development.
- Provide a global platform to encourage dialogue and debate between the Habitat Partner University Initiative community, policy and decision makers, practitioners and the public.
- Promote the development of world-class educational programmes in sustainable urban development for the next generation of practitioners and leaders. In addition, the Initiative will undertake capacity building programmes to disseminate research results and best practices.
- Support cutting-edge interdisciplinary research and thinking that spans the scope of urban issues. The research will be strategic in setting the global urban agenda and will be conducted with a wide range of international partners with capabilities in urban theory, implementation, regulation and policy development.
- Promote a demand-led approach to urban research, which would speed up the process of identification, development and uptake of solutions related to sustainable urban development. The Initiative believes that such an approach will lead to greater impact. The dissemination of innovative and appropriate methods will support the going to scale of urban practices.
- Turn research findings into information and knowledge in support of urban practice and policy. The Initiative will provide dissemination mechanisms

to maximize the uptake of its research and policy advice so that it has a demonstrable, tangible impact.

- Develop a knowledge management portal that will support the transfer of innovation and knowledge. The portal will be one of the tools through which the Initiative and other networks can interact. It will serve as the first stop for reliable up-to-date information and knowledge on sustainable urban development.

## Principles

The Initiative promotes sustainable urban development as set out in the principles below.

- Accessible and pro-poor land, infrastructure, services, mobility and housing
- Socially-inclusive, gender sensitive, healthy and safe development
- Environmentally sound and carbon efficient built environment, including the use of appropriate technologies
- Participatory planning and decision-making processes
- Vibrant, resilient and competitive local economies promoting decent work and livelihoods
- Conditions of non-discrimination and equitable rights to the city
- Governance structures that will empower cities and communities to plan for effective management of adversity and change
- Transparent and efficient local resource mobilization

## Operationalization

The Initiative will emphasize the comparative advantages of all partners in the field of education, research, professional development, policy advice as well as knowledge creation and dissemination.

The Initiative will be member driven. Universities and University-led associations will be able to become institutional members with full rights. Individuals, associated with universities, may become individual members. A Steering Committee provides strategic guidance.

Members signing up to the principles of the Habitat Partner University Initiative agree to promote sustainable urban development on local, national, regional and global levels

The Initiative promotes joint activities, projects, programmes and fundraising. The above strategic objectives will be achieved through education, research, professional development, policy advice and knowledge management.



# TERMS OF REFERENCE

## 1. Strategic Focus

The Initiative will have joint action as its starting point.

### 1.1 Principles

The Initiative unites its partners under a common set of principles which define the basis for engagement.

*(See diagram 1: 'Basics of the partnerships')*

### 1.2 Key outcomes and activities

A work plan is adopted by the Steering Committee and regularly updated. The work plan puts into action the priorities of the Initiative. It is to be attractive and realistic and responsibilities are to be clearly accorded.

*(See diagram 2: 'Key outcomes and activities under the pillars')*

### 1.3 Pillars

The work of the Initiative is defined into pillars:

#### *Education*

The Initiative emphasizes the importance of a strong network of partners that collaborate as a community of practice. This is supported by providing partners with the means for sharing knowledge and experiences, both online and face-to-face. The Initiative supports university courses and curricula and provides its partners with the opportunities (internships, fellowships, mentorships, events and exposure) and material (UN publications, reports and experts) to guide them in their work towards sustainable urban development education.

#### *Research*

The research pillar of the Initiative focuses on building and connecting an international network of researchers with a common agenda and a focus on urgent urban issues. The outcomes of the research network are to be closely connected to the other pillars, greatly influencing the main work within the Initiative and promoting the capacities of its members and stakeholders.

#### *Professional Development*

The Initiative supports capacity development through its professional development pillar, spreading new sustainable urban development knowledge generated in universities through experts identified among the partners. The Initiative aims at supporting partners in providing training on locally relevant issues, focusing primarily on local governments and selected non-governmental urban stakeholders. Capacity development approaches are tailored to the needs of the target group.

#### *Policy Advice*

The Initiative aims to close the theory-practice gap. Through its pillar of Policy Advice, university-urban partnerships at local, regional and global levels are forged. Evidence-based policy advice is provided to local governments through, for example, Local Urban Knowledge Arenas, to national governments (through methods such as National Habitat Fora) and globally through the support of UN-HABITAT's flagship reports and the World Urban Forum.

