



urbanmonde
sustainable cities **by** and **for** their residents

MISSION, VISION AND ACTIONS



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Convinced that residents and users of urban spaces should be at the heart of all processes that produce the city, urbaMonde's mission is to support groups of inhabitants who implement community-led housing projects and who are committed to making their cities **more sustainable and inclusive**.

In 2020, urbaMonde carried out a major collective reflection process to define its objectives for the coming years.

The results of this work are gathered in this general strategy document, which establishes the strategic axes of intervention for the period 2021-2025 as well as the priorities identified to continue the institutional strengthening of the three associations.

Particular attention is paid to urbaMonde's vision and approach to its international cooperation activities, which represent the most important part of its actions in terms of financial volume and human resources.

This document outlines urbaMonde's mission, vision, purpose and values, as well as its concrete actions.

OUR MISSION

UrbaMonde is an association created in 2005 in Switzerland and in 2015 in France.

Founded under the name of *Urbanistes Sans Frontières - International*, urbaMonde has its origins in the in the difficult situations encountered in post-disaster reconstruction, and in the development of the concept of urban planning: urbanism applied to humanitarian situations.

Since 2010, urbaMonde has progressively reoriented its activities towards **the empowerment of people in the production and management of their habitat** - housing, neighbourhoods and urban infrastructure - helping them to take their role as active actors at the heart of the production, management and transformation processes of the city, with the aim to make it **more just, sustainable, resilient and inclusive**.

Habitat, in the broad sense of human settlement, includes housing, local urban infrastructure and common spaces at the neighbourhood and city levels.

Housing is a right, not a commodity. The right to adequate housing does not mean having four walls and a roof. It is the right of every person to be able to live in their own home in a community, in safety, in dignity and in peace.

OUR VISION

Faced with the challenges of urbanisation, climate change and growing inequalities, and in a global context where the unbridled privatisation of public services and the advent of the financialization of cities are undermining **the right to the city and the fundamental right to adequate housing**, urbaMonde is committed to working alongside residents, urban professionals and public authorities, for a world in which **all residents have access to decent, safe and affordable housing by becoming actors in the transformation of urban space, understood in the sense of common good**.

In this context, **community-led housing** emerges as a practice that enables the strengthening of the capacity of residents, citizens and users of the city to organise themselves collectively and in solidarity, to plan, finance, build, manage and sustainably improve their living spaces at all scales of the city.

With the right financial, technical, organisational and political support, **community-led housing** activities result in permanently affordable, more sustainable and inclusive urban spaces, to meet the needs of local communities and provide solutions to contemporary urban challenges.





GENERAL OBJECTIVE

INCREASING THE SHARE OF COMMUNITY-LED HOUSING WORLDWIDE

By empowering people
their federations and networks,
at local and international levels.

By giving visibility
to participatory, anti-speculation,
inclusive, ecologically responsible,
economically innovative and
socially just practices.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

SOLIDARITY

EQUITY

PARTICIPATION

TRANSPARENCY

We act in solidarity with urban residents and professionals, and in collaboration with all housing actors who share our aspiration for a fairer and more sustainable society.

Our commitment is based on our concrete experience in the territories where we live and work.

We seek to create tools that respond to local needs and can be replicated or adapted in other contexts.

We observe the practices and solutions developed by our peers elsewhere to inspire our local action.

This feedback from different scales and territories of intervention results in a translocal approach that allows us to achieve greater relevance and quality.

Our work is based on bonds of trust and personal relationships built up over the years and through meetings. It necessarily takes place over a long period of time, often exceeding the time of the project.

The partnerships we forge with local actors and residents are horizontal in nature: we work in a spirit of co-construction and cooperation. Consequently, our relationships are based on a balance.

In our collaborations, we adopt a posture of learner, observer and peer.

We place respect and equality, including gender equality, at the heart of our thinking, practice and governance.

We encourage the active participation of women in decision-making bodies and positions of responsibility, and ensure that equal pay is applied.

Beyond the issue of gender equality, we are committed to diversity and do not tolerate any form of discrimination.

We promote self-management as an essential tool for emancipation, aiming at individual and collective transformation towards a more just and egalitarian society.

By promoting democratic and inclusive practices, as well as the sharing of experiences, self-management offers keys to organisation and operation that we and our partners implement on a daily basis.

