UNECE/UN-Habitat Guidelines on evidence-based policies and decision-making on sustainable housing and urban development

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Aim: to discuss approaches to evidence-based policy-making as included in the “UNECE/UN-Habitat Guidelines on evidence-based policies and decision-making on sustainable housing and urban development”.

Structure:

• INTRODUCTION
• CHAPTER 1. PRODUCING DATA FOR SUSTAINABLE HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT POLICIES
• CHAPTER 2. DEVELOPING EVIDENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT POLICIES
• CHAPTER 3. INFORMING HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND DECISION-MAKING
• SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.
• RECOMMENDATIONS
Countries in the UNECE region face diverse urban development challenges, incl. limited access to decent quality, affordable housing.

The lack of reliable data and insufficient capacities to use hinder urban development.

Cities and countries undertook a range of measures to improve production, management and use of data and evidence for policies on, however multiple challenges remain.
The “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Urban Development” plays important role in addressing these challenges.

The 2030 Agenda envisages a new, more rigorous approach to policy development and implementation insofar as it focuses on embracing opportunities stemming from “data revolution” and ensures that “No one is left behind”.

Establishing better standards for the production, management and use of data and evidence in policy-making is one of priority tasks under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to ensure its timely implementation.
The guidelines

Aim of the guidelines is to improve capacities of UNECE countries to develop, review and implement evidence-based policies on sustainable housing and urban development.

Objectives:

- to capture diversity of ongoing activities to improve evidence-based policy-making on sustainable housing and urban development in the UNECE region,
- to demonstrate application of various approaches to production/collection of data, development of evidence and decision-making in policy process,
- to present benefits of deploying evidence-based approach(es) to policy-making to improve the review and implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the UNECE region.
Evidence-based policy-making – 'helps people make well-informed decisions about policies, programmes and projects by putting the best available evidence at the heart of policy development and implementation' (Davies 1999).

Data: ‘facts and figures which relay something specific, but which are not organized in any way and which provide no further information regarding patterns, context, etc’ (Thierauf 1999).

Essence of the 'evidence' is that it emerges as a result of data analysis and that it is used in relation to a particular policy option – it creates an argument for and/or against it.
Focus: the role of data in evidence-based policy-making; how data can be produced/collected and opportunities and risks associated processes.

Mapping key data providers and mainstream sources of data (e.g. the Housing and Population Census and household surveys).

‘Data revolution’, the raise of ‘big data’, ‘geospatial information’, ‘citizen data’ and the role private sector in data development and management.

Value of ‘data collaboratives’ (Urban Data Centres in Netherlands).
Developing evidence for sustainable housing and urban development policies

- Focus: How data becomes evidence & approaches to aggregation and disaggregation of data.
- Importance of development of a relevant and a high quality evidence.
- Importance of ‘leaving no one (and nowhere) behind’.
  - Disaggregation of data and achieving a high level of data granularity, especially per gender, age, ethnicity, income, disability and migratory status, and at the city level.
- Insights into aggregation of data and designing indicator set.
Disaggregation of data as per...

- **Gender** – e.g. a large ‘gender data gap’ (time use, poverty, domestic violence are not well measured in official statistics and they affect women more than men) + ‘only 15 per cent of countries have laws that mandate specialized gender-based surveys; and only 13 per cent of countries have a budget dedicated to gender statistics’.

- **Age** – e.g. emerging generational housing gap requires targeted responses based on evidence of young people's housing conditions and opportunities.
Focus: opportunities and challenges for better decision-making on sustainable housing and urban development.

Overview of selected methods/methodologies and tools for policy appraisal (at various stages of evidence-based policy process).

‘Bottom-lines’ in evidence-based policy-making – ‘universal’ character of housing, collaborative nature of evidence-based policy-making in contemporary democracies; and policy transfer.
Reduction of biases by using tools/approaches that tie data collection, production, development of evidence and decision-making.

A “comprehensive” policy evaluation + ‘going beyond’ ex-post policy evaluation.

Impact assessment (such as Strategic Environmental Impact assessment, Land Use-based Integrated Sustainability Assessment, and others).

The role of ‘in-advance’ approaches, especially foresight, integrated sustainability assessment and regulatory impact assessments in structuring policy process and guiding decision-making.
Guidelines conclude with a 4 sets of recommendations that
A. Ensure an integrated and coordinated approach to the review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
B. Support openness of the data collection.
C. Promote comprehensive and integrated approaches to the organization of data.
D. Reduce Bias.
‘Institutional siloing’ as a challenge for evidence-based policy-making

I ‘Institutional siloing’ entails sustaining an agency-specific approach to a particular (policy) problem in spite of recognising that the problem is multi-faceted, cutting across various policy domains; hence nature of the problem and that it requires deploying various policy approaches.

‘Siloing’ unveils itself as e.g. agencies retain agency-specific datasets and do not share it with other organizations/agencies; or refuse collaboratively addressing a particular policy problem.

Costs of addressing ‘institutional siloing’ can be high. As agencies collect and keep their own data without consultation with other agencies (e.g. regarding methodological approach to data collection), they need to fix broken communication channels at latter stages of policy problems. At some point, these ‘partial’ datasets can become too costly to harmonize. Additionally, institutional siloing can mitigate positive effects of housing and urban development policies and programs.
Preparation to the “Cities’ statement”

I samarbeid med FN skal vi:

1. Gi alle kunnskap om status i sitt lokalsamfunn
2. Utvikle planer for samfunnsutvikling som viser hvordan vi skal nå bærekraftsmålene
3. Mobilisere og støtte innbyggere, næringsliv, organisasjoner og akademia som bidrar til bærekraftig utvikling
4. Måle og evaluere effekten av innsatsen

For å følge opp denne erklæringen vil kommunene sikre forankring og fremdrift.
The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a shared direction for creating inclusive, prosperous societies that respect planetary constraints. Norway is a country of vast resources and is uniquely equipped to contribute to sustainable development. Realising the SDGs will require global and local action. As municipalities we recognise that we have an important role to play - we both can, and wish, to be part of the solution - now.

In the partnership with the UN, we shall:

• Enhance communication about progress of achieving sustainable development in our communities,

• Develop plans to show how the SDGs will be realised at the local level

• Mobilize and support citizens, businesses, organisations and academia that contribute to sustainable development

• Measure and evaluate the impact of efforts.

The municipalities are committed to overseeing the local implementation of this declaration.
Thank you!

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