#### *Knowledge Management*

A strong component of the Initiative is the cross-cutting pillar of Knowledge Management. This ensures visibility, awareness and the dissemination of material and findings developed within the network. This is to support the partners' collaborative drive towards sustainable urban development, enabling progressive efforts based on the cumulative experiences throughout the Initiative's global network of partners.

### 1.4 Thematic Priorities

Sustainable urban development encompasses a broad range of interrelated topics. Therefore, it is important for the Initiative to identify priorities within the sustainable urban development agenda and to develop a work plan to address them. The resulting work areas are intended to be content driven and problem focused to encourage interdisciplinary approaches.

An initial shortlist is provided below:

- Better urban planning and design for a rapidly urbanizing world. Participatory planning processes encompassing youth, gender and social equity, inclusion and its key role in sustainable urban development.
- Risk reduction and rehabilitation, promoting resilient cities: mitigation and adaptation of cities to climate change; prevention, protection, response and recovery from natural and human induced disasters
- Urban Economy and livelihoods. Decoupling economic development in cities from resource consumption
- Urban land, legislation and good governance for future cities
- Urban basic services in a flexible and adaptive urban infrastructure. Integrated transport and spatial planning for sustainable mobility; integrated urban resource management such as waste, energy, water, materials
- Slum upgrading, affordable housing and public space.

Work areas from the above thematic priorities may be selected at different times or in different regions to provide a focus. The selection could be in line with the World Urban Campaign Foci, World Habitat Day, World Urban Forum, or UN-HABITAT's Flagship Reports. Specific current issues which are of particular interests may be taken up by sub-committees and be further developed by the Habitat Partner University Initiative Hubs.

## 2. Partnership

### 2.1 Requirements

Besides agreeing to the general aim of the Initiative the basic requirement for becoming a partner is to promote the principles and support the implementation of the agenda.

The principles are intended to act as general guidelines for the partnerships. The thematic priorities and outcomes reflect them. The work plan provides concrete opportunities for partner engagement towards fulfilling the main aims and vision of the Initiative.

*(See diagram 1: 'Basics of the partnerships')*

### 2.2 Membership levels

The initial proposal is for the Initiative to have two membership levels: 'individual' and 'institutional'. These tiers follow the basic principle that the more you put in to the partnership, the more you get out of it.

After the transition period, a tier of a more advanced membership may be introduced based on experience from the establishment stage. The engagement and contribution from the partners will be vital in identifying special members. The idea is to start with open inclusion and, through time, see which universities and individuals distinguish themselves.

The HPUI is aiming to be an inclusive network while promoting partners who distinguish themselves through achievements towards the aim of the Initiative.

#### Individual members

*(See 'Individual member guidelines' on webpage)*

On an individual level membership is acquired through signing up on the website: [www.unhabitat.org/HPUI](http://www.unhabitat.org/HPUI), thereby joining the Initiative's database and mailing list.

#### Institutional members

Universities and other tertiary institutions and their associations are eligible for institutional membership. While it is the aim to have the highest level of the university engaged to facilitate multi-sectoral activities across departments and schools, the Initiative also invites institutional membership at the "highest possible" level (for example, department, school or faculty).

To become an institutional member, the institution needs to have a proven commitment to the principles and a profile targeted towards Sustainable Urban Development. The institution needs to commit through not only adhering to the Initiative principles but also through formalizing this adherence through an Exchange of Letters or, under exceptional circumstances, a Memorandum of Understanding. Institutional members are subject to a review process and may distinguish themselves through their work and commitment towards the goals of the Initiative.

Institutional membership is achieved through institutional commitment as described in diagram 4, "Institutional membership application"

*(See diagram 3: 'Membership levels', and diagram 4: "Institutional membership application")*

#### Distinguished members

The Initiative has a wide entry of Individual and Institutional members, to be later distinguished via their commitment to the Initiative.

Individual members: Can be awarded a UN-HABITAT Chair by the Executive Director

Institutional Members: The Steering Committee through the HPUI Office may recommend Institutional members for distinction.

## 3. Setup

*(See diagram 5: 'Governance structure and purpose')*

### 3.1 Governance

#### Interim Steering Committee

During the 2011 Global Meeting in London an Interim Steering Committee was established, consisting of:

- Ten University members; representing the concerns and diversity within Habitat Partner University Initiative regions
- Representatives from World Urban Campaign and the Global Planning Education Association Network (GPEAN)
- HPUI Coordinator and UN-HABITAT

The Interim Steering Committee finalizes the governance structure and guides the activities of the Initiative

#### Steering Committee

*(See 'Terms of Reference Steering Committee' on webpage)*

Institutional members with a focal point are eligible for nominating and electing members for the Steering Committee. Steering Committee members stand for two years, for a maximum of two terms.