Decisions concerning our orientations, activities and internal management, as well as the establishment of new partnerships are taken in a participatory manner, ensuring the involvement of all those active within the Swiss and French associations. We are also committed to transparency in our actions, our methods and our financing.

We hope that the experience of our association - whether as an employee, a member of the committee (Switzerland)

or the board of directors (France), an intern, a collaborator or a volunteer will contribute to an **awareness and a personal development**.

As individuals, we consider ourselves as **committed residents**, and many of use develop cooperative and collaborative projects in parallel to our involvement with urbaMonde.

Our involvement in the association is part of our personal commitment to a more just and sustainable society.

We value the commitment of each individual, as we see ourselves as part of wider movements for social change.



OUR ACTIONS

“*By 2050, the world's urban population is expected to nearly double, making urbanization one of the twenty-first century's most transformative trends. Populations, economic activities, social and cultural interactions, as well as environmental and humanitarian impacts, are increasingly concentrated in cities, and this poses massive sustainability challenges in terms of housing, infrastructure, basic services, food security, health, education, decent jobs, safety and natural resources, among others.*

Habitat III, New Urban Agenda, article 2 (United Nations, 2017)

“*Today, it is estimated that over 800 million people live in inadequate housing conditions.*

By 2030, we estimate that 3 billion people, or about 40% of the world's population, will be without adequate housing.

Leilani Farha, former UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, "The Social Production of Habitat" (urbaMonde, 2015)

The global aggravation of the lack of access to adequate, safe and affordable housing for low-income people, but also for the middle classes, especially in large urban centres, is largely due to the global phenomenon of **financialization and the non-action of governments** in the face of the growing role of financial markets and private companies in the real estate, land and infrastructure sectors.

Yet access to adequate housing is a basic human right enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted in 1966 by the United Nations General Assembly.

It is important to emphasise that **women**, especially the most vulnerable (e.g. single mothers, widows, elderly women, migrant women), are **particularly affected** by the lack of access to adequate housing.

Victims of often **deep-rooted discrimination**, they face various obstacles to accessing adequate housing, such as economic dependence, lack of access to education and information, and unequal legal frameworks regarding access to land and inheritance issues.

The lack of access to adequate housing ultimately increases their vulnerability, forcing them to live in precarious conditions and **exposing them to violence and social and economic exclusion.**



RIGHT TO ADEQUATE HOUSING

The right to adequate housing does not mean having four walls and a roof. It is the right of every adult, youth and child to be able to live in their own home, in a community, in safety and in dignity and peace.

Legal security of tenure

Affordability

Habitability

Availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure

Accessibility

Location

Cultural adequacy

OUR APPROACH

Faced with current and future **environmental**, social and health challenges, the implementation of the right to adequate housing is more than ever a topical and urgent issue.

In this context, urbaMonde is committed, both locally and internationally, **as a support and network actor** alongside residents, urban professionals and public authorities.

As a technical support actor, we support groups of residents in their participatory processes of habitat production, through the strengthening of their community organisation, their technical and economic capacities, access to information, and more generally their collective power to act.

As a "resource" and network actor, we are working to create an international community of collaborative housing actors by promoting alliances between resident's federations, organisations academic actors, local governments and networks, as well by developing, in a concerted and horizontal manner, tools for capitalization, transversal analysis, exchange of experiences, participatory and open data documentation, dissemination of good practices and peer training.

We consider international solidarity as a fundamental lever for development and an essential vector for transformation, whether through cooperation projects involving financial support or through knowledge-sharing tools.

We seek to **build bridges between people** from different regions of the world, as well as between federations of people, civil society actors, academic actors and public authorities.

UrbaMonde's actions are defined in reference to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015 by the United Nations Member States as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as in reference to the New Urban Agenda adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2016 following the Habitat III conference held in Quito.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



UrbaMonde refers in particular to SDGs #11: to ensure that cities and human settlements are inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. But also to SDGs #1, #5, #8, #10, #12, #17.

un.org/sustainabledevelopment/

• • •

NEW URBAN AGENDA

31. We commit ourselves to promote national, subnational and local housing policies that support the progressive realisation of the right to adequate housing for all ..., **while enabling the participation and engagement of communities and relevant stakeholders in the planning and implementation of these policies, including supporting the social production of habitat ...**

107. We will encourage the development of policies, tools, mechanisms and financing models that promote access to a wide range of affordable, sustainable housing options, including rental and other tenure options, **as well as cooperative solutions such as co-housing, community land trusts and other forms of collective tenure ...**

habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda

UrbaMonde's actions are also in line with Swiss (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation) and French (French Development Agency) **international cooperation strategies**, particularly in terms of defending fundamental human rights, fighting against poverty and promoting sustainable development.

