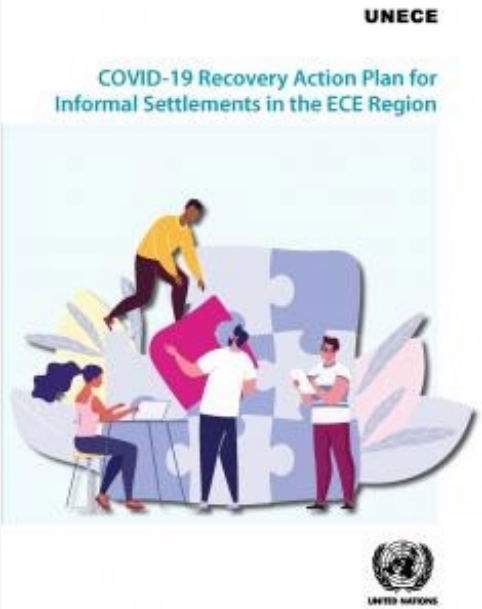
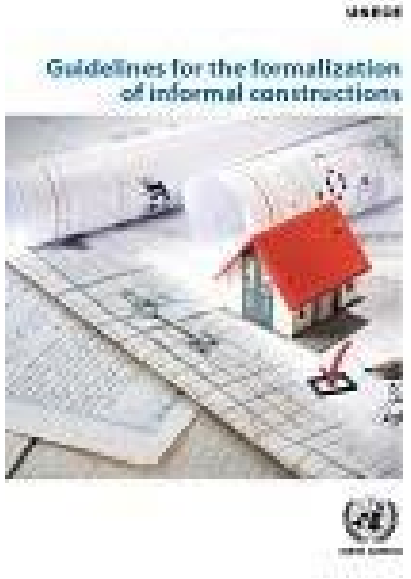
UNECE Webinar
Informal Settlements: Formalization and Build Back Better Projects?

to support the implementation of UNECE Guidelines for formalization & the COVID-19 Recovery Action Plan for Informal Settlements in the ECE Region





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Purpose of this webinar

The purpose of this webinar is to gather experts to:

- Review the progress made in **formalization** and **build-back-better initiatives** for informal settlements in our region
- Share experiences
- **Explore solutions** & ways to overcome remaining challenges in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs, with particular focus on **SDG 11** (on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable).

The webinar is divided into **two parts:**

- This first part, apart from the introduction section, will present 2 case studies, one from Albania & one from Greece.
- The second part, in the afternoon, will present case studies from Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, North Macedonia & Serbia.
- Each part will include a Q&A session and open discussions.

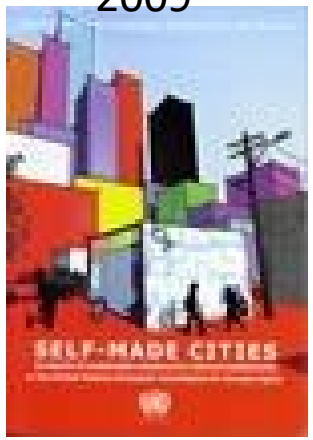
Background Information

- Since 2007 UNECE & FIG have addressed the field of informal settlements in Southern and Eastern parts of our region. It was estimated that more than **50 million people lived in informal settlements in 20 UNECE member-states.**
  - pre-existing challenges
  - new challenges introduced by COVID

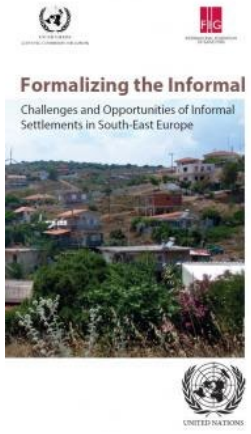
and solutions are investigated.

