Urban Policy Working Group (UPWG)

Minutes of Meeting

Meeting organizers	UN-Habitat
Meeting attendees	Ministry of Interior and Municipalities (MoIM), KfW, World Bank, Beirut Municipality, Live Love Lebanon (LLL), Public Works Studio (PWS), UN ESCWA, UNOPS, UNRCO, American University of Beirut Nature Conservation Center (AUB-NCC) in their capacity as part of the 3RF Consultative Group
Unable to attend	Beirut Governorate, Municipality of Bourj Hammoud, Public Corporation for Housing, Nahnoo, Beirut Heritage Initiative, Beit El Baraka, EU, EBRD, Lebanon Reforestation Initiative, Order of Engineers and Architects, UNICEF, UNESCO
Location	Hybrid: UN ESCWA and online
Date	29 September 2023
Duration	1.5 hours
Meeting nr.	4
Agenda	1) **Presentation of results from consultations and surveys** – UN-Habitat 2) **Discussion on way forward towards a position paper** – Group 3) **Update on Beirut Urban Recovery and Development Strategy** – World Bank
Link to previous minutes	https://www.lebanon3rf.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/3RF-Urban-Policy-WG_MoM-23Jun2023_final.pdf

Minutes of meeting

1) **Presentation of results from consultations and surveys** – UN-Habitat
   Please refer to the attached presentation.

2) **Discussion on way forward towards a position paper** – Group
   - **Municipality of Beirut**: Two technical points should be included in the forthcoming position paper regarding 1) financing issues in the housing sector and 2) environmental issues, more broadly and linked to housing specifically.
     - **UN-Habitat**: The UN-Habitat (2021) *Guide for Mainstreaming Housing in Lebanon's National Urban Policy* includes specific recommendations related to financing issues in housing (e.g. bailout programmes) and some relevant issues have been included in the analysis of group and bilateral consultations (e.g. concentration of all housing loan responsibilities within the Public Corporation for Housing). These have already been included in today's presentation (but perhaps not emphasized) and will definitely be mentioned in the position paper. Regarding environmental issues, they were tackled indirectly in bilateral and group consultation meetings related to infrastructure, public spaces, and public lands; so, they will certainly be mentioned in the position paper at least as a cross-cutting theme. However, given the existence of a dedicated working group on environment issues (Planet Results Group), it would not be appropriate for the Urban Policy Working Group (UPWG) to delve deeply and technically into this topic without further consultations with that working group.
   - **MoIM**: The five thematic priority sectors presented (housing, transport and mobility, infrastructure, land and public spaces, and planning and governance) could apply to many

urban contexts around the world; the position paper should focus on what the specific priorities for Lebanon are and what can make a significant change in the country. Out of the five thematic priority sectors presented, it would be good to focus on housing, which is linked to all the other sectors. Also, it is important to avoid pilot projects if there are no resources for a longer-term implementation. Moreover, it is important to consult with more ministries (e.g. Ministry of Water and Energy), as well as Members of Parliament (MPs) and parliamentary committees before drafting the position paper, so they are aware of the process from the beginning and they inform us of any ongoing/previous efforts they have undertaken/have been involved in that are relevant to points included in the position paper. In this way, they might endorse the position paper more easily and be more empowered to help disseminate it later on as well as support further phases.

- o **UNRCO:** It can be an iterative process, whereby we present to key MPs or parliamentary committees these preliminary findings laid out in a draft position paper, and they can feed into it by telling us which laws they are working on, what is/is not feasible or important to prioritize, etc.
- o **Municipality of Beirut:** It may also be helpful to speak to MP candidates, not only those who were elected, as well as to former MPs who may have previously been involved in drafting relevant laws.
- o **UN-Habitat:** UN-Habitat has exerted great efforts to reach out, bilaterally or collectively, to as many relevant ministry and other government representatives, as well as non-governmental stakeholders, as possible to gather multistakeholder feedback, as presented in the beginning of the presentation. However, it has not been possible to consult with all those approached, unfortunately, for various reasons – in some cases, we reached out to people several times and received no response or were unable to schedule a meeting. UN-Habitat is ready to consult with more relevant stakeholders as recommended by members of the UPWG. Regarding the focus on one priority sector, initially the intention was that; however, the feedback received from the different consultations in the past months has been so rich and interesting that we consider it important to summarize all that in the position paper for potential longer-term use by different stakeholders, while for sure also including recommendations and providing a sort of a roadmap about short- to medium-term priorities in the paper.

