

URBAN BASIC SERVICES SECTION, URBAN PRACTICES BRANCH, GLOBAL SOLUTIONS DIVISION
TERMS OF REFERENCE
JUNIOR PROFESSIONAL OFFICER (JPO)

Position: Junior Professional Officer (Water and Sanitation)

Section: Urban Basic Services Section

Location: UN-Habitat Headquarters, Nairobi, Kenya

BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

Lack of safe drinking water supply and basic sanitation services is becoming an increasing constraint to sustainable urban development. The provision of these important services has not kept pace with the high demand created by rapid urban population growth, climate change and rising consumption patterns. The UN estimates that 2.1 billion people lack safe drinking water at home and more than twice as many lack safe sanitation¹. If present trends continue, the global demand for water is expected to grow by 50% by 2030. Improving water productivity to close the worldwide gap between supply and demand for water will cost US\$50-60 billion annually over the next 20 years.²

Cities and local governments in the global south are today confronted with a rising urban population resulting in an increased demand for water and sanitation services, increasing urban poverty, growing financial resource constraints, and uncertainties and risk implications of climate change. The problem is complicated by lack of infrastructure, weak institutional capacity and low investments. In these circumstances, the urban poor are disproportionately affected.

According to the recently released UN Secretary-General's policy brief on COVID-19 in an Urban World, with an estimated 90 percent of all reported COVID-19 cases, urban areas have become the epicentre of the pandemic³. The size of their populations and their high level of global and local interconnectivity make them particularly vulnerable to the spread of the virus. In the near term, for many cities, the COVID-19 health crisis has expanded to a crisis of urban access, urban equity, urban finance, safety, joblessness, public services, infrastructure and transport, all of which are disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable in society.

¹ Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene: 2017 Update and SDG Baselines. Geneva: World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2017

² The United Nations World Water Development Report 2016, Water and Jobs

³ UNSDG. 2020. Policy Brief on COVID-19 in an Urban World. Available at: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/policy-brief-covid-19-urban-world>

The COVID-19 pandemic has positioned water, sanitation and hygiene services at the centre of a public health emergency response in slums. Most slum residents do not have the facilities at home to wash their hands with soap and running water. Maintaining physical distancing is equally difficult as most water and sanitation facilities are communal. Today, over 700 million urban residents live without improved sanitation, contributing to poor health conditions and heavy pollution loads in wastewater, and over 156 million live without improved water sources.⁴ Lack of adequate water and sanitation in slums and informal settlements results in widespread outbreaks of water-borne diseases further complicating efforts at controlling the spread of COVID-19. The poor often have to buy their water from private vendors at prices that are much higher than those paid by middle class residents with municipal connections.⁵ Poor sanitation in these settlements has more dire health consequences for women and girls in particular. Currently, 1 in 3 women and girls live without a decent toilet and it is estimated that 335 million girls go to school without water and soap available for washing their hands or clothes when changing sanitary pads, compromising their ability to lead unrestrained and dignified lives.⁶

UN-Habitat

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is the agency for human settlements. It is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all.

The Urban Basic Services Section of UN-Habitat is mandated to improve the access to urban basic services, including water and sanitation. The objective of the Water and Sanitation Programme of UN-Habitat is to support member states in achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 and the water and sanitation aspects of the New Urban Agenda (NUA). The Programme provides policy advisory services, capacity building and technical assistance to local authorities and water and sanitation service providers to improve their capacity to deliver effective and efficient services while addressing the needs of the urban poor. The pro-poor focus is guided by the principle of *leaving no one behind – reaching the furthest behind first*.

The Focus is also on global advocacy and support to regional water and sanitation-related political processes and events to raise the profile of pro-poor urban water and sanitation issues and their integration into policy and practice.

