Overview of SDG City certification “Model Process”

UN-Habitat has developed a model process for attaining SDG City certification. This is described in detail in *SDG Cities Guidelines for Participating Cities*. The following is a simplified checklist, meant to inform the design of each city’s specific approach to meet UN-Habitat certification standards. Cities can choose to follow the SDG Cities Model Process closely, or design their own equivalent process that meets the same objectives.
PHASE 1: ONBOARDING TO SDG CITIES

1. Letter of Intent to join the SDG Cities programme
2. Mobilize and commit necessary resources
3. Public commitment to the SDG City Program
4. Involve public stakeholders
5. Draft SDG City Compact
6. UN-Habitat grants SDG City SILVER Certification
7. Public announcement of receiving certification

SDG City SILVER
Awarded upon evidence of sufficiently ambitious goal setting and baseline SDG measurement
Phase 1
Onboarding to SDG Cities

Step 1.1 Letter of Intent to join the SDG Cities programme
- After discussions with UN-Habitat, the City writes a Letter of Intent to join the SDG Cities programme
- UN-Habitat formally recognizes the City as a participant, and outlines specific consultation and assistance services that are available
- City is invited to proceed to Silver certification using steps outlined below, or a process of their own design meeting the same objectives.

Step 1.2 Mobilize and commit necessary resources
- Establishment of SDG City Task Force to set broad parameters of the city’s SDG effort and oversee the SDG City certification process
- Selection of a SDG City coordinator to execute task force directives
- Secondment of city staff to who have required technical and subject matter expertise to participate in an SDG City Technical Committee(s)
Step 1.3 Public commitment to the SDG City Program

- Issue press release and publicize City participation in the UN-Habitat SDG Cities program
- Press release should commit city to involve the public in the process

Step 1.4 Involve public stakeholders

- On behalf of the Task Force, the SDG City Coordinator conducts informal consultation of relevant stakeholders and institutions to input into selection of SDG targets
- Stakeholders and institutions should work provide input into SDG Technical Committee and should have expertise in urban functional domains of:
  - Urban social development
  - Urban economic development
  - Urban environmental impact reduction
  - Urban cultural promotion
  - Urban governance capacity development
**Step 1.5 Draft SDG City Compact**

- SDG City Coordinator leads Technical Committees through the process of drafting the SDG City Compact
  - SDG City Technical Committee prepares “first cut” list of recommended Urban SDG Indicators and targets. This will be further prioritized in subsequent phases and steps

- The SDG City Compact needs to include which implementation methods will be concentrated on over the next four years – these are organized into four parallel tracks:
  - Data collection & reoccurring monitoring of SDG related indicators
  - SDG specific action planning
  - Increased government capacity to effectively deliver SDGs
  - Improve financeability of high impact SDG projects

- SDG City Compact should be reviewed and approved by Task Force and City Leadership

**Step 1.6 UN-Habitat grants SDG City SILVER Certification**

- Upon review and approval of SDG Cities Compact UN-Habitat grants SDG Cities Silver certification
Step 1.7 Public announcement of receiving certification

- At minimum this would involve a press release and publication of the SDG City Compact on the city website

- At minimum the city shall affix SDG City logo on website, in other prominent online and physical locations

- Additional publicization is at the discretion of the city
PHASE 2: ASSESSMENT & PLANNING

1. SDG Cities Baseline Assessment

2. Participatory Strategic Planning Process to determine priority initiatives

3. Draft SDG City Development Strategy

4. UN-Habitat grants SDG City GOLD Certification

5. Public announcement of receiving SDC City GOLD certification
Phase 2
Assessment & Planning

Step 2.1 SDG City Baseline Assessment

The technical committee is tasked with refining which of the SDG Indicators from the SDG City Compact the city should concentrate its efforts on.

- Once approved by the Task Force, these indicators will be used for both SDG City Baseline Assessment and SDG City Development Strategy.

