

85th Session of the UNECE Committee on Urban
Development, Housing and Land Management

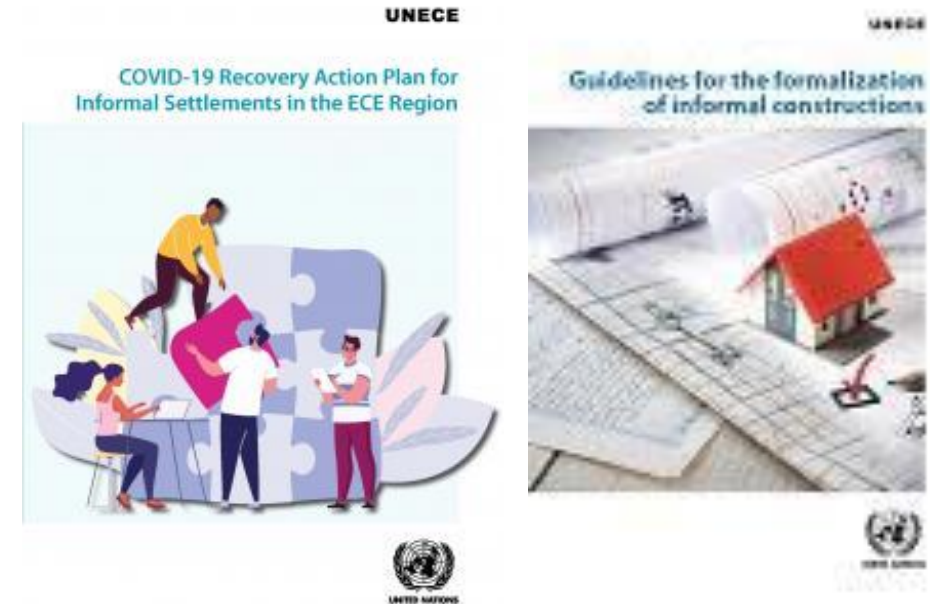
Webinar on Informal Settlements: Formalization and Build Back Better Projects?

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Webinar Focus: to monitor the
formalization progress in the region
& to support the implementation of



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

The Webinar provided Background information on UNECE's efforts since 2007



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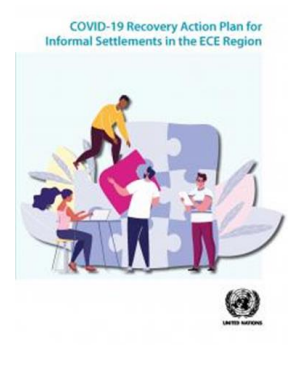
More specifically, informal settlements, depending on the case, have:

- 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 is undeniable.



With an emphasis on implementing 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.**

Highlighted the development of **publications & resources** to support formalization & disaster preparedness.