- A country's preparedness against disasters can make all the difference

2009

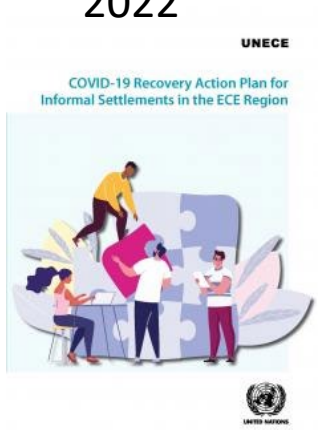


2015



2019

2022



Additional supporting material is prepared, that will help better understanding and implementation of both the guidelines and the recovery action plan

E-courses
To access the e-learning courses:
https://www.cityresiliencetraining.com

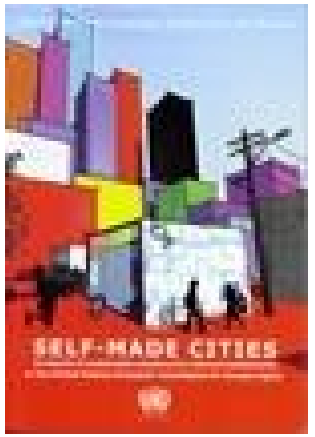
More specifically, **by 2009**, it was identified that informal settlements, depending on the case, had:

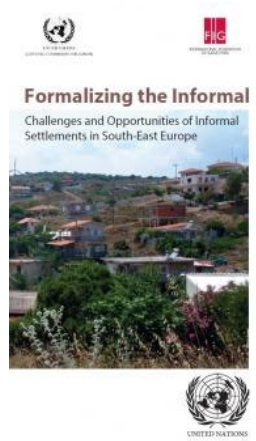
- dense populations,
- usually limited services such as water supply and sanitation,
- inadequate transport,
- unregistered residents,
- inadequate housing,
- Informal & unregistered constructions & Informal markets

Residents had generally:

- insecure tenure,
- unregistered land rights,
- limited access to credit & funding
- lower incomes and, in the most intense situations,
- they often had few resources,
- precarious employment,
- limited digital connectivity, and
- included many of society's most vulnerable people

The importance of tackling this issue was undeniable.





By 2015, several member states have already initiated formalization & build-back-better projects. Examples of on-going formalization projects in 5 countries were investigated

Background Information

- In parallel, **by 2015**, the issue has been addressed in several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- **SDG target 1.4** stresses that governments should ensure that all men and women, particularly the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property and inheritance.
- **SDG11** stresses that cities and human settlements should be inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
- Based on lessons learned from the various projects, **in 2019**, UNECE prepared and published the "Guidelines for the Formalization of Informal Constructions" in an effort to provide general guidance for formalization projects in countries facing the challenge of informal development, and to contribute to the formulation, implementation and monitoring of an **appropriate land policy** in the region that **will promote sustainable land management to more readily achieve the UN 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.**