The technical committee chooses indicators from UN-Habitat’s Global Urban Monitoring Framework (UMF), OR ensures that the localised SDG proxy indicators conform its two basic principles.

- Indicators must address each of five key urban functional domains: (Society, Economy, Environment, Culture, and Governance).
- Within each of those functional domains, indicators must consider the four objectives of Urban SDG Goal 11: (Safe, Inclusive, Resilient, and Sustainable Urbanization).

The technical committee prepares a report on the current baseline state of the chosen SDG indicators using a combination of:

- Existing statistical data
- Citizen generated spatial data
- Perception data survey
The report should identify existing or potential actions or interventions to improve SDG performance within chosen indicators.

The report should also include a baseline diagnosis of local government capacity on:

- Urban governance and development of policy
- Longterm integrated urban planning & design
- Effective, innovative, and sustainable financing
- Basic urban services delivery

SDG City Coordinator consults UN-Habitat to confirm SDG City Baseline Assessment conforms to Global Urban Monitoring Framework, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the New Urban Agenda

**Step 2.2 Participatory Strategic Planning Process to input into initiatives**

Taskforce approves or amends the SDG City Baseline Assessment report.

SDG City Coordinator builds consensus on priority initiatives to achieve SDGs through stakeholder consultations.
These could take the form of:

- In person and online consultations
- Targeted requests for input to specific groups
- SDG City Urban Thinkers Campus

SDG City Coordinator integrates stakeholder input & creates list of recommended priority SDG initiatives for approval by the Task Force and city leadership

It is important to approve prioritized initiatives as they will form the basis of the SDG City Development Strategy

**Step 2.3 Draft SDG City Development Strategy**

The taskforce requests the technical committee to develop SDG City Development Strategy

The Strategy shall propose specific targets for each chosen indicator they decide to report on

The Strategy shall propose concrete SDG impact initiatives

- **‘Soft infrastructure’** SDG Interventions - This includes development strategies, legislation, spatial plans, institutional development, etc.

- **‘Hard infrastructure’** SDG Interventions - This includes infrastructure development such as public space, roads, water, electricity, drainage, landscaping, affordable housing, leisure facilities etc.
The Strategy shall identify who is primarily responsible for each intervention

Technical committee refers development strategy to the Taskforce comment and amendment if needed

SDG City Development Strategy is approved by city leadership

2.4 UN-Habitat grants SDG City GOLD Certification

Cities receive SDG Cities GOLD certification after completion of SDG City Development Strategy

2.5 Public announcement of receiving SDC City GOLD certification

At minimum this would involve a press release and to publicize the SDG City Development Strategy online

City shall update the SDG Cities logo on their website from Silver to Gold

Additional publicization of this achievement is at the discretion of the city
PHASE 3: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE & IMPLEMENTING INITIATIVES

1. Implement a Technical Assistance Package

2. Continual Monitoring of Institutional capacity development

3. Implement SDG City Development Strategy

4. Implementation Report on the SDG City Development Strategy

5. UN-Habitat grants SDG City PLATINUM Certification

6. Public announcement of receiving SDC City PLATINUM certification

SDG City PLATINUM
Awarded upon evidence of effort to increase SDG delivery capacity of local institutions, and a progress report on meeting SDG targets.
Phase 3
Assistance package and implementing initiatives

3.1 Implement a Technical Assistance Package

☐ SDG City Coordinator reviews Diagnosis of Local Government Capacity conducted within SDG City Baseline Assessment

☐ SDG City Coordinator gathers a catalogue of institutional development assets within and from the SDG Cities Technical Committee, and other stakeholders

☐ UN-Habitat can provide a Technical Assistance Package with Digital tools for:
  - governance assessment
  - planning systems assessment
  - rapid own source revenue analysis
  - mobility assessment
  - waste management assessment
  - water utilities assessment
  - residents perceptions

☐ Based on available funding or new resources secured, SDG Coordinator proposes technical assistance package for approval by the Task Force and city leadership
3.2 Continual Monitoring of Institutional capacity development