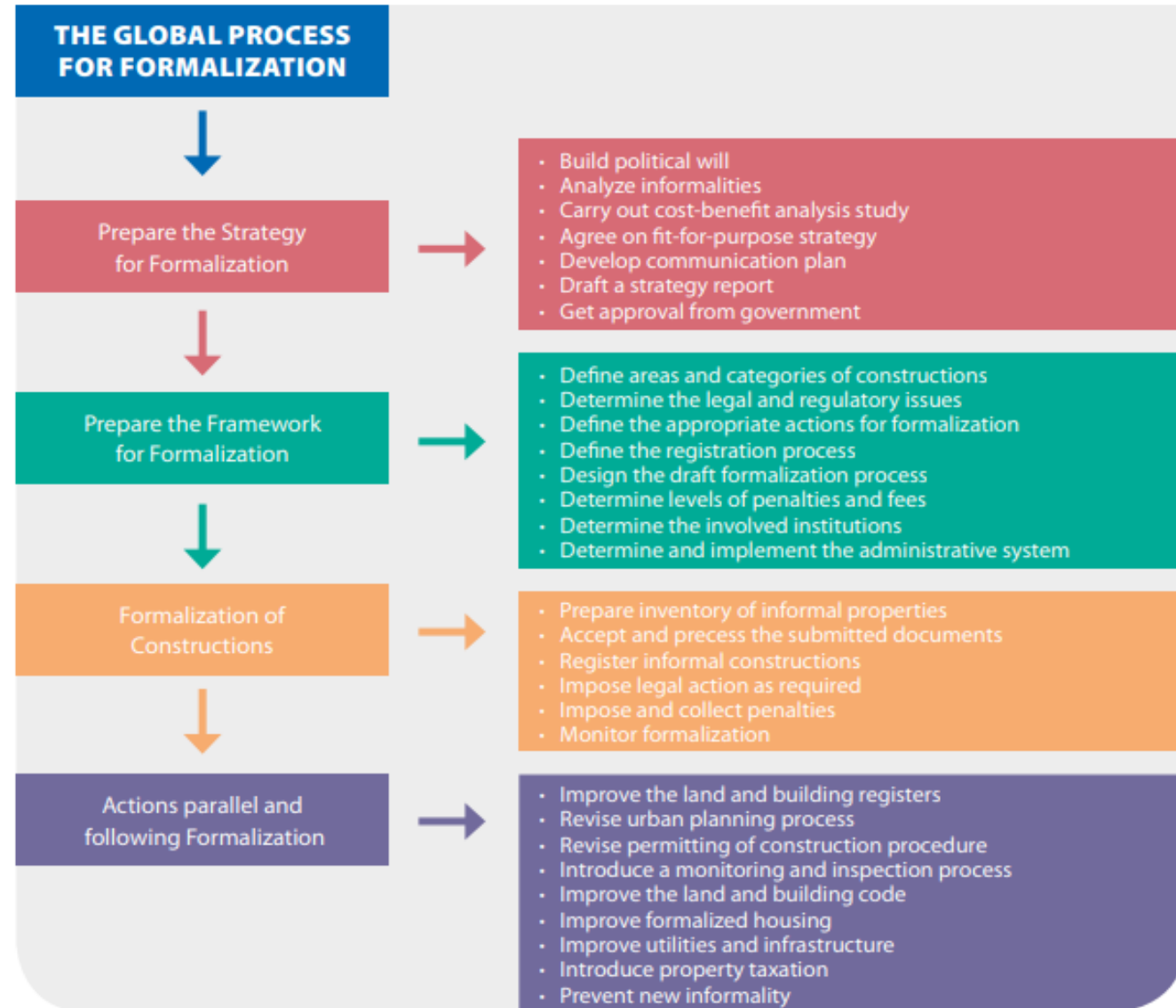
The Guidelines content

Prepare Strategy

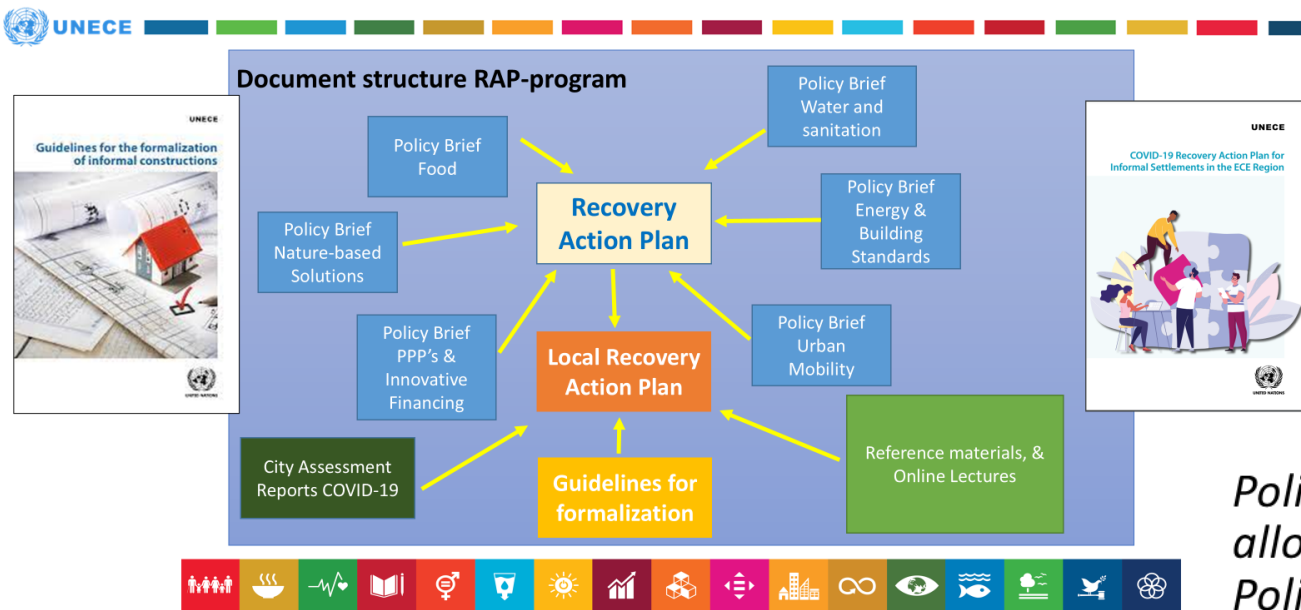
Prepare framework

Formalize constructions

Arrange for better conditions



STRUCTURE OF THE POST COVID-19 RECOVERY ACTION PLAN



The RAP has **9 Policy Areas**:

- Each has a main **Goal**
- Under these are **Targets**
- Under these are **Actions** to achieve the Targets.

*Policy Area 1 - Geospatial, land rights, tenure, resource allocation and justice (**formalization**)*

Policy Area 2 - Involvement of local communities and local action

Policy Area 3 - Basic data needs, telecommunication & information technology

Policy Area 4 - Physical infrastructure, water, sanitation and energy services

Policy Area 5 - Social and infrastructure services

Policy Area 6 - Stay at home recommendations, culture and vulnerable groups

Policy Area 7 - Food, basic consumption & distribution

Policy Area 8 - Environmental concerns, green spaces, recreation and social events

Policy Area 9 - Buildings, construction and land planning

The webinar also highlighted:

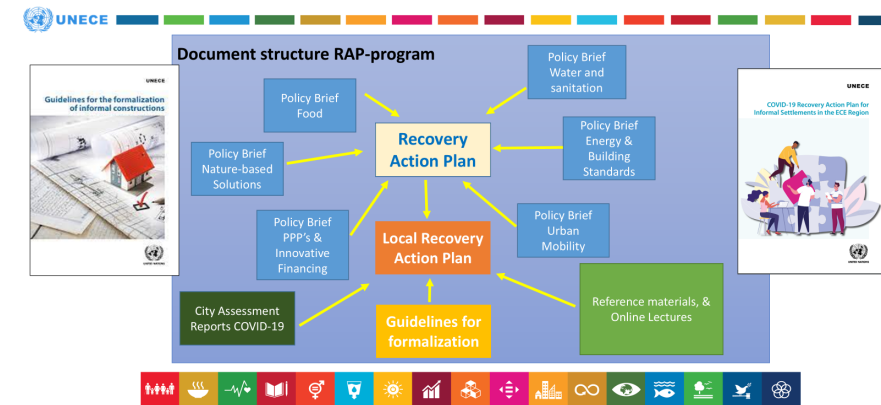
- how the pandemic introduced new challenges to achieving the SDGs
- the importance of **integration of formalization with recovery action plans** to address both old and new challenges

- Then it was introduced the transition from the knowledge base on formalization presented in the first part to practical case studies in the second part, emphasizing the need to consider real-world experiences, and
- the importance of adapting standardized knowledge to local contexts and learning from concrete experiences on the ground for effective formalization and urban sustainability was highlighted.
- 6 case studies were presented from: Albania, Greece, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia were presented, with Q&A sessions and open discussions

In Albania:

- ISs arose due to the transition to a market economy, rapid urbanization, and issues in land ownership and urban planning.
- The formalization of titles is managed by a centralized agency.
- It was emphasized that effective resolution requires a comprehensive approach that includes urbanization, infrastructure development, and systemic efficiency improvements to prevent the recurrence of informality and to address the underlying challenges.