- **UN ESCWA**: It might help to link the five priority sectors into one strategic vision.
- **AUB-NCC**: The analysis and findings are impressive; the priorities are ambitious, but it is important to mention them in the position paper. Some small gaps: how does this fit into a bigger vision, even beyond an urban focus? For example, a just resilient transition, public health, environment and economics should be mentioned. It would be important to include environmental and climate-related topics, as well as the topic of gentrification and alleviating urban centres from housing pressures/challenges. With regard to the idea of establishing a Ministry of Housing, we need more institutions to deal with this topic, but perhaps a national strategy implemented through local actors may be more conducive than a national institution – perhaps a separate discussion should take place in this regard. The position paper should focus on the triangle of housing–public spaces–transport (i.e. interlinkages between these sectors) and policy reform entry points available in that regard, instead of viewing these three sectors separately.
- **PWS:** What is missing in the consultation process led by UN-Habitat so far is the participation of different communities. The approach we took with the draft law on right to housing that we have been working on in terms of involving MPs and communities is the following: MPs will

take the draft law to public hearings to present it to their constituents, and this will feed back into the draft law. A similar approach could be adopted by the UPWG during the dissemination of the position paper. The triangle approach proposed by AUB-NCC is important, since we should not think of these topics in isolation. Simply resolving the Old Rent Law is not enough to address the housing issues. It is a complex sector that involves such considerations as how to utilize public lands, finance public housing, and handle evictions. A comprehensive vision is necessary to address the housing sector.

- **UN-Habitat**: Indeed, during the wider group consultation meeting in June 2023, AUB-Beirut Urban Lab also mentioned the need to include a vision in the position paper. We also recognize very well the integrated nature of the policy sectors and we will try to highlight that in the position paper.
  - o

3) **Update on Beirut Urban Recovery and Development Strategy** – World Bank
- The [recruitment process](#) for a consulting firm has been initiated and relevant information was shared with the WG members. The deadline for the Expression of Interest passed recently. It is important that the firm is present in Beirut and can work with all stakeholders in a participatory approach to co-create the strategy. The Bank will launch the request for detailed proposals to short-listed firms in mid-October 2023, and hope that by early-December 2023, the firm will be on board. The timeline of implementation is foreseen to be around 15 months, till early spring 2025. The Bank is still thinking about the optimal governance structure, which will allow everyone to co-own the results. One of the components will pertain to the concept of an urban planning and coordination unit (PCU) under the governor of Beirut (different to the Central Management Unit under the Prime Minister's Office).
  - o **LLL**: Last year, civil society organizations already drafted a ToR for a PCU within the Governorate of Beirut – it would be good to build on that.
  - o **AUB-NCC**: If the strategy is to cover Greater Beirut, then the steering mechanism should look at municipalities around Beirut; it might also be helpful if the ToR stresses the governance angle.
  - o **UN-Habitat**: The UN-Habitat 2021 *Beirut City Profile*, where "Beirut City" is defined as the continuously built-up area beyond the boundaries of Municipality Beirut, includes multisectoral analysis that could serve as an evidence base for the diagnosis of key urban recovery and development challenges and needs that the consultancy firm is expected to complete as part of its assignment. The city profile also includes recommendations that the strategy could rely on. In addition, it will be good to look at the synergies between the national-level policy work of the UPWG and the Beirut-level work that will be done through the strategy consultations.

