

World Habitat Day Session on Tunisia

Event date: 06 October 2025 - 10:30am to 11:30am – GMT+1

Title:

Urban crisis response in a changing climate, the power of collective action

Partnering organizations:

UN-Habitat with the Municipality of Kerkennah, Lams Association and TBC

Short paragraph describing the event:

Climate change and urban density pressures are converging to create an urban crisis that Tunisia is struggling to manage with limited resources. As climate-vulnerable areas expand and the livelihoods within informal settlements deteriorate, the country faces increasingly complex challenges that require urgent and effective interventions.

Tunisia is an ancient and highly urbanized country. Since independence, its population has nearly tripled, increasing from 4 million in 1956 to about 11.7 million in 2020, with an urbanization rate of 70%. The uncontrolled expansion of informal housing has played a major role in driving urban densification through the spread of informal settlements. While this phenomenon dates back to the 1960s, it escalated sharply after 2011, with the rapid multiplication of such settlements. Dozens of new neighborhoods emerged as marginalized populations sought access to labor markets in the absence of adequate social housing options. The growth of informal settlements, and their associated social, economic, and environmental consequences, has become a central challenge for the country's stability, underscoring the need for innovative, integrated, and cross-cutting solutions to support public policies for neighborhood management.

At the same time, Tunisia is considered highly vulnerable to climate change and is expected to face increasingly severe impacts from rising temperatures, greater aridity, declining precipitation, and sea level rise. Climate-related hazards such as extreme heat events, coastal and urban flooding, droughts, and wildfires are becoming more frequent and intense, with the most pronounced effects occurring in cities where the majority of Tunisians reside. The vulnerability of urban areas is further compounded by social, economic, political, and environmental pressures. As local governments carry the primary responsibility for climate change adaptation and mitigation in cities, strengthening their capacity for resilient urban planning is essential. Such planning must integrate the interconnected challenges of climate change, rapid urbanization, and biodiversity loss.

The intersection of climate change impacts and urban crises is not only intensifying vulnerabilities but also amplifying inequalities within Tunisian cities. Informal settlements, often located in climate-exposed areas, embody this dual challenge: they are both the product of unplanned urban growth and among the most at risk from floods, heatwaves, and other climate shocks. Addressing these overlapping crises requires going beyond sectoral or top-down interventions. A participatory approach that meaningfully involves communities, civil society, local authorities, and national stakeholders is essential to co-create solutions that are both context-specific and socially just. By fostering collective action, Tunisia can leverage local knowledge, strengthen social cohesion, and ensure that crisis response and climate resilience strategies are inclusive, sustainable, and rooted in the realities of those most affected.

Objective: To explore how participatory planning contributes to social inclusion and resilience in different urban and territorial contexts.

Draft program – Online format

Time	Session
10am – 10:10am	Opening of the session Moderator: Asma Shili
10:10am – 10:30	Setting the scene of the housing crisis and the interference with other thematics Ms Henda Gafsi: Senior consultat
10:30am – 10:45am	An innovative approach to address the housing crisis: JDID project Ms Chiraz Gafsi: Project manager (<i>UN-Habitat</i>)
10:45am – 11:00am	The impact of the housing crisis on People With Disabilities – PWD: perspective from the local level <i>Ms Temna Tabib: Lams Association</i>
11am – 11:15am	Addressing climate adaptation in vulnerable cities: Case of Kerkennah archipelago <i>M. Mahdi Makhlouf: Principal Architect (la municipalit� de Kerkennah)</i> <i>Ms Mariem Rekik: Program assistant (UN-Habitat)</i>
11:15am – 11:30am	Wrap up of the session Moderator: Asma Shili

Related link:

- [JDID project](#)
- [Ennour VLR report](#)
- [Kerkennah MVA report – Soumoud project](#)