The Steering Committee gives overall guidance and has the purpose of:

- Providing strategic direction for the Initiative
- Developing a work plan
- Deciding work areas across the regions
- Updating priorities and membership criteria
- Meeting in person once a year: at the time of the World Urban Forum bi-annually and on one other relevant occasion for the year in between
- To have one virtual meeting per year



The Steering Committee is to consist of a balance of representatives from UN-HABITAT, universities and cities:

- Regional representation from Habitat Partner Universities (elected by university Focal Points):
  - Africa
  - Arab States
  - Asia-Pacific
  - Caribbean
  - Europe
  - Latin America
  - United States and Canada
- Thematic coordinators (by Steering Committee recommendation and appointment by UN-HABITAT's Executive Director)
- HPUI coordinator, UN-HABITAT
- Director, Global Division, UN-HABITAT
- GPEAN representative (ex-officio)
- World Urban Campaign representative (ex-officio)

### *Standing Committee*

The Steering Committee can designate a Standing Committee as its executive arm if it so wishes.

### *Advisory Committee*

The Advisory Committee may be set up to consist of associate members such as civil society or the private sector.

- Civil Society representation
- Private Sector representation
- UNESCO/United Nations University

### *Sub Committees*

In support of thematic priorities and/or preparation of special events or award procedures, the Steering Committee may invite members to participate in sub-committees.

- University representatives from across the regions

Regional/thematic sub-committees may be established within the regional hubs where a particular issue or theme is deemed to be a priority for that region. In some cases a theme may be identified as a current priority for more than one region. Where appropriate, the Steering Committee may identify one or two themes that are of general priority and should be adopted across all regions.

Other sub-committees may be established on an ad hoc basis in conjunction with specific events such as the World Urban Forum, World Habitat Day or other related HPUI Initiatives as deemed necessary by the Steering Committee.

### *HPUI regional and thematic hubs*

*(See 'Terms of Reference Regional and Thematic Hubs' on webpage)*

Regional and thematic hubs are proposed to be hosted by partner universities. Thematic coordinators and Regional representatives may set up hubs.

Members of the regional hubs are proposed to consist of:

- Regional representatives
- UN-HABITAT regional representatives
- Partner University representatives

Members of the thematic hubs are proposed to consist of:

- Thematic coordinators
- UN-HABITAT thematic representatives
- Partner University representatives

Thematic coordinators and Regional representatives may within the hubs invite other stakeholders from:

- Cities/government
- Donors
- NGOs/CBOs
- Private sector

### *HPUI chairs*

The chairs are highly recognized in their field which would also be one of the priority themes of the Initiative, and represent this in regional and/or thematic hubs.

## **3.2 Within Partner Universities**

For effective engagement of the University the following is proposed:

### *Internal Steering Committee*

- Set up by the university
- Coordinates the contributions from across the university which can contribute to the multi-disciplinary approach of the Habitat Partner University Initiative
- Supports the university's focal points

### *Focal points*

*(See 'Terms of Reference Partner Focal Point' on webpage)*

- University contact point
- Focal Points to act as conduit, to share

information between the Steering Committee, HPUI office, Internal Steering Committee and student representatives

- Be responsible for the distribution and application of Habitat Partner University Initiative guidelines (Found on [www.unhabitat.org/HPUI](http://www.unhabitat.org/HPUI)).
- Eligible to vote for candidates to Steering Committee.

### 3.3 Within UN-HABITAT

#### *HPUI office*

- Provides day-to-day coordination
- Services the Steering Committee
- Provides and updates standardized procedures and guidelines within the Initiative
- Facilitates partner interactions.
- Manages the internal and external website
- Manages Initiative related programmes
- Drives the Initiative, linking the partners and activities

#### *UN-HABITAT Thematic and Regional representatives*

Representatives positioning the Initiative within UN-HABITAT, acting as main contact points for the HPUI office and the HPUI regional and thematic hubs.

Members of the internal Habitat Partner University Initiative UN-HABITAT task force.