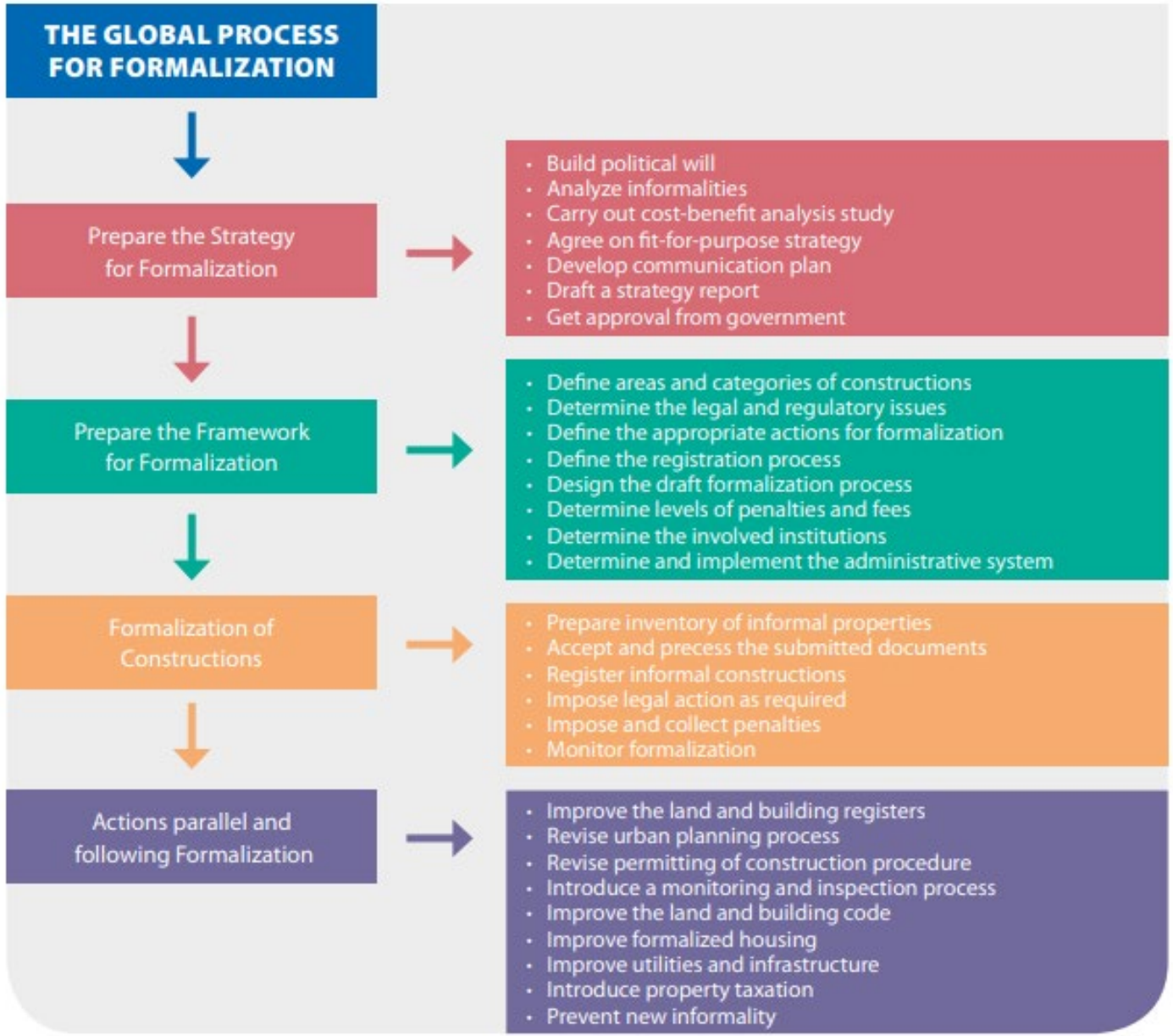
The formalization process

Prepare Strategy

Prepare framework

Formalize constructions

Arrange for conditions



https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/technical_guidelines_informal_settlements_e.pdf

Parallel geospatial data ecosystem improvements

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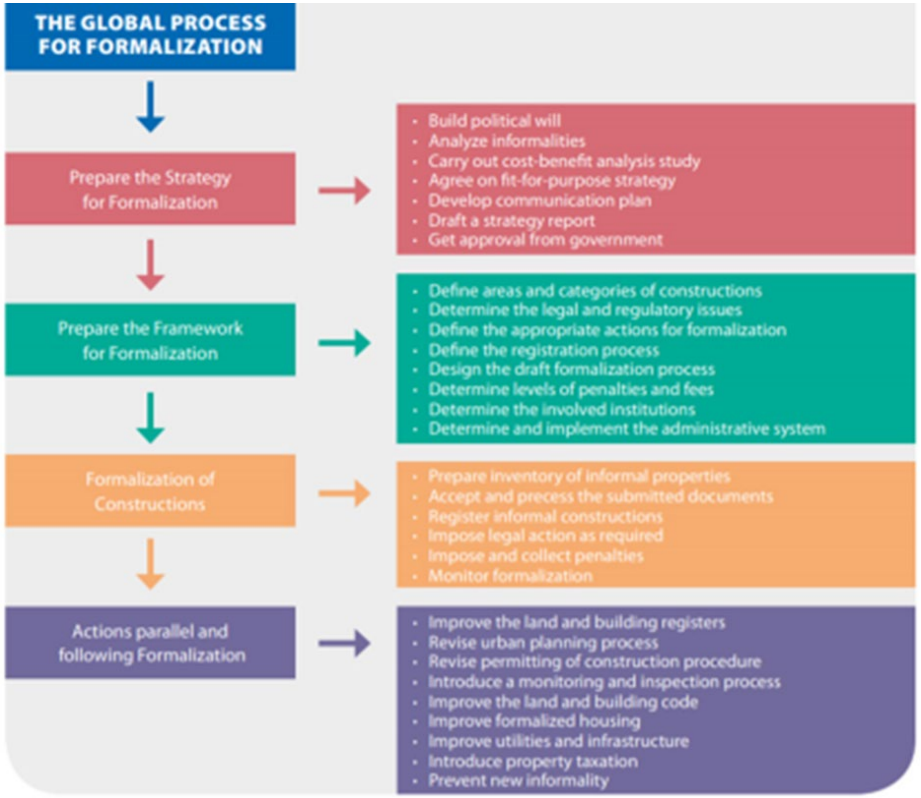