It should be noted, however, that the theme of housing and the urban environment is still insufficiently taken into consideration by public and private development cooperation actors, particularly in Switzerland.

In this respect, urbaMonde regularly advocates to representatives of Swiss and French international cooperation agencies, to raise their awareness on this issue.

Contrary to the gradual withdrawal from **Latin America** announced by the Swiss Confederation in its 2021-2024 international cooperation strategy, urbaMonde is seeking to strengthen its presence in this region, which has been particularly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and where increasing urbanisation and growing inequalities are worsening the conditions of access to adequate housing.

Similarly, we will continue to develop links and cooperation projects in **sub-Saharan Africa**, particularly in Senegal and South Africa, and in **Asia**, particularly in South and South-East Asia.

For the implementation of its international cooperation projects, urbaMonde relies on the support of the **Fédération Genevoise de Coopération** and the **Fédération Vaudoise de Coopération** at the Swiss level, as well as the Fondation Abbé Pierre in France, which are key allies with whom we share many values.

UrbaMonde stands alongside other **non-governmental organisations and actors from Swiss and French civil society** in favour of an increase in official development assistance, to reach the rate of 0.7% of GNI, as recommended by the United Nations for more than forty years.

In the face of a global trend of decreasing official development assistance and a worrying reorientation of cooperation towards the private sector (particularly in Switzerland), we are redoubling our efforts to maintain and improve our support actions for low-income populations and their networks and federations.

To achieve this and ensure the continuity of our actions, the work of **raising the awareness of local and regional public authorities** and the establishment of strong alliances with other actors in housing and development aid are **essential** elements.



OUR PRIORITY THEMES

To achieve its objective, urbaMonde supports concrete actions, both locally and internationally, within a transversal theme and three priority sub-themes.

PARTICIPATION & SELF-MANAGEMENT

Access to land
and finance

Technical
support

Social and
solidarity
economy

Social and solidarity economy

Residents must be at the heart of the production and management of their living spaces. Encouraging their active participation, according to a "bottom-up" logic, in the reflection, formulation of proposals, decision-making and implementation - both in the planning of the housing project and in its financing, construction and management - strengthens their power to act and their resilience.

The application of self-management principles and methods of democratic and inclusive governance becomes a vector of formation and transformation within the city and neighbourhoods, helping to activate the role of residents as citizens in solidarity, while strengthening

the local social and economic fabric. The pooling of resources, know-how and responsibilities are the keys to ensuring the sustainability of these jointly designed living spaces, which are driving forces of innovation and creativity in the transition to a more democratic, ecological and socially just society.

Access to land and finance

In the face of the financialisation of the housing sector and real estate speculation, people in many parts of the world have no access to building land and no access to building loans. Public policies for access to housing are not a priority in many countries, leaving people with no hope of improving their living environment.

In this situation, the occupation of land generally unsuitable for construction is often the only way out, with the precariousness and long-term risks that this entails.

Housing projects based on collective ownership, and therefore beyond the reach of real estate speculation, provide an effective solution to ensure the security and permanence of the inhabitants, while strengthening their capacity for self-management and proposing interesting mechanisms for partnerships between public actors and inhabitants.

Whether they are housing co-operatives, land trusts or other legal forms, their realisation shows by example what public policies designed and actively supported by the inhabitants could be.

The exclusion of low- and even middle-income residents from the banking system, as well as the exorbitant interest rates applied by banking institutions in many countries, are the main obstacles to the realisation of participatory housing projects.

The search for alternative sources of finance is therefore inevitable. Mechanisms are being implemented by organised residents, such as savings groups, revolving funds or citizen finance, which enable them to strengthen their financial power of action while encouraging solidarity between peers. However, in the context of precariousness further

aggravated by the Covid-19 pandemic, recourse to residents' savings cannot be the only solution. Improving housing is more than ever an urgent task.