## 4. Tools

### 4.1 Online tools, website

The interactive website [urbangateway.org](http://urbangateway.org) will offer tools for sharing, interaction and action amongst the partners and the site will be user-driven. This will mean that most of the material will be uploaded by the partners and most of the discussions and collaborations will be initiated and driven by the partners. The incentives for partners engaging on the site include:

- Overview of the Habitat Partner University Initiative: Institutional and Individual Members, Focal Points, Steering Committee, HPUI Chairs and other representatives
- Visibility of one's academic work
- Awareness of colleagues academic work
- Give and get feedback on academic work
- Find material for courses
- Share good practices

- Awareness of opportunities, including funding, exchanges of expertise and ideas
- Networking and initiating collaborations
- User-driven quality control, enabling the academic community to spotlight great work and practices
- Ready access to new information and ideas as well as opportunities to quickly act on new ideas with colleagues

Specific website tools are proposed to enable:

- Library of material (PhD thesis, articles, research, UN publications, reports, course material, policy documents, government documents)
- Library of material from events (forum discussions, conferences, workshops, video lectures)
- Databases of both individual and university members (overview of competencies, networking and targeted invitations)
- Enabling social academic networks.
- Database of tools, best practices and projects such as for assessing urban sustainability
- Noticeboard of job, professional development and internship opportunities
- Moderated forums focusing on UN-HABITAT-university-city interactions, inviting specific representatives to discuss specific issues such as curricula development.
- Discussions started by any member, inviting specific member groups with an opening for feedback on specific issues
- Suggestions for thesis and thesis supervision by individual members, cities and UN-HABITAT.
- Functions for starting collaborative projects
- Online courses

### 4.2 Procedures and guidelines

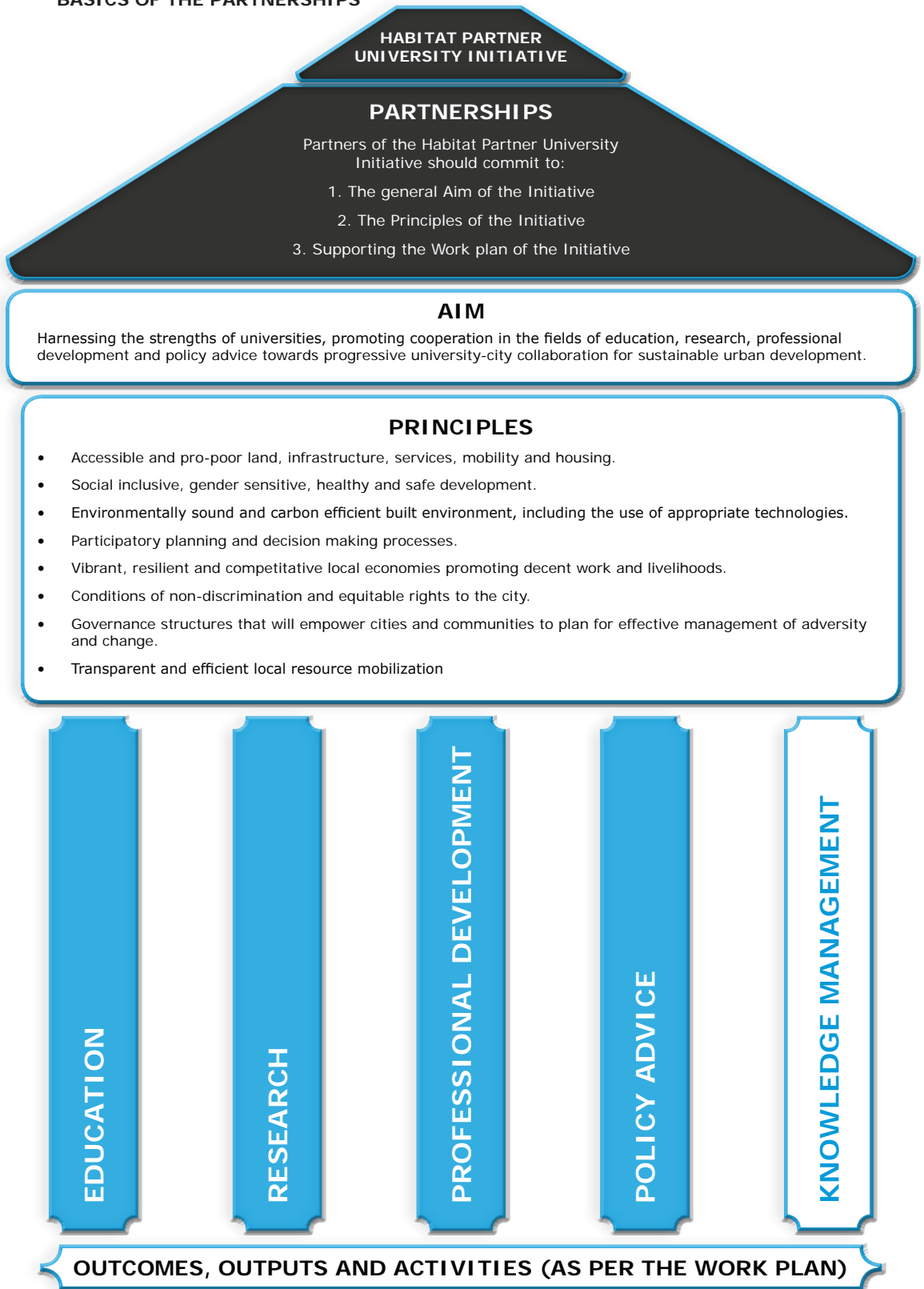
In order to maintain consistency, provide direction and facilitate processes the Initiative provides standardized procedures and guidelines. New institutional members of the Initiative are to be directed to these documents on the homepage:

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

The Steering Committee may appoint a sub-committee reviewing, evaluating and updating these documents regularly.



**DIAGRAM 1:  
BASICS OF THE PARTNERSHIPS**





**DIAGRAM 2:  
KEY OUTCOMES AND ACTIVITIES UNDER THE PILLARS**

PILLARS	OUTCOMES	ACTIVITIES
<p><b>EDUCATION</b></p>	<p><i>Tertiary Urban Education increasingly responds to current and prepares for future urban challenges, particularly in developing countries.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint transdisciplinary collaborative courses</li> <li>• Implementing new innovative programmes</li> <li>• International common courses/summer courses/online courses/field trips/study tours</li> <li>• Higher educational policy development</li> <li>• Curriculum/course development</li> </ul>
<p><b>RESEARCH</b></p>	<p><i>Urban Research meets the data and information needs in developing countries and is increasingly turned in to knowledge for policy and action.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instigate working relationships with city partners (new collaborative partnerships and active exchange of researchers)</li> <li>• Instigate PhD research collaborations</li> <li>• Engage in regional and thematic hubs</li> <li>• Support action research and demand driven research</li> <li>• Create toolboxes (e.g. methodologies, practices)</li> <li>• Research Capacity Development</li> <li>• Integrate research into specific university programmes</li> </ul>
<p><b>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b></p>	<p><i>Universities have the capacities to offer Professional Development courses that meet the needs of local governments (as part of an integrated university-city capacity development strategy)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training based on new research which applies to practice, develop short continuous education courses in fields linked to sustainable urban development</li> <li>• Perform training needs assessment and impact evaluation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>POLICY ADVICE</b></p>	<p><i>Urban decision making on global, regional, national and local levels has improved through stronger university engagement.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage in University-City collaborations</li> <li>• Engage in university global partnerships (World Urban Forum, Governing Council, Habitat 3, normative work of UN-HABITAT etc.)</li> <li>• Engage in policy recommendations to UN-HABITAT, local government and city partners</li> <li>• Actively collect and analyze information related to case studies.</li> </ul>
<p><b>KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT</b></p>	<p><i>Universities and other urban stakeholders increasingly bridge the theory practice divide, effectively channelling sustainable urban development knowledge to city actors.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage in resource base for institutional partners</li> <li>• Joint seminars workshops, conferences and other events.</li> <li>• Engage with the Habitat Partner University Initiative website. Build up the global electronic repository and information systems for knowledge exchange. Dealing with projects, funding, case studies, Human Resources exchange etc.</li> </ul>



**DIAGRAM 3:  
MEMBERSHIP LEVELS**

**WHO CAN APPLY?**

Individuals and institutions of tertiary education who adhere to the Habitat Partner University Initiative principles.

