



INTERNATIONAL
URBAN REGENERATION
OUTSTANDING PRACTICES



UN-HABITAT



THE FIRST CYCLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL OUTSTANDING PRACTICES ON URBAN REGENERATION (IOPUR) APPLICATION GUIDELINES



The First Cycle of the International Outstanding Practices on Urban Regeneration (originally known as World Urban Regeneration Best Practices, abbreviated as WURBP), is a joint effort between the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and Shanghai University (SHU).

UN-Habitat and Shanghai University are undertaking a joint project titled “Strengthening Urban-Rural Linkages through Regeneration,” with the first cycle of the case collection of the International Outstanding Practices on Urban Regeneration (IOPUR) as one of its components. IOPUR aligns with global development priorities by advancing the **implementation of the New Urban Agenda** and accelerating **the localization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, with a strong focus on **SDG 11**.

The initiative directly supports two key goals of the **UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2020–2025**: a) reducing spatial inequality across the urban-rural continuum and b) enhancing the prosperity of city-regions. Additionally, it contributes to UN-Habitat’s **Inclusive Communities – Thriving Cities** Flagship Programme. As UN-Habitat transitions to the new Strategic Plan (2026–2029), this project will directly contribute to the Organization’s core priorities of land, housing, and basic services. The expected practices will highlight themes such as housing regeneration, informal settlement upgrading, and the provision of basic services, among others, thereby demonstrating practical pathways for advancing inclusive, resilient, and sustainable urbanization.

PURPOSE

The International Outstanding Practices on Urban Regeneration initiative aims to recognize outstanding efforts from around the world that have made meaningful contributions to urban-rural regeneration. Its goal is to showcase, exchange, and disseminate outstanding practices and innovative solutions in global urban-rural regeneration.

By evaluating, researching, and disseminating practical cases, the initiative aims to build a global platform for knowledge exchange and collaboration on urban-rural regeneration. This platform aims to foster a shared understanding of sustainable regeneration practices, unlock new opportunities for cooperation, and enhance international dialogue on this topic. By bringing together interdisciplinary knowledge and real-world experiences, it will inspire more actors to pursue innovative regeneration approaches. Ultimately, our goal is to offer practical guidance and thought leadership—helping to shape a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable future across the urban-rural continuum.

OBJECTIVES

I. HIGHLIGHT A GLOBAL VISION AND MULTIDIMENSIONAL VALUE

The initiative covers a wide array of fields, including urban culture and sustainable regeneration design, urban regeneration management and digital governance, as well as policy and finance related to regeneration. By focusing on four key dimensions— impact, innovation, instrumentality, and scalability— the initiative brings together cutting-edge practices from around the world. By doing so, it offers actionable insights and practical guidance to support and scale urban-rural regeneration efforts globally.

II. PROMOTE DISCIPLINARY DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION OF INDUSTRY AND EDUCATION

The initiative aims to enhance international exchange and cooperation in the realm of urban and rural regeneration by fostering seamless integration between academic research and practical application. It seeks to transform theoretical insights into tangible regeneration actions, while also incorporating innovative real-world experiences into academic research and case studies, thereby building a bridge between theory and practice.

III. PROVIDE STRATEGIC SUPPORT FOR URBAN GOVERNANCE AND PUBLIC SERVICES

By extracting and refining effective governance strategies and innovative solutions from urban regeneration practices, the initiative enables stakeholders to better understand the complexities of urban regeneration, identify key needs, address implementation challenges, seize future development opportunities, and foster continuous innovation and improvement in regeneration strategies.

IV. LEAD FUTURE SUSTAINABLE REGENERATION COLLABORATION MODELS

The initiative highlights the importance of interdisciplinary and cross-sector collaboration. It encourages professionals and institutions across diverse fields—such as cultural arts, social governance, financial investment, environmental science, as well as planning and design—to contribute comprehensive and innovative solutions for urban and rural regeneration, fostering new global partnerships for sustainable development.



GENERAL INFORMATION

I. NAME

The First Cycle of the International Outstanding Practices on Urban Regeneration (IOPUR)

II. THEME

Regeneration in action: Towards a sustainable urban-rural future

III. CONCEPT GUIDANCE

The First Cycle of the International Outstanding Practices on Urban Regeneration is guided by three core concepts: “People-centered”, “Technologically Inclusive”, and “Safe & Sustainable”. It specifically recognizes initiatives demonstrating remarkable contributions in enhancing community well-being, integrating smart technologies with social inclusion, as well as building urban safety and climate resilience.