Long-term BBB also includes improvements in developing:

- ✓ well-functioning **property registration**
- ✓ pro-growth **planning** and flexible permitting of developments & plans
- ✓ planning for **affordable housing**
- ✓ property **valuation and taxation**
- ✓ **funding mechanisms**
- ✓ professional **education**
- ✓ **professional** standards and **ethics**
- ✓ general **infrastructure** upgrading works
- ✓ an inclusive role for the **private sector**
- ✓ a **functioning and transparent real estate market**

Background Information

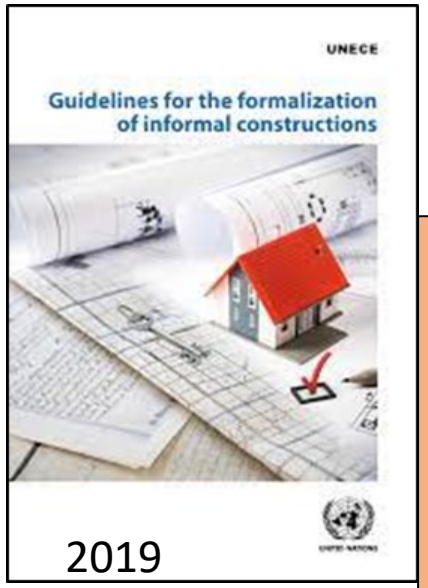
The 2019 pandemic has created **new challenges & reinforced the pre-existing obstacles** to realizing the SDGs : structural inequalities, socio-economic gaps, and systemic challenges and risks & significant delays.

- In **2022**, UNECE published the "COVID-19 Recovery Action Plan for Informal Settlements in the UNECE Region" in an effort to propose **measures to deal with the new pandemic-based challenges** and **the pre-existing ones**.
- This Recovery Action Plan **targets national and local governments** in the UNECE region, and provides an extensive **list of goals, targets, and actions**. These can be advanced by governments, local authorities, residents, community leaders, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders to help mitigate or prevent the pandemic spread but also to build back better the self-made cities by achieving greater resilience in future.

What is the general set up?

Informal constructions are defined as unauthorized constructions, not registered, not marketable