LEVEL	BENEFITS AND CONTRIBUTIONS	REQUIREMENTS
<p>INSTITUTIONAL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of Habitat Partner University Initiative logo</li> <li>• Access to Habitat Partner University Initiative network of partners</li> <li>• Invitations to special events/opportunities</li> <li>• Internship + mentoring opportunities</li> <li>• Possibilities for joint fundraising</li> <li>• Contribute to Habitat Partner University Initiative programmes, regional and thematic hubs.</li> <li>• Eligible to apply for awards</li> <li>• Eligible for Steering Committee nomination</li> <li>• Eligible to vote for Steering Committee</li> <li>• Appointing Focal Point (with dedicated time to HPUI)</li> <li>• Encourage the set up of an internal Steering Committee</li> <li>• Promote and engage in interaction on website</li> <li>• Access to publications to be put in university library</li> <li>• Access to collaborative tools (see 'tools')</li> <li>• Access to UN-HABITAT (World Urban Campaign, Governing council, partnership mechanisms for example in preparation for Habitat 3)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreeing with the aim of the Habitat Partner University Initiative.</li> <li>• Adherence to the Habitat Partner University Initiative principles.</li> <li>• Implementation of the Habitat Partner University Initiative work plan.</li> <li>• Exchange of letter or Memorandum of Understanding at highest possible level</li> <li>• Annual assessment by Steering Committee in relation to achievements and engagement.</li> </ul>
<p>INDIVIDUAL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to tools and material on website</li> <li>• Access to opportunities promoted within the Initiative</li> <li>• Engage on website: share, interact and act together with the other members of the Initiative</li> <li>• Engage in programmes, thematic and regional hubs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreement with the HPUI aim and principles.</li> <li>• Signing up to the Initiative</li> </ul>



## DIAGRAM 4: INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

The Habitat Partner University Initiative is an inclusive initiative, enabling an open entry process based on motivation towards sustainable urban development and subsequent opportunities for its partners to distinguish themselves through their engagement and achievements towards this goal.

Besides agreeing to the general aim of the Initiative the basic requirement for becoming a partner is to promote the Habitat Partner University Initiative principles and support implementing its agenda.

The Initiative includes two membership levels: "Individual" and "Institutional".

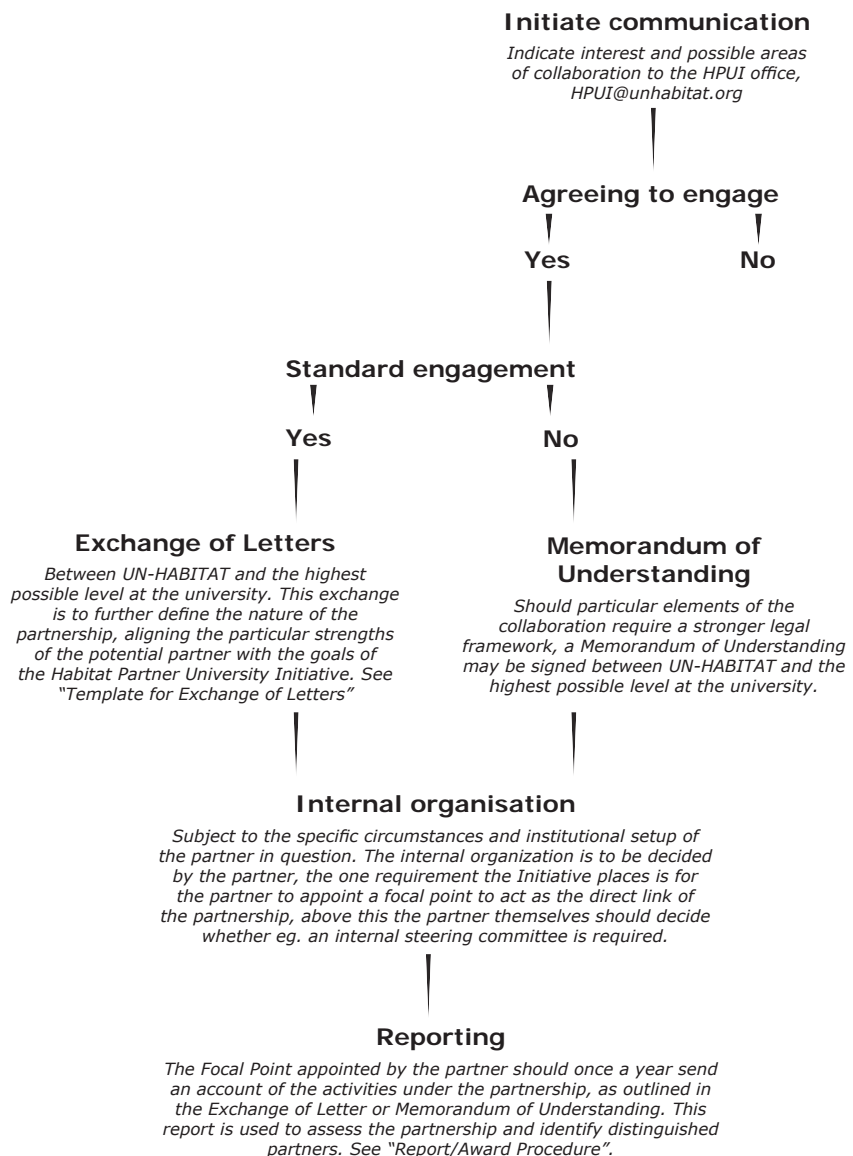
### Individual membership

On an individual level membership is acquired through signing up on the website: [www.unhabitat.org/HPUI](http://www.unhabitat.org/HPUI), thereby joining the Initiative's database and mailing list.