PEOPLE-CENTERED

Urban regeneration practices should prioritize people, aiming to enhance quality of life for all. Special attention should be given to protecting and promoting the rights of vulnerable groups, disadvantaged communities, and indigenous peoples. Projects are encouraged to address these groups’ needs through initiatives such as gender-inclusive, disability-friendly, elderly-friendly or child-friendly public spaces and adaptive reuse of buildings for community centers. Evaluations will consider not only the physical outcomes of projects but also the inclusiveness of the development process, ensuring a socially sustainable approach. Engaging diverse local stakeholders—such as residents, civil society groups, and academia—through participatory methods (e.g., co-designing workshops, consultation sessions) is essential. Post-completion, assessments should measure social impact and incorporate user feedback to inform future practices.



TECHNOLOGICALLY INCLUSIVE

Technology should be used to empower communities, serving as a tool for inclusion rather than surveillance or control. Practices must prioritize solutions that ensure equitable access to digital tools and methods, emphasizing both high-tech innovation and “low-tech” approaches. The latter includes integrating traditional, accessible, and low-cost technologies to bridge gaps in areas with limited digital infrastructure, such as rural regions. Heritage technologies and alternative solutions (e.g., reviving traditional techniques) are encouraged to foster inclusivity. This balanced approach ensures technological advancements benefit all, regardless of socioeconomic or geographic barriers.



SAFE & SUSTAINABLE

Regeneration practices should integrate nature-based solutions to re-green urban spaces and conserve natural heritage, particularly in rural areas. Promoting energy-efficient innovation—such as Passive House Standards and Positive Energy Districts—is critical for sustainable buildings and communities. Additionally, extending the lifespan of existing structures reduces construction waste and enhances material circularity, minimizing inefficiencies in resource cycles. By prioritizing ecological stewardship and sustainable design, projects can harmonize urban development with environmental resilience.



IV. EVALUATION CRITERIA



INNOVATION

Demonstrates originality and relevance within both global and local context, offering valuable insights and benefits that can inform and inspire others.



INSTRUMENTALITY

Ensures long-term economic and social sustainability through the effective use of technologies and tools.



IMPACT

Exhibits the ability to produce positive, tangible outcomes for sustainable urban development, with clearly defined, measurable, and assessable results.



SCALABILITY

Shows strong potential for replication, dissemination, and broader adoption across different contexts.



V. FOCUS AREAS

The First Cycle of the International Outstanding Practices on Urban Regeneration particularly encourages and welcomes applications in one or more, but not limited to, the following areas:



HOUSING, BASIC SERVICES AND SLUM UPGRADING

To achieve decent and affordable housing for all, urban and rural regeneration must prioritize housing-related objectives, such as improving housing conditions and upgrading public facilities and infrastructure in neighborhoods. Special emphasis should be placed on ensuring access to basic services (e.g., water and sanitation).



INNER-CITY & WATERFRONT REVITALIZATION

Historic inner cities—with their mix of residences, administrative offices, gastronomy, cultural venues, and pedestrian zones—foster civic identity, pride, and social cohesion. Regeneration efforts should address evolving challenges to enhance safety, livability, and accessibility. Similarly, waterfronts, deeply tied to a city's historical growth and prosperity, should be revitalized to create vibrant, publicly accessible spaces that celebrate their cultural and ecological significance.



CULTURE AND HERITAGE-LED REGENERATION

Aligned with SDG 11.4, conservation of cultural and nature heritage should be strengthened in urban regeneration practices. This aims to not only create aesthetically enriching environments, but also to shape and reinforce the identity of the place. Sustainability means safeguarding both heritage and ecosystems for future generations. We advocate integrating heritage perspectives into all regeneration projects, ensuring they respect historical narratives and ecological balance.



URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES AND RURAL REVITALIZATION

Rural revitalization is critical to improving rural residents' quality of life and strengthening urban-rural connections. Often lagging in modernization, rural areas urgently require upgraded facilities, including public spaces, renovated housing, enhanced services (e.g., healthcare, education), and community centers for local communities, as well as hospitality facilities for rural visitors. Regeneration should also celebrate intangible heritage—such as spaces for local performances, literature, and customs—while fostering new economies like temporary coworking hubs for urban professionals or small-to-medium enterprise clusters.





SMART & INTELLIGENT REGENERATION

The application of emerging technologies, such as digital twins and AI, can significantly enhance the regeneration process and deliver positive outcomes. In particular, for places and communities that have been left behind, smart technologies like autonomous public transportation can offer innovative solutions to improve livelihoods. In heritage-related regeneration, digital twins can document historical elements and support the restoration process. Meanwhile, in dense urban areas, the integration of advanced technologies can help with design and shorten construction periods and improve efficiency.