Action points proposed by UN-Habitat:
- All the members of the UPWG should please feel free to share with UN-Habitat recommendations on current and former MPs, parliamentary committees, and other stakeholders that should be consulted before/while developing the position paper's first draft.
- If any members of the UPWG are interested in taking part in the drafting of the position paper, please contact UN-Habitat, noting that all UPWG members will have the chance to review it once it has been drafted.

o   AUB-NCC will inform the 3RF Consultative Group civil society members about the position paper drafting process, to see how it can be supported by them. This will bring more credibility to the position paper.
- UPWG members might also wish to share with UN-Habitat any relevant documents and materials that they think would be important to reference in the position paper.
- The next UPWG meeting will likely be dedicated to an in-depth policy dialogue on the Old Rent Law, which may be expiring this year with significant implications for vulnerable people including the elderly, and therefore requires urgent attention. The topic of this law has come up through the Lebanon Financing Facility-funded project on housing rehabilitation, as well as in recent meetings that the UN Resident Coordinator has had with some government partners.

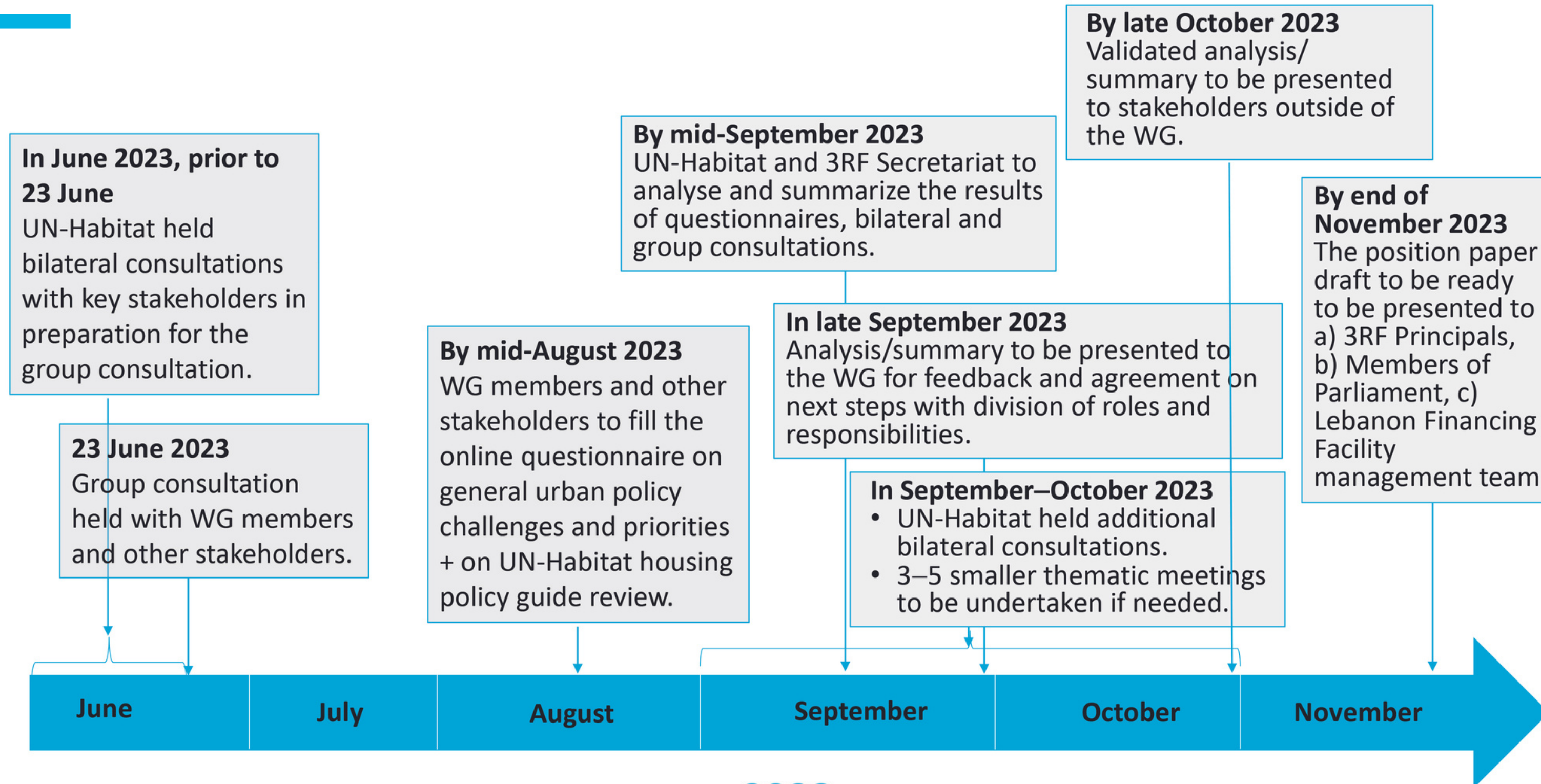| Documents shared |
| --- |
| UN-Habitat PowerPoint presentation from the meeting. |