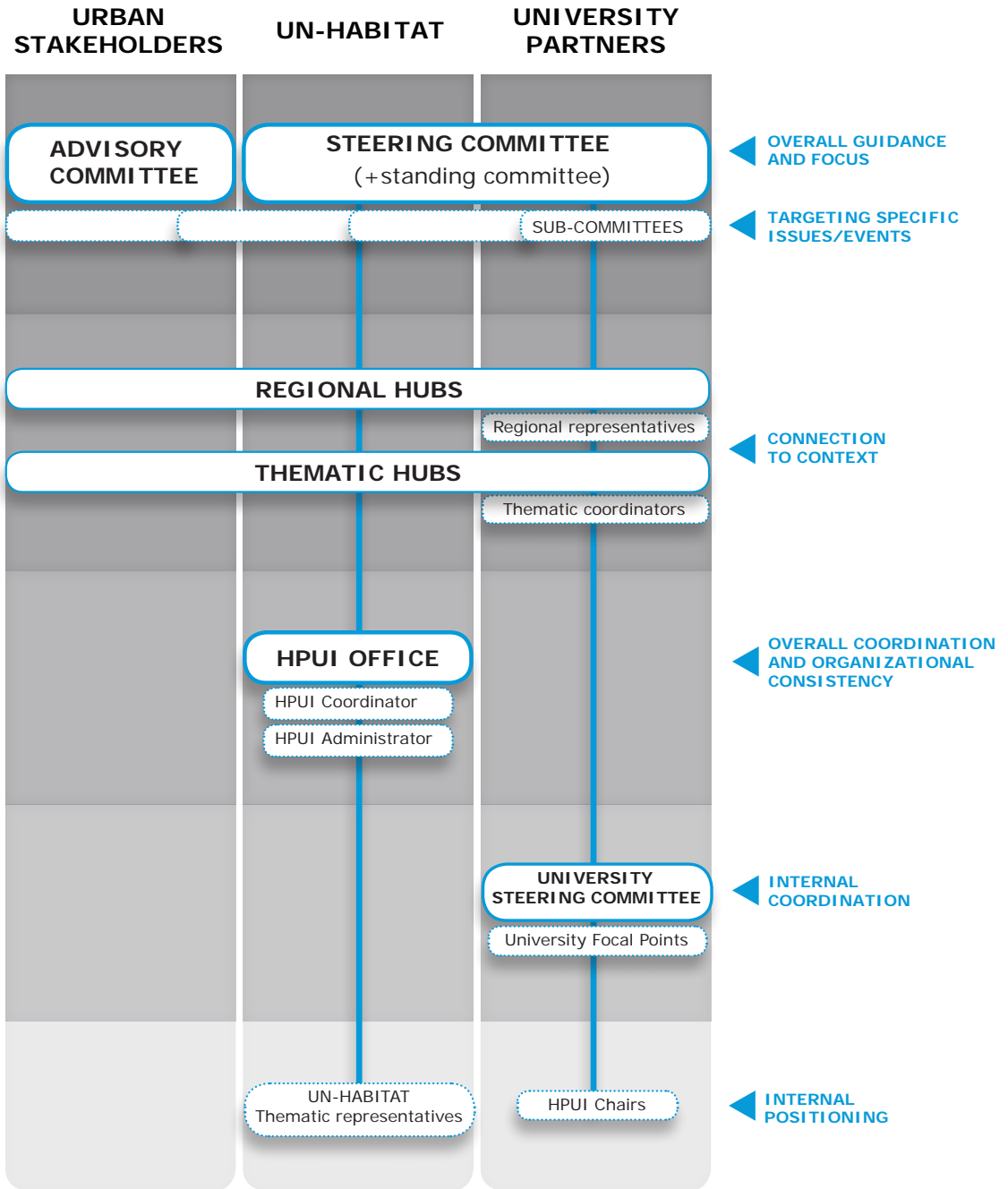
### Institutional membership

Universities and other tertiary institutions and their associations are eligible for becoming institutional members. While it is encouraged to have the highest level of the university engaged in order to work with multi-sectoral activities the HPUI also invites institutional members of the highest possible level (department, faculty...)