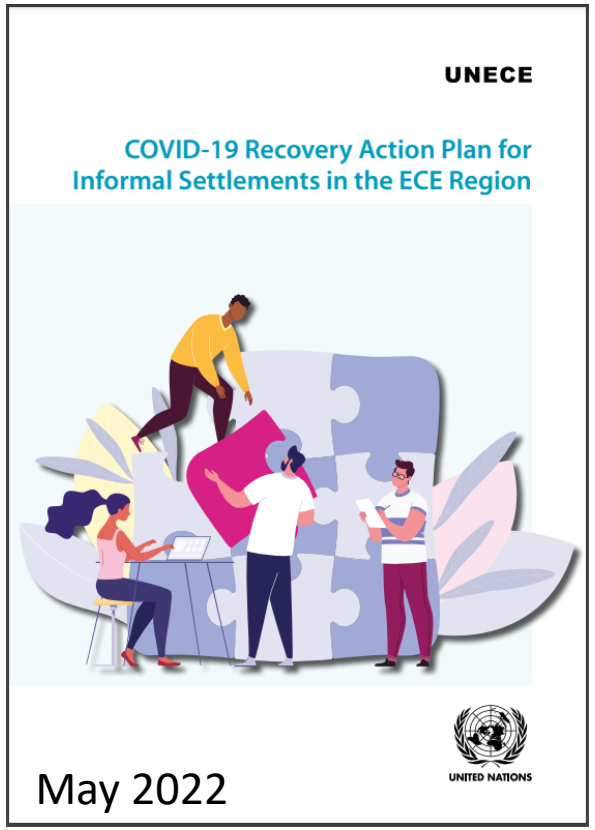
Recovery action plan to be considered as a simple guide with suggestions on **increasing resilience & BBB** of IS



Guidelines Formalization (Legal empowerment + geospatial + access to credit + suggestions for BBB)

Recovery Action Plan (BBB)

Local Recovery Action Plan for BBB



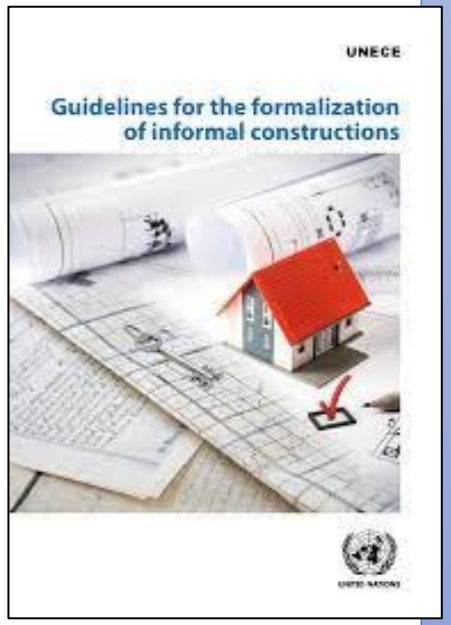
Build Back Better (BBB) is a **strategy aimed at reducing the risk to the people of nations and communities in the wake of future disasters and shocks** (first introduced by US President Bill Clinton in 2005 after Tsunami as a post-disaster recovery)
As such a **pandemic (COVID-19) is considered as a disaster**, which may occur again anytime in future (often as an outbreak of disease that spreads quickly & affects many people at the same time, for a number of reasons)

Local Recovery Action Plan to be considered as a sort of a Build Back Better plan