In this context, it is essential that international solidarity, particularly through development cooperation, actively supports the initiatives of these groups of organised residents.

Similarly, it is essential to support and encourage the implementation of ethical financial mechanisms and public policies that promote accessibility and banking inclusion.



Technical support

Collaboration between residents and housing professionals (architects, engineers, urban planners, academics, etc.) is an essential aspect of the success and sustainability of a collaborative housing project. It is therefore essential to strengthen the skills of these technicians in developing and implementing truly inclusive **participatory approaches**, enabling groups of residents to fully assume their role as "project owners".

This implies the adoption of a **professional posture of support and advice**, as well as the ability to co-construct a project based on the knowledge, needs and pre-existing structures of the residents.

Adapted and participatory technical assistance enables residents to acquire new skills, particularly by **proposing accessible self-construction solutions**, which enable them to take ownership of their living space and create links, while reducing the cost of projects.

Furthermore, because of the major environmental impacts of the building sector, **green building** has become an important solution to address the housing deficit by adopting an environmentally responsible strategy.

The use of local and natural resources brings environmental benefits to all phases of a building's life cycle (extraction, transport, construction, etc.). In

some cases, it allows the revisiting and re-use of old building techniques. In general, it promotes uniqueness, rather than homogenisation, by allowing local culture to emerge in the built environment.

In the context of climate emergency, the technical support provided to collaborative housing projects should aim at the adoption of resilient construction techniques adapted to local contexts and favouring the **circular economy**, as well as **innovative ecological solutions** that are affordable and appropriable by the residents.



Social and solidarity economy

The transition to a society that is fairer and more respectful of humans and the biosphere necessarily implies thinking about housing from **a local and sustainable development perspective**.

Beyond housing, the way we live in our living spaces is a fundamental vector of social, economic and ecological transformation.

The **eco-design** of living environments, particularly at **the neighbourhood level**, makes it possible to address the issue of living together by proposing quality solutions adapted to the needs of users, by encouraging the creation of social links, proposing economic alternatives and rational use of natural resources.

In this sense, **the social and solidarity economy** provides interesting keys to promote sustainable, resilient economic activities, anchored in a regional territory and **based on strong social values**, such as solidarity and social inclusion.

By favouring **short circuits** and creating local jobs, it contributes to the development of a living social and economic fabric that respects the environment.

Similarly, **transitional urbanism** is today presented as a lever for economic development by allowing local actors (companies, artists, etc.) to access and temporarily occupy empty spaces or

buildings, while prefiguring future urban projects.

These initiatives are part of **the collaboration between users, project owners, developers and public authorities**, whose support is essential to ensure their development.



OUR PARTNERSHIP POLICY

UrbaMonde pays particular attention to continuously nurturing, strengthening and establishing quality partnerships with a wide range of actors working for the right to adequate housing and the right to the city.

Our local partners

In our international cooperation projects, we work alongside our local partner organisations, which we carefully select based on **our shared visions**, their local roots and **the bonds of trust** established over the years and within the networks in which we are jointly involved. We take care to adopt a **non-interference stance** in our partnerships and encourage **the co-construction of proposals**.

Our ongoing training and that of our partners is based on **popular education practices** and cooperative pedagogies, creating spaces for collective reflection and dialogue that encourage **the co-construction of knowledge** based on our different practices.

We **encourage and support** our partners in their advocacy and awareness-raising actions with the public authorities in their regions and countries. The federation of actors and the pooling of tools and resources, beyond national borders, is **one of the pillars of our mode of action** to have an impact on public policies.

Our strategic partners

As a facilitator of the **CoHabitat Network** (page 23), we actively participate in the construction and visibility of a global movement for the right to housing and for collaborative housing.

This network allows us to encourage the formation of **alliances**, the formulation of multi-actor **collaborations** and the **co-creation of advocacy tools** and exchanges of experiences.

In Geneva, we seek to build links with **international organisations** active in the same field as us, in particular with UN Habitat, UNECE and Geneva Cities Hub, in order to make the voice of local communities heard.

UrbaMonde is also a member of the international network Habitat International Coalition, and of several local networks, such as the swiss social and solidarity economy network Après-GE, the Swiss Participation Federation and the swiss cooperative Ressources Urbaines.