- SDG City Coordinator and technical committee monitors and ensures technical assistance package improves institutional capacity
- SDG City Coordinator keeps Task Force apprised of progress

3.3. Implement SDG City Development Strategy

- SDG City Coordinator receives quarterly updates from Technical Committee who monitors the implementation the initiatives SDG City Development Strategy
- SDG City Coordinator works to secure potential and actual sources of support for initiatives within the SDG City Development Strategy
  - Ascertain funding opportunities from higher levels of government, private sector and public-private partnerships
3.4 Implementation Report on the SDG City Development Strategy

SDG Coordinator prepares implementation report for the SDG City Development Strategy for approval by Task Force on:

- Any notable impact technical assistance may have had on SDG indicators
- Any available updated data on selected SDG indicators included in the SDG Baseline Assessment
- Stage of completion of initiatives
- Notable sources of funding and financing for SDG initiatives
- Impacts of initiatives on SDG indicators, or their pre-cursors and proxies.

3.5 UN-Habitat grants SDG City PLATINUM Certification

Cities receive SDG Cities PLATINUM certification after completion of SDG City Development Strategy Implementation Report.

3.6 Public announcement of receiving SDC City PLATINUM certification

At minimum this would involve a press release and to publicize the Implementation report for its SDG City Development Strategy online.

City shall update the SDG Cities logo on their website from Gold to Platinum.

Additional publicization of this achievement is at the discretion of the city.
PHASE 4: ESTABLISHING FINANCEABLE SDG PROJECT PIPELINE

1. Develop and Launch SDG City Investment Portal

2. Generate pipeline of ‘Hard Infrastructure‘ SDG initiatives

3. Monitoring and report on changes in SDG indicators

4. UN-Habitat grants SDG City DIAMOND Certification

5. Public announcement of receiving SDC City DIAMOND certification

SDG City DIAMOND
Awarded upon evidence of effort to ‘de-risk’ accelerated investment in SDG related infrastructure, and a second SDG progress report
Phase 4
Establishing financeable SDG project pipeline

4.1 Develop and Launch SDG City Investment Portal

- Taskforce identifies ‘hard infrastructure’ SDG initiatives that are good candidates for private sector investment
- SDG City Coordinator to identify technical advisor needed to establish or utilize an existing investment portal
- The SDG City Investment Portal should be a publicly viewable and updatable database of de-risked ‘hard infrastructure’ SGC initiatives to which the city invites private investors
- Once established, the City shall publicize the launch of the SDG City Investment Portal
4.2 Generate pipeline of
‘Hard Infrastructure’ SDG initiatives

Taskforce develops list of recommended SDG impact initiatives along with a package of incentive to reduce risk and increase attractiveness for private sector investment (de-risking incentives). De-risking incentives could include:

- tax abatements
- co-financing commitments
- infrastructure toll concessions
- lease back agreements or long term purchase agreements
- co-financing of pre-feasibility and feasibility studies
- regulatory waivers, fast tracking, or pre-approvals

SDG Coordinator to work with relevant decision makers and stakeholders to implement de-risking measures in proportion to increased interest and financial commitment of private investors to specific SDG ‘hard infrastructure’ initiatives

4.3 Monitoring and report on changes in SDG indicators

Reconvene technical committee to gather updated data on SDG indicators included in the SDG Baseline Assessment

SDG Coordinator to produce report on the Current state of the SDGs Report and presents this to the Task Force
4.4 UN-Habitat grants SDG City DIAMOND Certification

Cities receive SDG Cities DIAMOND certification after implementation of SDG City Investment Portal and updated current state of SDGs report

4. Public announcement of receiving SDC City DIAMOND certification

At minimum this would involve a press release and to publicize the SDG City Investment portal and Current State of the SDGs online

City shall update the SDG Cities logo on their website from Platinum to Diamond.