Since 1999 when the first “Water for Cities” Programme was launched, UN-HABITAT has acquired valuable experience, knowledge and expertise in pro-poor urban water governance, urban

⁴ UN-Water 2017. Water and Urbanization. Available at: <https://www.unwater.org/water-facts/urbanization/>

⁵ [World Water Assessment Programme. 2019. The United Nations world water development report 2019: leaving no one behind. Paris: UNESCO, and London: Earthscan.](#)

⁶ WaterAid. 2019. Clean water and toilets vitally linked to women's sexual and reproductive health. Available at: <https://www.wateraid.org/us/media/sexual-reproductive-health-and-rights-clean-water-women-deliver>

water conservation and demand management, integrated urban environmental sanitation, and income generation for the urban poor through community-based water and sanitation services.

Over 100 cities in 36 countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean have benefitted from the Programme. The programme supports a combination of policy and normative work with on-the-ground pilot and demonstration initiatives (for learning) through regional “Water for Cities” programmes in Asia, Africa and the Latin America.

DUTIES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTED OUTPUTS

1. Research, document and evaluate existing innovative approaches and experiences at global level in regard to provision of water supply, sanitation and hygiene, particularly for the urban poor.
2. Initiate documentation and dissemination of case studies on best-practice models and effective national policy frameworks to address urban water and sanitation challenge.
3. Assist in providing technical advice on the development and implementation of water supply and sanitation in UN-Habitat partners countries to national and local governments.
4. Initiate new partnerships and dialogue between communities, community-based organisations, local governments, water and sanitation utilities, international development partners or other partners in UN-Habitat partner countries.
5. Assist in Resource Mobilisation efforts by identifying opportunities and preparing proposals for donors including the private sector and foundations.
6. Assist in the implementation of UN-Habitat supported initiatives and field projects.
7. Support the broader work of the Urban Basic Services Section by contributing to the integrated approach to urban basic services and through reporting on outcomes and outputs.

TRAVEL

Occasional travel to key conferences and in relation to on-going projects may be required.

TRAINING AND LEARNING ELEMENTS

The incumbent will be encouraged and supported to engage in technical or general training and learning activities both at the UN campus in Nairobi, at external conferences and training event and through electronic courses. The Human Resources Management Service of the United Nations Office at Nairobi offers a wide range of cross-cultural training workshops or language classes.

QUALIFICATIONS, EXPERIENCE AND COMPETENCIES REQUIRED

Education

Advanced University Degree (Masters or Equivalent) in civil or water supply or environmental engineering or environmental science with knowledge on water supply, sanitation and environmental management or a first degree with the relevant combination of professional and academic qualifications.

Work Experience

At least two (2) years of relevant experience in water supply, sanitation and environmental management.

Languages

English and French are the working languages of the United Nations Secretariat. For the post advertised, excellent fluency in oral and written English is essential. Knowledge of French and/or Spanish or other United Nations official languages is an asset.

Other Skills

Understanding of diverse institutional cultures and the specific needs and conditions of low-income residents, slum-dwellers, NGOs and Municipalities involved in addressing the water and sanitation needs of the urban poor.

Competencies

- **Professionalism:** In-depth understanding of strategic direction and ability to transform it into results-oriented work programme. Ability to identify key strategic issues, opportunities and risks as well as to show persistence when faced with challenges.
- **Communication:** Speaks and writes clearly and effectively; listens to others, correctly interprets messages from others and responds appropriately; asks questions to clarify, and exhibits interest in having two-way communication; tailors language, tone, style and format to match the audience; demonstrates openness in sharing information and keeping people informed.
- **Planning and Organizing:** Develops clear goals that are consistent with agreed strategies; Identifies priority activities and assignments; adjusts priorities as required; allocates appropriate amount of time and resources for completing work; foresees risks and allows for contingencies when planning; monitors and adjusts plans and actions as necessary; uses time efficiently.
- **Teamwork:** Works collaboratively with colleagues to achieve organizational goals; solicits input by genuinely valuing others' ideas and expertise; is willing to learn from others; places team agenda before personal agenda; supports and acts in accordance with final group decision, even when such decisions may not entirely reflect own position; shares credit for team accomplishments and accepts joint responsibility for team shortcomings.



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SUPERVISION

Under the overall Supervision of the Chief, Urban Basic Services Section, the incumbent will work under the direct supervision of the Programme Management Officer, Water and Sanitation.