3RF Urban Policy Working Group (WG)

Identification of Urban Policy Challenges and Reform Priorities in Lebanon: Results from Consultations and Surveys

Presented by: **Sera Saad and Nanor Karageozian, UN-Habitat Lebanon Country Programme**
Date: **29 September 2023**
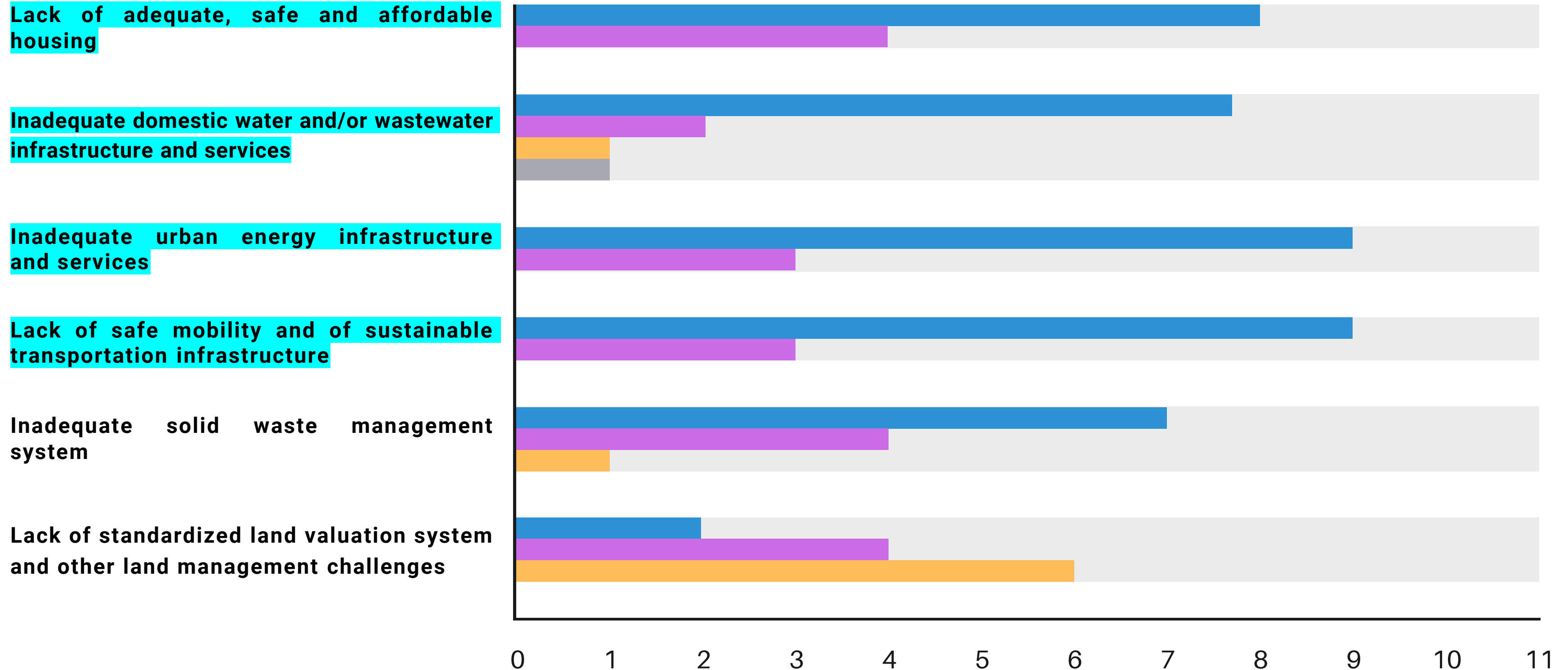
Timeline & suggested next steps