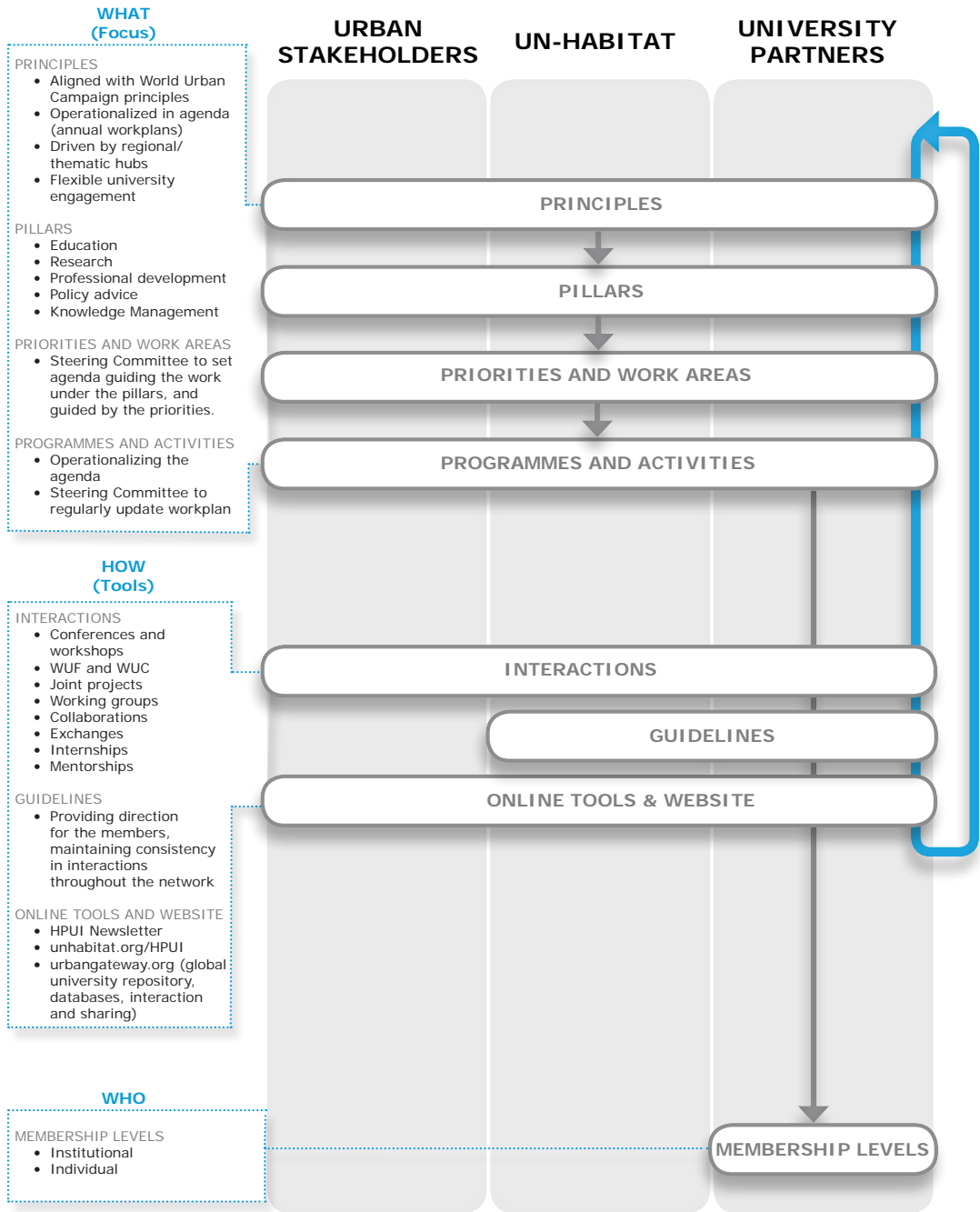
Institutional members distinguish themselves through their work and commitment towards the goals of the Habitat Partner University Initiative. Institutional membership is achieved through institutional commitment as described in the steps below:



**DIAGRAM 5:  
GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE AND PURPOSE**



**DIAGRAM 6:  
OVERVIEW OF HABITAT PARTNER UNIVERSITY INITIATIVE FEATURES**



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