COVID-19 Recovery Action Plan for Informal Settlements in the ECE-Region

UNECE

Document structure RAP-program



Policy Brief Food

Policy Brief Water and sanitation

Policy Brief Nature-based Solutions

Recovery Action Plan

Policy Brief Energy & Building Standards

Policy Brief PPP's & Innovative Financing

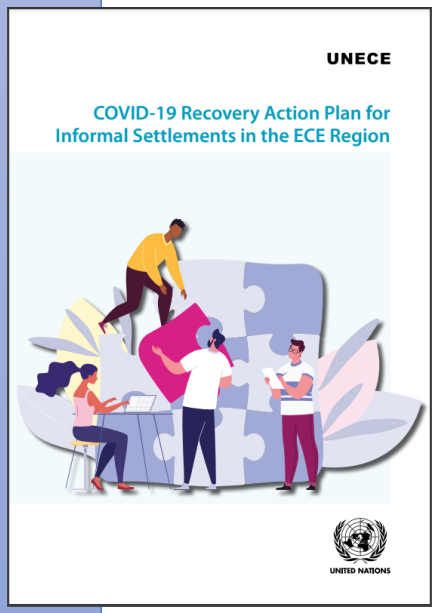
Local Recovery Action Plan

Policy Brief Urban Mobility

City Assessment Reports COVID-19

Guidelines for formalization

Reference materials, & Online Lectures



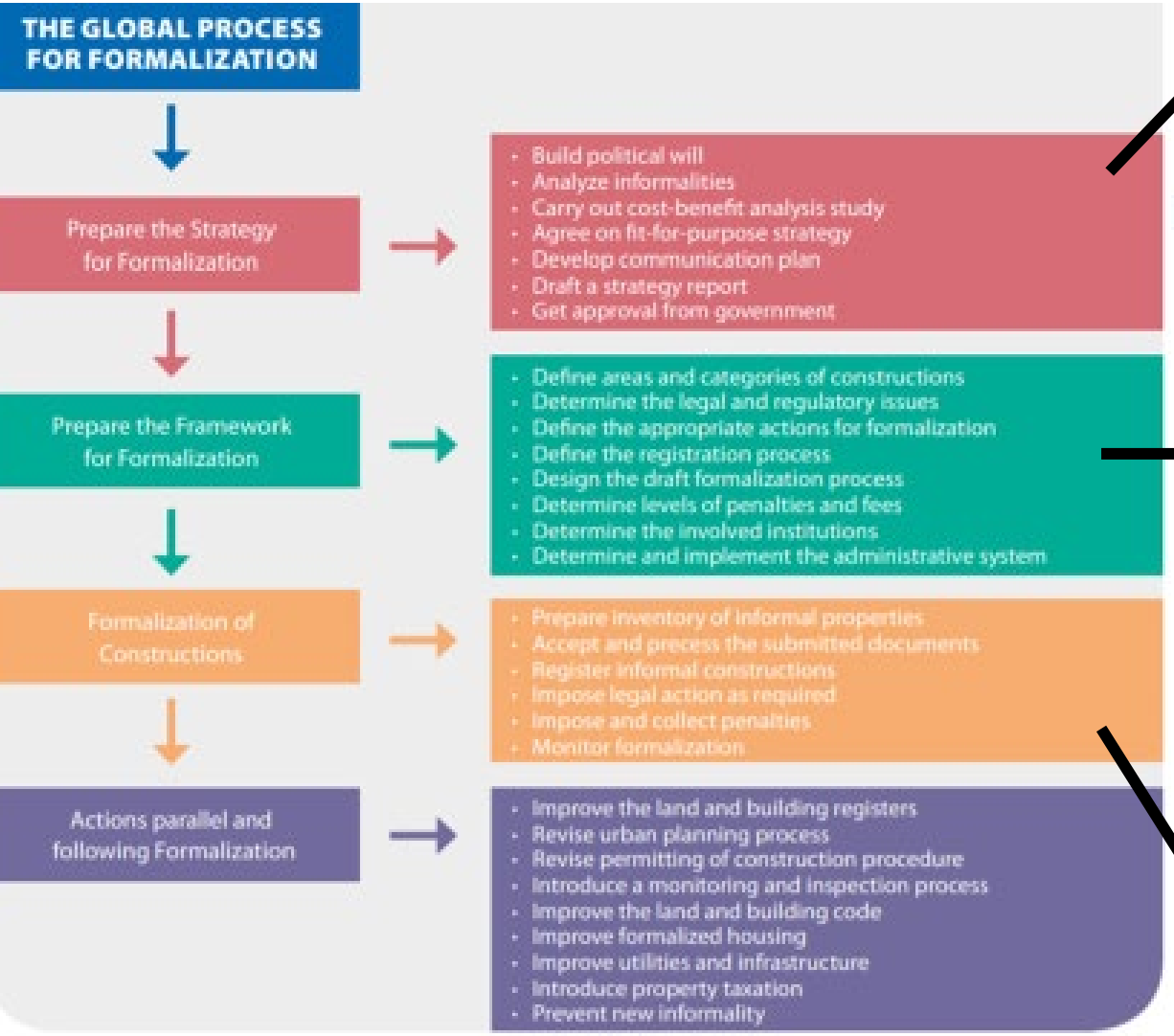
TIMING IN THE BBB RAP

*The plan identifies **9 policy areas**, Goals, Targets, and Actions key to a successful response. **Appropriate local implementation should vary in timing, priority, and scope** based on the physical and social realities in their communities.*