In June 2023, prior to 23 June
UN-Habitat held bilateral consultations with key stakeholders in preparation for the group consultation.

23 June 2023
Group consultation held with WG members and other stakeholders.

By mid-August 2023
WG members and other stakeholders to fill the online questionnaire on general urban policy challenges and priorities + on UN-Habitat housing policy guide review.

By mid-September 2023
UN-Habitat and 3RF Secretariat to analyse and summarize the results of questionnaires, bilateral and group consultations.

In late September 2023
Analysis/summary to be presented to the WG for feedback and agreement on next steps with division of roles and responsibilities.

In September–October 2023
- UN-Habitat held additional bilateral consultations.
- 3–5 smaller thematic meetings to be undertaken if needed.

By late October 2023
Validated analysis/ summary to be presented to stakeholders outside of the WG.

By end of November 2023
The position paper draft to be ready to be presented to a) 3RF Principals, b) Members of Parliament, c) Lebanon Financing Facility management team

June	July	August	September	October	November

2023

Data collection & stakeholders consulted

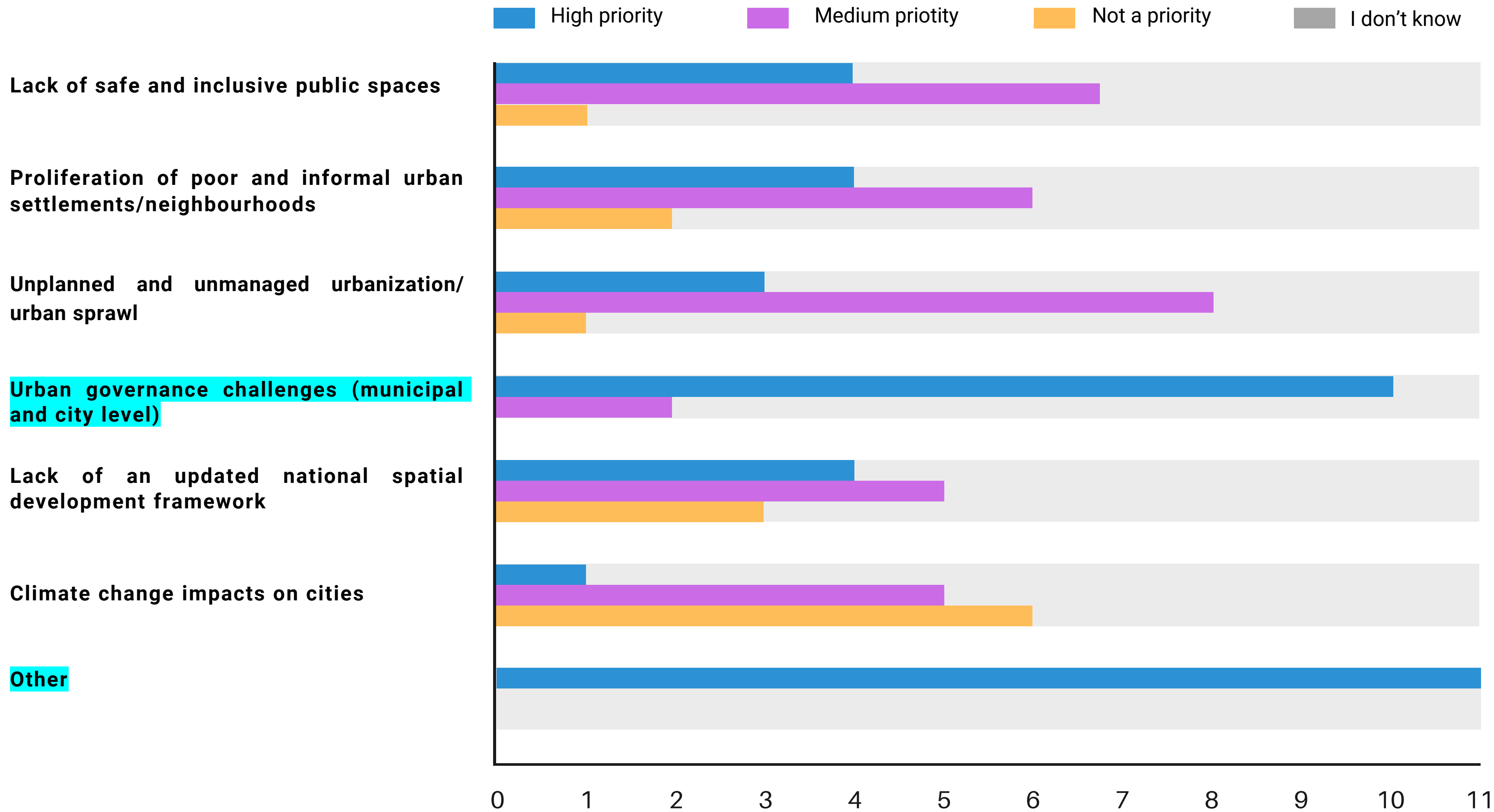|	12 Bilateral consultations	24 Group consultation	11 Online survey
Municipality of Beirut	x		x
MoIM	x	x	x
MoPWT	x		x
DGLAC	x	x	
PCH	x		x
CNRS-L	x		x
CSOs	x	x	x
Academic institutions	x	x	x
Individual experts	x	x	x

Prioritization level of identified urban needs/challenges in Lebanon

This graph is based on online survey results

■ High priority ■ Medium priotity ■ Not a priority ■ I don't know

Lack of adequate, safe and affordable housing

Inadequate domestic water and/or wastewater infrastructure and services

Inadequate urban energy infrastructure and services

Lack of safe mobility and of sustainable transportation infrastructure

Inadequate solid waste management system

Lack of standardized land valuation system and other land management challenges

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

Legend: High priority, Medium priotity, Not a priority, I don't know

- Lack of safe and inclusive public spaces
- Proliferation of poor and informal urban settlements/neighbourhoods
- Unplanned and unmanaged urbanization/ urban sprawl
- Urban governance challenges (municipal and city level)
- Lack of an updated national spatial development framework
- Climate change impacts on cities
- Other

X-axis: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

Policy reform – How do we define it?

