

# 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



## SWEDEN AND SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

### MAIN MESSAGES

- **Inclusive cities.** Invest in good governance for inclusive urbanisation that is socially, environmentally and economically beneficial, and respectful of basic human rights. Adequate supply of affordable housing for all is a fundamental requirement for inclusive urbanisation. Foster the rural-urban linkages by reaching out to connected peri-urban and rural areas. Women's empowerment and women's full and equal participation and leadership in the economy are vital to achieve sustainable development and to significantly enhance economic growth and productivity.
- **Green cities.** Strengthen local, regional and national governance for climate change adaptation and disaster risk preparedness to increase the resilience of cities and peri-urban areas. Improve air quality to enhance citizens' health. Invest in urban green spaces and greenery for ecosystem services, such as clean air, lower temperatures, water management and recreation. Continuously scrutinize solutions to prevent the addition of a 'green facade' to otherwise conventional urban development.
- **Smart cities.** Invest in smart and sustainable infrastructure and housing to create opportunities for technology development and digitalisation. New technologies give us ever-greater opportunities to build cities that are smart and sustainable. Better planning and smart solutions can enable a higher share of non-motorised and public transport. The opportunities are diverse, and include smart energy, smart recycling, smart homes, smart transportation, etc. Critically supervise policies to avoid short-term techno-fixes that counteract long-term societal benefit.

# SWEDEN ON TARGET FOR SDG 11: PREPARING FOR AN URBAN FUTURE

## Sweden at work nationally

Today, a majority of the Swedish population live in urban areas. Slums do not exist in any conventional sense; virtually all homes have functioning water, sewage, waste management, and heating, and street networks are lit. Nonetheless, there is a lack of housing, especially for households with limited income.

The quantity of particles in the air particularly affects the health of the Swedish population, not least in urban areas. The Swedish environmental objectives system includes a clean air objective. Achieving this requires reduced emissions of nitrogen oxides and particles. The most recent follow-up, using data from 19 Swedish urban areas, shows that the air quality trend is largely positive, but that the objective will not be achieved by 2020. Access to nearby green areas is, in general, relatively good in Swedish cities. In 2010, 92 per cent of the population, in the 37 biggest cities, had access to green areas within 200 metres of their homes.

Sweden faces a number of challenges, regarding sustainable urban development, such as security and satisfying the need for more housing. Segregation is another challenge. Emissions from transport must also

decrease. Continued urbanisation is also creating greater demand for expanded and environmentally- friendly public transportation systems that also have good accessibility for people with disabilities.

To tackle some of these challenges, Sweden has recently adopted a national policy for sustainable cities that provides a goal and a framework for integrated action in various sectors, as well as highlights the roles and focus of national, regional and municipal administrations and areas for engagement of other actors.

Sweden has adopted a new target for sustainable cities, which was announced in the Budget Bill for 2018. The Government has appointed a Council for Sustainable Cities, which will serve as a forum for public authorities and municipalities, in the implementation of the Government's policy for sustainable urban development.

The Swedish Government has also recently established a Delegation against Segregation, which has been tasked with building knowledge and providing financial support to counteract segregation. The long-term goal is to improve the situation in socio-economically vulnerable areas and to tackle the structural causes of segregation.

## Sweden at work globally

At the global level, Sweden works within UN-Habitat to achieve the goals and targets regarding sustainable cities. Sweden supports UN-Habitat's projects through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Implementation of the New Urban Agenda declaration is crucial in this work and also constitutes the basis for Sweden's work in this area. Swedish development cooperation focuses on the challenges facing growing cities, in many low- and middle-income countries, such as health and environmental decline, inequality, poverty and security problems. Sweden provides the least developed countries with support for the construction of resilient buildings using local materials.

The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) is the contact point for Sweden's obligations in relation to the UN's Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. The framework is aimed at reducing the risks and consequences of accidents and disasters. One focus area is the need to rebuild areas following a disaster.

Road safety is a global public health issue with a bearing on particularly vulnerable groups, gender equality and quality of life, among other things. Road traffic accidents are a growing problem in cities and, unless measures are taken, it is estimated that road traffic accidents will become the fifth most common cause of death in the world by 2030. Sweden has put itself forward as a candidate to host the third global high-level conference on road safety in late 2019/early 2020.