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



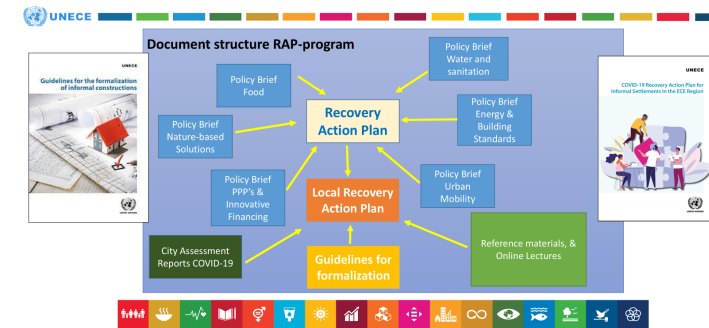
In Greece

- Current formalization, initiated in 2013, focuses on the creation of marketable property units **for a 20 year-period only (then reforms will take place)**
- Legal reforms have introduced measures like reduced penalties & installment payments, special conditions for vulnerable groups, and greater flexibility in formalizing constructions.
- Only about 489,440 constructions had been declared, due to stringent constitutional limitations, complex classification & requirement for detailed documentation of constructions, affordability issues, poor communication about the benefits among decision-makers, occupants of informal constructions & the society in general

In Montenegro:

- Informal development exists for over 40 years, with about 70,000 of informal buildings
- Since 2017, only 3,000 buildings are actually legalized.
- Key challenges include insufficient spatial planning, inadequate infrastructure, high legalization fees, unrealistic prerequisites such as, detailed technical documentation, buildings must meet specific criteria, including being identified on 2018 aerial shots and registered in the real estate cadastre, prior legalization, & high fees from illegal builders.

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



In North Macedonia

- A study in 2009 estimated 350,000 illegal buildings
- A legalization process, was initiated in 2011. The law has undergone 14 amendments to extend deadlines mainly. The legalization fee payment is €1 per square meter, for residential buildings
- around 360,000 informal objects are already registered in the cadastre
- Remaining challenge is the limited capacity of the municipalities. A new law with a simpler, continuous process for legalization, and realistic fees equivalent to those for legally built structures is needed.

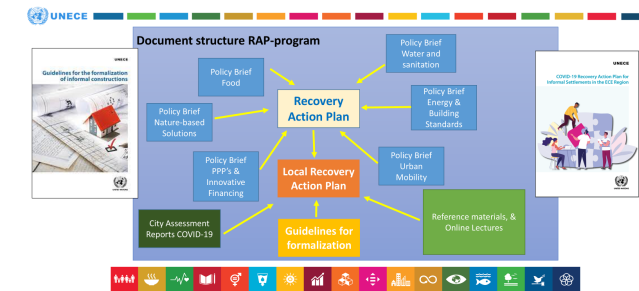
In Kyrgyzstan:

- ISs emerged primarily on agricultural lands near Bishkek and Osh, totaling over 20,000 hectares. The moratorium in 2009 on converting agricultural land to residential areas exacerbated the issue, resulting in residential buildings in unsuitable agricultural zones. Since 2013, a legalization law is initiated. As of now, 60,000 documents have been issued, and over 50,000 ownership rights have been registered, covering approximately 75% of informal settlements. The law aimed for a one-time solution and is set to conclude this year.