Additional publicization of this achievement is at the discretion of the city
Global Initiative

SDG City

**Silver**
Awarded upon evidence of sufficiently ambitious goal setting and baseline SDG measurement

**Gold**
Awarded upon evidence of a plan (or updates to existing plans) to meet SDG targets

**Platinum**
Awarded upon evidence of effort to increase SDG delivery capacity of local institutions, and a progress report on meeting SDG targets

**Diamond**
Awarded upon evidence of effort to ‘de-risk’ accelerated investment in SDG related infrastructure, and a second SDG progress report
**SDG Cities**

**Key Concepts In-Brief**

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### Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals are a set of 17 Goals that lie at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda was adopted in 2015 and “provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. […] [It is an] urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.” See [https://sdgs.un.org/goals](https://sdgs.un.org/goals).

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### SDG Goal 11

Goal 11 of the Sustainable Development Goal is make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

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### SDG Cities

A UN-Habitat programme seeks to accelerate the achievement of SDGs in cities. For a list of the SDGs goals, indicators and targets: see [https://sdgs.un.org/goals](https://sdgs.un.org/goals).

The SDG Cities program aims to engage over 900 cities either in clusters through their national governments and regional city networks, or individually as the case may be.

Cities that require assistance will be supported by UN-Habitat, partners, institutions and experts within their country. The program aims to connect the value chain of data; evidence-based policy; capacity in governance, planning and financing; and, impact investments, to increased achievement of SDG targets.

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### SDG City

An SDG City is an individual city (or similar local or regional authority) that is participating in the UN-Habitat SDG Cities programme. An SDG City is in the process of achieving one of four certifications under the UN-Habitat SDG Cities programme.
### SDG City Task Force

An executive committee of city leaders, senior staff, and other relevant stakeholders in each participating city that champion and serve as the executive body for the SDG City process. This task force works delegates management tasks to the SDG City Coordinator.

The Task Force approves priorities for SDG indicators, targets and initiatives, seeking approvals where needed. It steers, reviews and approves studies, plans, reports, and strategies and any output of the SDG Cities process.

The SDG Task force is also responsible for ensuring resource for the process. As such it should be networked with budget decision makers, as well as external stakeholder partners and sources of funding.

### SDG City Coordinator

The focal point and manager for the entire SDG Cities process within any one city. They are responsible for the coordinating of all the activities of the SDG Cities program under the supervision of the SDG City Task Force. This includes managing the following:

1. Multistakeholder consultations
2. Partnerships with external institutions
3. SDG City Technical Committee(s)
4. SDG City Baseline Assessment process
5. Participatory Strategic Planning Processes
6. SDG City Development Strategy
7. Implementation Report on SDG City Development Strategy
8. City Investment Portal
9. Public communication of SDG City certifications, reports, strategies and implementation of actions

### SDG City Technical Committee(s)

A committee or several committees made up of technical and subject matter experts related to each of the SDG indicators the city has chosen to prioritize.

Internal city staff are envisaged to make up the majority of the technical committee, however the city should make use of key stakeholders and external experts should they be available.

### SDG City Compact

An agreed plan of action to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs in a particular city. It is signed by city leaders and UN-Habitat, is the culmination of Silver of the SDG Cities programme and a requirement for certification.
## Global Urban Monitoring Framework (UMF)

This is a framework for organizing the reporting and management of SDG related initiatives in cities. Using the framework ensures these themes are integrated into the five globally recognized functional domains of local government such as: Society, Economy, Environment, Culture, and Governance. The UMF also ensures the integration of the cross cutting themes of urban inclusivity, urban safety, urban resiliency and urban sustainability into those functional domains.

The UN has developed a set of recommended Urban SDG indicators that cover all the functional domains and cross cutting themes.

Cities are free to use their own indicators as long as they cover all five functional domains and four cross cutting themes.

