

Management Response: Evaluation of the Open UN-Habitat Transparency Initiative Evaluation Report 1/2016

UN-Habitat welcomes the evaluation of the Open UN-Habitat Transparency Initiative. The evaluation was managed by the Evaluation Unit and carried out by consultant Mr. Willem van Vliet between September-December 2015. The management acknowledges the findings of the evaluation. The evaluation finds that the Initiative is timely and highly relevant to current trends and that UN-Habitat went from lagging to leading, by being one of the first UN agencies to publish International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) data. Thanks to a supportive donor and a small group of expert staff working together, the implementation overcame initial difficulties, established good working relationships and implemented the work on schedule. All ongoing UN-Habitat projects are being published on a quarterly basis as required by IATI and the Initiative is perceived to have increased UN-Habitat's transparency, especially by Sweden (Sida), one of UN-Habitat's key donors.

It is worth noting that UN-Habitat established and chaired the UN Working Group on Transparency to share and promote best practice within the UN system. This was taken up by the UN Development Group and in December 2015 the UN Task Force on Data and Transparency was established recognising the importance of the work that had been carried out under UN-Habitat's lead.

However, more work remains to be done. To date, emphasis has been mainly on working out the technical aspects of publishing transparent data. More focus on changing the organizational context and work culture is now required. This requires more buy-in from staff and management, including the Executive Director, who has the formal responsibility for transparency according to the 2016-2017 Work Programme. Formal buy-in from the Senior Management Board and the CPR will also be secured during 2016.

It would also require a long-term approach and a supportive overall strategy. An official transparency policy and whistle-blower policy adopted by the organisation would support a change of culture. This work could partly be streamlined together with the results based management and anti-corruption activities being implemented as part of UN-Habitat's strengthening organizational capacity work. Moreover, additional internal communications activities would be needed, including staff training and information sessions at Headquarters, regional and country levels.

To date UN-Habitat's transparency initiative has been coordinated by a Sweden-funded JPO with support from the Head of Media and Press, an ICT assistant and consultants from the Operations and Management Division, under the leadership of the Acting Head of External Relations Division. With this JPO no longer available, it is recommended that a structure is formalized, with a clear focal point for transparency, as soon as possible.

UN-Habitat acknowledges the six recommendations of the evaluation, four recommendations are accepted and two partially accepted.