1

New laws or amendments to existing laws/ government strategies/ government decisions at local, regional and/or national levels [to regulate, restrict, facilitate/improve certain aspects of life]

2

New institutional frameworks/ structures or changes to existing ones to improve the policy environment at local, regional and/or national levels

3

Improvements to the implementation/ enforcement of existing laws/ strategies/decisions (without changing them), through capacity-building, awareness-raising, and other mechanisms

4

Any other changes that could create and/or maintain an enabling environment for policy reform at local, regional and/or national levels

Urban policy priorities – Themes

Housing

Transport & mobility

Infrastructure

Land & public spaces

Planning & governance

Housing policy priorities

Proposed new laws/strategies	Draft a "Right to Housing" law	Develop an "Affordable Housing" law	Review/endorse the PCH new housing strategy

Amendments to existing laws/strategies

- Amend the **Old Rent Law**.
- Improve the **Building Code**/its enforcement and other relevant legislation, such as related to public safety.
- Undertake a comprehensive review of existing **rent-related legislation** to ensure that it is current, relevant, and serves the best interests of both tenants and landlords (e.g. Develop a unified rent pricing index).
- Make reforms to ensure the tenure security and protection of housing, land and property rights of tenants (e.g. related to eviction).

Institutional changes

- Create a Ministry of Housing.
- Revise and strengthen the structure and operations of public housing institutions to improve efficiency and service delivery and centralize all housing loan granting activities under the PCH.
- Boost the capacity and resources available to municipalities for the active supervision and enforcement of tenant rights and compliance with the construction law and public safety decree.

Housing policy priorities *(continued)*

Related actions

- Promote and facilitate collaboration between public entities and private sector partners for the development of affordable housing projects.

- Establish a streamlined inspection process for all residential and commercial buildings to ensure safety and code compliance,

- Impose regulations on the real estate sector to protect home buyers.

- Develop a bailout programme for a selected number of overindebted/distressed middle-market housing developers.

- Provide subsidized housing loans to public servants.

- Unify and officialize seismic retrofitting guidelines and incentivize owners who retrofit their buildings against seismic hazards.

- Launch and assess innovative pilot projects in the housing sector to test new approaches and solutions.

Data-related actions

- Mandate a systematic collection and analysis of data related to current rental agreements to identify trends and areas of improvement, especially agreements made under the old rent law (tenant profiles, spatial distribution, etc)..

Transport & mobility policy priorities

Proposed new laws/strategies	Develop a National Transport Policy	Consider TOD strategies

Amendments to existing laws/strategies

- Amend car parking laws (e.g. revisit building laws to remove the requirement for providing additional parking spots in buildings that is increasing the cost of housing).
- Consider reforms oriented towards transit-oriented development and develop/amend the laws that govern the development of land to make public transport economically and financially viable while providing high densities in regions surrounding the public transport system.

Transport & mobility policy priorities *(continued)*

Related actions

- Prioritize the enhancement of walkability in cities (e.g. implement strict regulations to remove elements that make a city unwalkable, such as sidewalk intrusions).
- Given the difficulty of achieving an organized public transport/bus rapid transit (BRT) system in the short to medium term, focus on better regulating and enhancing the safety of the informal transport system ("service", mini buses, etc.) in the short term, including through the use of technologies.
- Prioritize reforms that could enhance the safety and security of different modes of transport, including related to improving women's economic empowerment/access to economic opportunities.

Data-related actions

- Collect more data and update records especially related to:
  - Informal public transport sector
  - Formal public transport sector (e.g. number of registered red plates versus number of functional red plates)

Infrastructure policy priorities

Proposed new laws/strategies

Develop multisectoral neighbourhood upgrading/regeneration strategies for poor/informal urban neighbourhoods

Institutional changes

- Centralize decision making, coordination and implementation of infrastructural work at the municipal level.

Related actions

- Separate clear water and waste water networks.

- Transition towards renewable energy sources, primarily solar energy.

- Find alternative water solutions (e.g. collect rainwater).

- Develop wastewater treatment plants.

- Develop efficient and effective waste management plans.

Data-related actions

- Gather more information about current infrastructure (and in relation to city demographic data). This will enable a more accurate projection of required upgrades and modifications, grounded in understandings of expected population shifts and possible expansions.