In Serbia:

- Since 2016, a comprehensive legal reform is initiated in a digitalized, streamlined process for land administration that reduced the registration time to under three days & introduced new geospatial platforms for better decision-making and transparency. An attempt is made to simplify and expedite the formalization of millions of informal buildings while addressing legal and policy changes needed for comprehensive formalization

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



The way forward- TOGETHER WE CAN



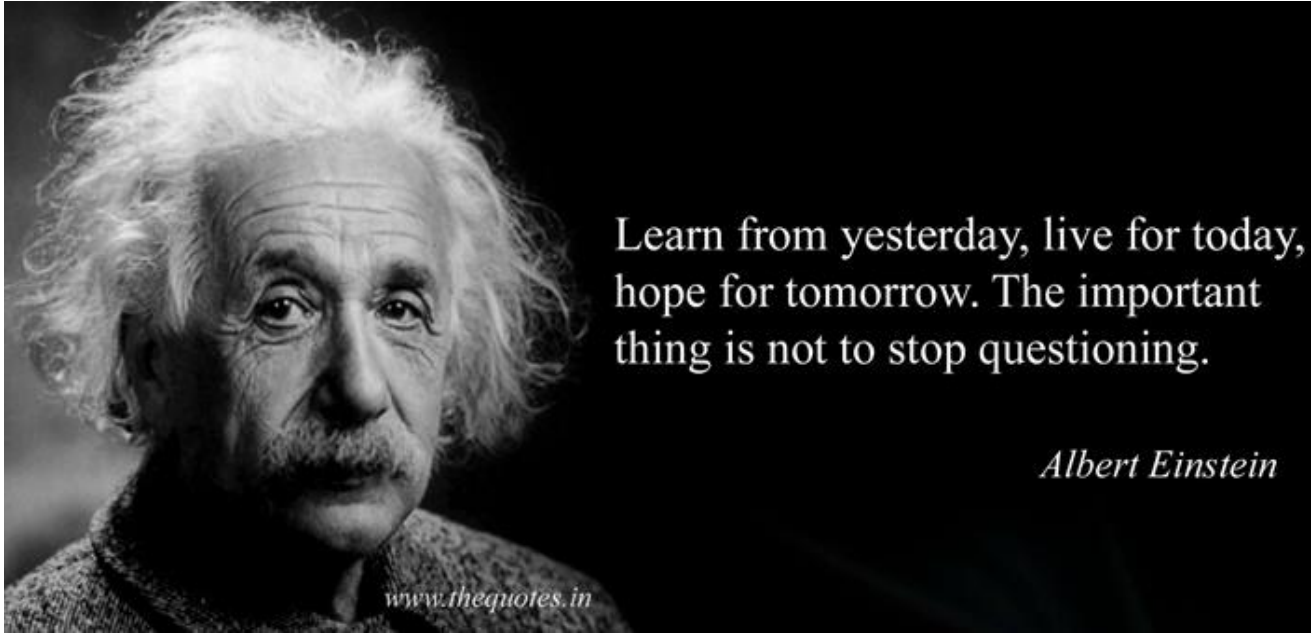
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Experts have agreed to work together to identify & unblock complex situations in formalization and provide support in problem solving & building back better informal settlements. Detailed reviews will be prepared & presented at a

Joint UNECE WPLA/ FIG Com 3 & 9/ EGoS/ WB REM conference on "Build Back Better the Self-made Cities, Improving the Geospatial Data Ecosystems & Formalizing the Informal Settlements" to be held on 18-20 June 2025, in Athens, Greece

Main topics include (among others):

- *Monitoring formalization progress in the various member states (provision of statistics)*
- *Identifying weakness & strong points in the formalization of land rights, legislation, registration, procedures-costs-times*
- *Implementation of the Recovery Action Plan, services & infrastructure provision,*
- *Building Back Better the geospatial data ecosystems & legislation; Organization of sales markets, rental markets, taxation/valuation/ planning/permitting systems, etc.,*
- *Identifying community engagement good practices,*
- *Preparing local recovery action plans & geospatial data infrastructures, examples*
- *Raising resilience against future disasters*



Thank you!

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