## SDG City Baseline Assessment

The identifies and spatially maps the status of achievement of SDGs, identifying urban areas that are most left behind and priority sectors requiring investment. It provides evidence to support strategic planning.

## Participatory Strategic Planning Process

This draws from the Baseline Assessment and reports in order to articulate the city’s priorities for 2030. It includes outlining specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-based actions through which the cities chosen indicator goals will be achieved. The plan will also identify who is primarily responsible for each intervention. The strategic planning process requires continuous stakeholders’ engagement and local ownership.

## SDG City Design Charette

Public workshop that is part of the participatory planning process in which stakeholders can discuss, design and build on consensus on the initiatives to achieve the SDG goals within their city.

## SDG City Urban Thinkers Campus

Urban Thinkers Campus is an open space for critical exchange between urban researchers, professionals, and decision-makers who believe that urbanization is an opportunity and can lead to positive urban transformations. It is also intended as a platform to engage stakeholders in strategic urban dialogue and build consensus between partners engaged in addressing urbanization challenges and proposing solutions. It can be deployed to bring relevant parties together to unpack and brainstorm challenges identified in the baseline assessment and to bring stakeholders together in visioning the development of the city.

## SDG City Development Strategy

Developed by the technical committee, the strategy shall propose specific targets for each SDG indicators they decide to report on. It will also outline concrete SDG impact initiatives and identify who is primarily responsible for each intervention.
**SDG City Technical Assistance Package**

The Technical Assistance package is developed to increase digital capacity in areas identified by the Diagnosis of Local Government Capacity conducted within SDG City Baseline Assessment. The package can include assistance from UN-Habitat’s suite of digital tools.

**UN-Habitat Suite Digital Tools**

Dependent upon cities needs UN-Habitat can provide a variety of digital tools to assist capacity building. Tools include:
- governance assessment
- planning systems assessment
- rapid own source revenue analysis
- mobility assessment
- waste management assessment
- water utilities assessment
- residents perceptions

**SDG City Implementation Report**

The implementation report on progress towards the achievement of the City’s SDG Goals as outlined in the Development Strategy. The report is prepared by the Coordinator for approval by Task Force. It includes:
- Any notable impact technical assistance may have had on SDG indicators
- Any available updated data on selected SDG indicators included in the SDG Baseline Assessment
- Stage of completion of initiatives
- Notable sources of funding and financing for SDG initiatives
- Impacts of initiatives on SDG indicators, or their pre-cursors and proxies.

**SDG City Investment Portal**

Participating cities upload project information including: project description, SDG related indicators, cost estimates, anticipated internal rate of return, co-financing commitments and investment requirements. The portal is accessible to an audience of local and international investors. Projects entering the portal are filtered to ensure quality and SDG relevance. Projects in the portal can be aggregated to meet specific investor interests and thresholds.

**Hard Infrastructure SDG Initiatives**

Hard Infrastructure initiatives are one type of action that can be taken in order to achieve cities SDG goals. This includes infrastructure development such as public space, roads, water, electricity, drainage, landscaping, affordable housing, leisure facilities etc.
**Soft Infrastructure SDG Initiatives**

Soft Infrastructure initiatives are one type of action that can be taken in order to achieve cities SDG goals. This includes development strategies, legislation, spatial plans, institutional development, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>SDG City Silver Certified</strong></th>
<th>Upon review and approval of SDG Cities Compact UN-Habitat grants SDG Cities Silver certification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SDG City Gold Certified</strong></td>
<td>Cities receive SDG Cities Gold certification after completion of SDG City Development Strategy. It represents completion of phase 2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SDG City Platinum Certified</strong></td>
<td>Cities receive SDG Cities Platinum certification after completion of SDG City Development Strategy Implementation Report showing measurable progress. It represents completion of phase 3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SDG City Diamond Certified</strong></td>
<td>Cities receive SDG Cities Diamond certification after implementation of a SDG City Investment Portal and updated current state of SDGs report. It represents completion of phase 4.</td>
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