Land & public spaces policy priorities

Proposed new laws/strategies	**Develop a land value capture policy**	**Develop public space and tactical urbanism strategies for cities, especially Beirut, considering issues related to accessibility, safety and security**

Amendments to existing laws/strategies

- Develop new legal instruments/amend existing ones to protect public lands, especially on the coast, from illegal construction.
- Establish a "fair" valuation system for settlement of infringements on maritime public property.
- Halt all decrees that legalize encroachments on maritime land and clearly define the term "temporary occupancy" of maritime public land in existing legislation.
- Revise the Maritime Law.
- Work towards strengthening legal frameworks and regulations to provide stronger protection for public properties against privatization and ensure their appropriate management and utilization.

Institutional changes

- Reinitiate discussions around the draft law on institutional changes related to real estate transactions (through notary offices, and not the Directorate General of Land Registry and Cadastre).

Land & public spaces policy priorities *(continued)*

Related actions

- Launch a comprehensive public awareness campaign to educate the public about the value and importance of public properties and the potential negative consequences of privatization, with a particular focus on the types of public properties of social value.

- Engage with municipalities to raise awareness about the existence and significance of public properties within their jurisdictions and collaborate with them to develop sustainable models for the utilization of these properties and oppose privatization efforts.

- Establish mechanisms for meaningful public participation and consultation in decision-making processes related to public properties, particularly communal lands and municipal lands.

Data-related actions

- Conduct a thorough inventory and assessment of various types and categories of public properties to identify the specific risks of privatization for each property.

- Modernize the outdated data infrastructure hardware/system of the Directorate General of Land Registry and Cadastre (DGLRC) to ensure its security, protection and sustainability, as well as to support DGLRC to have improved quality of data, especially on public properties, that can be used for planning.

Planning & governance policy priorities

Amendments to existing laws/strategies

- Amend the criteria through which new municipalities can be formed to avoid dissecting the Lebanese territory even more.
- Amend Municipal Law to allow city residents to vote in their municipalities of residence.
- Reform the municipal finance/taxation system and provide capacity development programmes for municipalities to enhance their access to financial resources.
- Consider other amendments to the Municipal Law to give municipalities more flexibility to plan and implement initiatives/provide services.
- Update the National Physical Master Plan for the Lebanese Territory.
- Develop application decrees for the PPP Law.

Institutional changes

- Create a neighbourhood-level institutional/planning mechanism (e.g. neighbourhood committees) to enhance coordination and planning, to increase trust between residents and other actors (public authorities, civil society, etc.) >> how do we define "neighbourhoods"?
- Establish a National Urban Observatory to collect, analyse and monitor national and city-level multisectoral data for better, evidence-based planning and decision making. Consider the use of new technologies to collect and analyse such data
- Create local development/planning units within municipalities (to collect and monitor data, propose local plans, follow up on their implementation, promote coordination of relevant stakeholders, etc.).
- Return (from the ISF) to municipalities the power to supervise legality of construction on public lands in their areas and related actions in this regard.
- Create a regional, intermunicipal (city-level) institutional/planning mechanism.

Planning & governance policy priorities *(continued)*

Related actions

- Raise awareness among policymakers to ensure they are adequately informed of the issues surrounding urban planning, policy and policymaking.

- Support municipalities to develop local master plans to better regulate land use/zoning, etc. and decrease the delays in decreeing such plans

Data-related actions

- Modernize data collection and management systems related to urban data in public institutions.

What's next?
Outline of position paper

Introduction

Background about the 3RF and the Urban Policy Working Group

Methodology
- Definition of policy reform
- Types of data used and data collection process

Pressing urban challenges in Lebanon

Key urban policy reform needs
- Planning and governance
- Housing
- Transport and mobility
- Infrastructure
- Land and public spaces

Barriers to policy change

Opportunities of policy change and recommendations for way forward, including pilot projects

What's next?

- More thematic consultation meetings?
- Drafting and review of position paper. Who to involve? How?
- How to disseminate the position paper?