INDUSTRIAL LAND REGENERATION

As industries are rapidly restructuring, converting industrial land for non-industrial uses has become a trend in post-industrial cities. Polluted industrial sites should be remediated before regeneration begins. We advocate for conserving and reusing existing industrial infrastructure (e.g., transforming factories into cultural hubs) rather than complete demolition. Through design and innovation, these structures can adapt to new functions, promoting sustainable resource use and preserving their historical character.



COMPREHENSIVE AND MIX-USE REGENERATION

Large-scale regeneration projects, such as redevelopment of transportation hubs, act as engines for urban and economic development due to their transformative scale and impact. These initiatives offer unique opportunities to catalyze growth, reshape urban environments, and integrate mixed-use spaces (e.g., combining housing, commerce, and culture). Beyond economic benefits, projects must prioritize high-quality public spaces and inclusive cultural facilities to serve all citizens equitably.



TEMPORARY AND INFORMAL REGENERATION

Before formal redevelopment begins, adaptive reuse of buildings/sites for temporary or informal purposes (e.g., pop-up galleries, creative studios) can attract artists and innovators, sparking creativity and community engagement. Examples include industrial-artistic clusters in New York and Shanghai, or Germany's "Zwischennutzung" (in-between use) model. Similarly, rural areas are increasingly repurposed as coworking spaces or "second homes" for urban creatives. These bottom-up practices are vital to fostering inclusive and sustainable urban transformation.



VI. TARGETED APPLICANTS

The First Cycle of the International Outstanding Practices on Urban Regeneration is open globally to entities with experience in urban regeneration practices and innovative solutions to participate. This includes, but is not limited to, local governments, enterprises, and research and design institutions. Applications may be submitted either through self-application or by nomination from experts.

VII. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

1. The entity submitting must have actively participated in the practice and played a significant role in shaping the project. This could include, for instance, city administrations that approved the project, architects or urban planners who have designed it, real estate developers who invested in it, local institutions that have coordinated its implementation, or any other institutions.
2. The regeneration practices in urban and rural areas must meet the following criteria:
 - The practice must have been completed or have achieved measurable progress within the past five years (from January 1, 2020). Projects that have completed design but have not been implemented are not eligible for submission.
 - The practice should align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities.
3. Applications may not be considered under the following conditions:
 - Incomplete application materials or submissions received after the deadline.
 - Information or documentation found to be inaccurate, or misleading may affect the eligibility of the application.
 - Shortlisted practices that fail to provide sufficient information for a comprehensive review may not proceed to the final evaluation stage.
 - Any actions that could compromise the integrity of the evaluation process, including attempts to influence outcomes, may lead to removal from consideration.

VIII. HOW TO APPLY

The practices/case studies should be submitted through the official English website (www.wurbp.org).

Please note that **the application must be submitted in English**. All supporting materials required during the application process, including but not limited to the Project Profile, Proof of Applicant's Association with the Project, Video Subtitles, and Certificates of Honor, may be submitted in any of the United Nations official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, or Spanish.



IX. SELECTION PROCESS

The evaluation is conducted by a panel of distinguished experts and scholars from both China and abroad, representing multidisciplinary fields such as architecture, urban planning, rural revitalization, urban-rural linkages, transportation, economics, social science, and culture. The process includes the following stages:

Application Submission

Application materials should be submitted online within the indicated timeframe to ensure consideration.



Eligibility Review

Following the submission deadline, the Task Force will review all received applications to ensure they meet the basic eligibility and submission requirements.



Preliminary Shortlist (Online Recommendation)

Based on the evaluation criteria, the Expert Panel conducts a comprehensive review of the submitted materials and recommends a shortlist of entries.



Final Selection List (Final On-Site Recommendation)

The Expert Panel further evaluates the preliminary shortlist, prepares a detailed assessment report, and recommends the final recommended cases.



X. SELECTION BENEFITS

Following a multistage evaluation process including eligibility review, online recommendation, and final on site recommendation, The First Cycle of the International Outstanding Practices on Urban Regeneration will recommend **no more than 32 shortlisted cases**, from which **up to 10 final cases** will be determined.

The final selected cases are intended for incorporation into the publication on the International Outstanding Practices on Urban Regeneration.

Shortlisted and final recommended practices will receive an honorary certificate and be given priority for invitation to participate to major international events organised by Shanghai University on urban regeneration, such as side events on the occasion of World Urban Forum and World Cities Day.





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For more information,
please visit the official English website
www.wurbp.org

