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A-Z Site Index

Home

About ▾

Campaigns ▾

Goals ▾

Take Action ▾

Partnerships ▾

News And Media ▾

Learn More ▾

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



The world is becoming increasingly urbanized. Since 2007, more than half the world's population has been living in cities, and that share is projected to rise to 60 per cent by 2030.

Cities and metropolitan areas are powerhouses of economic growth—contributing about 60 per cent of global GDP. However, they also account for about 70 per cent of global carbon emissions and over 60 per cent of resource use.

Rapid urbanization is resulting in a growing number of slum dwellers, inadequate and overburdened infrastructure and services (such as waste collection and water and sanitation systems, roads and transport), worsening air pollution and unplanned urban sprawl.

The impact of COVID-19 will be most devastating in poor and densely populated urban areas, especially for the one billion people living in informal settlements and slums worldwide, where overcrowding also makes it difficult to follow recommended measures such as social distancing and self-isolation.

The UN food agency, FAO, warned that hunger and fatalities could rise significantly in urban areas, without measures to ensure that poor and vulnerable residents have access to food.

COVID-19 response

Cities are on the front line of coping with the pandemic and its lasting impacts. Across the globe, COVID-19 is threatening cities and communities, endangering not only public health, but also the economy and the fabric of society.

UN-Habitat, the UN agency for housing and urban development, is working with national and local governments to help them prepare for, prevent, respond to and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. The [UN Habitat COVID-19 Response Plan](#) aims to:

THE 17 GOALS



- Support local governments and community-driven solutions in informal settlements
- Provide urban data, evidence-based mapping and knowledge for informed decision
- Mitigate economic impact and initiate recovery

[UN-Habitat's COVID-19 Policy and Programme Framework](#) provides guidance for global, regional and country-level action.

The UN [Economic Commission for Africa](#) has proposed specific support to city governments to mitigate and respond to the economic effects of COVID-19. Africa's cities account for more than 50% of the region's GDP, and COVID-19 is likely to hit African cities hard, with sharp declines in productivity, jobs and revenues.



Why it matters: Sustainable Cities and Communities



Infographic: Sustainable Cities and Communities



Facts and figures

- Half of humanity – 3.5 billion people – lives in cities today and 5 billion people are projected to live in cities by 2030.
- 95 per cent of urban expansion in the next decades will take place in developing world
- 883 million people live in slums today and most them are found in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia.
- The world's cities occupy just 3 per cent of the Earth's land, but account for 60-80 per cent of energy consumption and 75 per cent of carbon emissions.
- Rapid urbanization is exerting pressure on fresh water supplies, sewage, the living environment, and public health
- As of 2016, 90% of urban dwellers have been breathing unsafe air, resulting in 4.2 million deaths due to ambient air pollution. More than half of the global urban population were exposed to air pollution levels at least 2.5 times higher than the safety standard.

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The United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, took place in Quito, Ecuador from 17-20 October 2016, and was the first UN global summit on urbanization since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Habitat III offered a unique opportunity to discuss the important challenges of how cities, towns, and village can be planned and managed, in order to fulfill their role as drivers of sustainable development, and how they can shape the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

In Quito, world leaders adopted the New Urban Agenda which set global standards of achievement in sustainable urban development, rethinking the way we build, manage, and live in cities through drawing together cooperation with committed partners, relevant stakeholders, and urban actors at all levels of government as well as the civil society and private sector.

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