The Regional Action Plan distinguishes different goals: immediate emergency-focused goals, short-term emergency related goals, intermediate term goals blending resilience and emergency goals, or long-term resilience-focused goals.

a. Emergency goals (emergency focused)
   Targets and actions to secure short-term goals; *Loosely defined as those to be accomplished in less than 6 months.*
b. Short term goals (emergency related)
   Targets and actions to secure short-term goals; *Loosely defined as those to be accomplished in less than 1 year.*
c. Intermediate term goals (blended resilience and emergency focus)
   Targets and actions to secure intermediate-term goals. *The greater complexity is expected to loosely require 6 to 18 months to accomplish.*
d. Long term goals (resilience focused)
   Targets and actions to secure long-term goals. *The greater complexity and nature of the solutions are expected to loosely require more than 1 year to accomplish, often 1 to 5 years.*

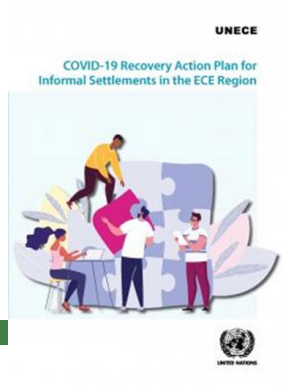
RAP & Formalization projects



✓ **Prepare local Action plan(for BBB) plan & prioritize actions/works; specific cost-benefit analysis; agree on a FFP; communication plans, strategy report; approval**

- ✓ Define the **risk in the various zones** and **list all necessary measures/actions**
- ✓ Define the **legal and regulatory issues** to allow urgent-short-mid- & long-term measures/interventions
- ✓ Define the **appropriate implementation actions** & **administrative procedures, roles/responsibilities/ <u>establish an emergency operation center in the municipality / funding</u>**
- ✓ Define the levels of **penalties** & the **involved institutions**

Implementation of measures/actions/small public works; prepare geospatial plans; identify routes, buildings, spaces, small improvement works, **implement, monitor, continually assess the needs; modify daily; training**



The Social value of formalization and BBB RAP

A. Clear, fair, affordable and transparent title issuing and registration:
   1. Improve security of tenure against land grabbing and evictions, market pressure, etc.
   2. Improve living conditions
   3. Create marketable property units-Minimize lending risks & Enable funding improvements
   4. Provide a geospatial data infrastructure for evidence-based good governance, provision of humanitarian support & preparing a **local action plan** / **disaster** / **pandemic risk reduction plan**, etc.

B. Increase public trust. Existing informal rights should be recognized & legalized prior to any land reforms for upgrading, resettlement (if needed) and planning. Residents when fairly treated are more likely to support the reforms.

C. Raise awareness about **community engagement** and **participation** to support implementation of projects/local plans

D. Increase pandemic **resilience** & tenure security **against disasters & climate change**, SDGs achievement for a more just, equitable, and sustainable future

The way forward- TOGETHER WE CAN

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Capacity-building and international knowledge-sharing

webinars to unblock complex situations in formalization and provide support in problems solving & building back better informal settlements:

- *Monitoring formalization progress in the various member states*
- *Formalization of land rights, legislation, registration, procedures-costs-times, statistics, Improving tenure security,*
- *Implementation of BBB RAP, services & infrastructure provision,*
- *Parallel geospatial data ecosystem & legislation improvements, Organization of sales market, rental market, taxation/valuation/ planning/permitting, etc.,*
- *Community engagement good practices,*
- *Preparing local recovery action plans & geospatial infrastructures, examples*
- *Raising resilience against disasters and future pandemics*

Joint UNECE WPLA/ FIG Com 3 & 9/ EGoS/ WB conference on "Build Back Better the Self-made Cities, Improving the Geospatial Data Ecosystems & Formalizing the Informal Settlements"

18-20 June 2025, Athens, Greece