We work in dialogue with local actors of collaborative housing, both in France and in Switzerland.

In Switzerland, we maintain strong links with housing cooperatives and their umbrella organisations.

Over the last few years, urbaMonde has strengthened its collaboration with academic actors, seeking to raise awareness among students about the right to housing and collaborative housing and to formulate action research projects by facilitating links with groups of inhabitants in the field (in Switzerland with UNIGE, ETHZ, EPFL, UNIL, UNIBAS; in France with the University of Aix-Marseille and the Ecole d'Urbanisme de Paris; in other countries with DPU and IIED London, the University of Lund in Sweden, the University of Delft in the Netherlands).

Finally, urbaMonde maintains regular links and contacts with public authorities in Switzerland and France in order to raise awareness among local elected officials and the general public about the right to housing and international solidarity in this field.



OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

SUPPORTING LOCAL ACTORS

Organised residents benefit from effective technical and financial support mechanisms at local and international level in the production and management of their habitat.

DOCUMENTATION, DISSEMINATION, EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES & ADVOCACY

The visibility, recognition and knowledge around the social production and management of housing and the city are strengthened on a global scale.



Since 2014, urbaMonde has been coordinating the CoHabitat Network, a joint initiative by grassroots federations and umbrella organisations, as well as non-profit organisations and academic institutions working in the field of community-led housing. This network works to empower local communities in their collaborative housing projects.

The CoHabitat Network projects itself as a reference actor in terms of co-production of knowledge and information about Social Production of Habitat (SPH); in terms of linking SPH actors between organisations, countries and regions; in terms of designing and implementing solidarity, ethical and citizen finance tools.

www.co-habitat.net

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2005 • Creation of the association *Urbanistes sans frontières*, by a group of experienced professionals working in the administration, the private sector and education. The aim is to offer expert services in urban planning after a disaster.

2007 • Djibril Diallo, a resident of the DTK neighbourhood in Dakar, Senegal, is seeking the association's help to deal with the flooding that his neighbourhood regularly suffers. He was invited to Switzerland to meet the members of the association.

2008 • Following this visit, teachers and students from EPFL organised a 3-month internship in Dakar, with the support of the association Ingénieurs du monde managed by EPFL students. After this first mission, which included Cyril Royez and Olivia Boutay, it is clear that the "expert intervention" approach is not adapted to the situation: it is more important to support a long-term process led by local actors.

2011 • In order to meet this ambition, which is supported by a group of committed students, the association changes its name and adapts its statutes, with the agreement of the founding members of *Urbanistes sans frontières*. The urbaMonde-Suisse association and the urbaMonde-Vaud association were created.

A first project supported by *Ingénieurs du Monde* is presented to Fédération Vaudoise de Coopération (FEDEVACO). urbaMonde became a member of FEDEVACO to ensure continuity of this support. urbaMonde then became a member of Fédération Genevoise de Coopération and presents various projects, including a new phase for the land management project in Matagalpa, Nicaragua.

2012 • Organisation of the first Habitat Forum: highlighting the essential role of knowledge sharing and the protagonism of social movements, with the presence of several representatives of residents' federations from different countries. The first milestone of the CoHabitat Network was reached.

2015 • In Senegal, for historical reasons, French and European cooperation is very present. The DTK project arouses a lot of interest. It is therefore obvious that an urbaMonde-France association should be set up, as Switzerland does not have access to European funds and is less involved in urban issues in West Africa.

At the same time, urbaMonde is committed to supporting the convergence between different actors in Social Production of Housing through the coordination of a global thematic platform. In 2018, the SPH Platform officially became the CoHabitat Network.

2022 • urbaMonde accompanies collaborative housing projects on several continents, continues its documentation and knowledge sharing work, and coordinates the CoHabitat Network.

ADDITIONS

Statutes of the three associations: [Switzerland](#), [Vaud](#), [France](#)

[Annual Report 2021](#) - [Annual Report 2020](#)

Financial reports 2021: [Switzerland](#), [Vaud](#), [France](#)

[Organigrams](#) of urbaMonde-Suisse, urbaMonde-France & urbaMonde-Vaud



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organised around collaborative housing
and participatory cities.

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