Rapid urbanization is both an opportunity and a challenge for Afghanistan. As cities grow it’s vital that policy makers and city leaders have access to reliable and accurate information in terms of urban indicators to support decision-making.

Lacking detailed knowledge of the demographic, economic, cultural, physical and environmental dynamics of Afghan cities, and the capacity to collect and use such information, many planners and decision makers are operating in a climate of uncertainty, allocating resources to immediate and pressing issues rather than investing in progressive change over the long term.

The costs of this widespread information and capacity deficit are both immense and irreparable, and accrue in the form of expanding informal settlements, land grabbing, decreasing agricultural land, deepening social problems, rising urban inequality, and greater insecurity.

Recognising these challenges, the State of Afghan Cities Programme aims to build the capacity of government and partner counterparts to better understand and monitor the process of urbanisation in Afghanistan. The one-year programme undertakes a thorough analysis of qualitative and quantitative city-based data and conduct specific analyses for key national, provincial and municipal urban development issues. It focuses on the 33 Provincial Capitals and Kabul.

A key programme outcome will be an authoritative and evidence-based “State of Afghan Cities Report 2014/15”. The Report will present a well-informed and action-oriented analysis of the state of urbanisation with a view to reducing bottlenecks and harnessing the opportunities urbanization can provide to contribute to economic growth, poverty reduction and peace and stability in Afghanistan. It will also provide an informed basis for formulating national urban policies and bringing urban issues to the forefront in the national development agenda.

UN-Habitat
UN Agency for Sustainable Human Settlements

Working in partnership with communities across Afghanistan since 1992, UN-Habitat has provided basic services, including shelter, water and sanitation training. It has worked closely with the Government of Afghanistan and local governments on a wide range of ambitious projects, strengthening institutional capacity and addressing clear human settlement priorities.

The State of Afghan Cities Programme will also contribute to the global sustainable urban development focusing on the implementation of a New Urban Agenda, one of the main objectives of the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in 2016.
The State of Afghan Cities Programme 2014/15

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