## Connecting the dots<sup>1</sup>



Source: Stockholm Environment Institute

From 2014 to 2050, the world's population is expected to increase by 2.3 billion people. This growth will take place exclusively in urban areas, while the world's rural population

starts to modestly decline in the next decade. While future urbanisation will primarily take place in low- and middle-income countries, cities around the world experience common

<sup>1</sup> This section is based on an analysis by Stockholm Environment Institute. For more information on their work visit the SEI website [www.sei.org](http://www.sei.org)

challenges, such as air pollution, a major global health risk, climate change-linked heat islands and flooding disasters. Sustainable urban development also demands careful and integrated planning and provision of vital services and infrastructure. Urban transport planning, which is well integrated with other service systems and that makes it easier to manage daily life without the use of a car, is essential. A sustainable structure for housing must be based on the actual needs of people, no matter their income or other personal conditions. Sustainable urban development is, to a large extent, about social inclusion. Urbanisation has an impact on gender equality, public health and wellbeing, not least for children and the increasing group of senior citizens. Altogether, these issues make urban development a crucial factor in achieving the main goal of Agenda 2030 – to eliminate poverty.

## Urbanisation and poverty

Today, approximately 25 per cent of the world's poor live in urban areas (SDG 1). This proportion is expected to increase to 50 per cent by 2040. Evidence shows that the proportion of the population living in urban areas is strongly related to economic growth and absolute poverty decline on one hand, and to an increase in inequalities (SDG 10) and relative poverty on the other hand, such as the growth of unplanned, informal, under-served settlements, rising house prices, or segregation. Cities all over the world also need to be resilient to growing disaster risks, and to do so in a way that protects all residents. In addition, eviction without a proper legal procedure is increasingly used in cities as a method to access valuable land, causing unacceptable suffering for poor people in informal settlements. Urban violence and insecurity are growing concerns and a major obstacle to sustainable and inclusive urban development. Cities are of strategic importance in terms of access to resources, power and economic gain. Violence in its many forms (political and social violence, sexual abuse, crime, and interpersonal or domestic violence) has therefore become increasingly concentrated in urban areas over the past 20 years. Within cities, violence is unevenly distributed and particularly acute in poor informal settlements and against women and girls.

## Urban access to social services Sustainable city planning

Besides the basic need for good and affordable housing, an increased urban population will lead to a need to provide social services such as health care (SDG 3) and education (SDG 4), and to employment opportunities, as well as creating a large, educated workforce (SDG 8). Whereas access to services, such as water, sanitation, garbage collection, health care, education and transport, is typically higher in urban than in rural areas, it can still be unacceptably low and unaffordable for the urban poor. Within slums, access rates are, in many cases, comparable to, or lower than, access rates in rural areas. Furthermore, the lack of adequate services in dense urban settlements often results in increased negative consequences, such as the spread of cholera and other diseases. Promoting greater inclusion in urban planning and development will also help to promote gender equality (SDG 5). The SDG 11 targets often require direct, or indirect, access to safe and affordable water. This implies the need to deal with growing pressure on water supplies, sanitation services and water pollution (SDG 6), as well as affordable energy access (SDG 7). Transportation infrastructure (SDG 9) is needed to maximise both the economic and social benefits of urbanisation, such as by making services more accessible.

Urban sprawl has brought about enormous changes in landscape patterns, and substantially impacted agricultural land-use in areas where land was predominately used for crops. With cities already contributing to more than 70 per cent of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, how cities address challenges, such as waste management, energy access and transportation, has an enormous impact on climate mitigation and adaptation (SDG 13). By concentrating resource demand (especially water, food and energy), as well as waste generation (in particular air pollution, wastewater and solid waste), cities are entirely dependent on – and simultaneously have a major negative impact on – the natural environment, both peri-urban and in production regions, as well as downstream freshwater and marine ecosystems (SDG 2, 6, 7, 14 and 15). However, concentrated urban populations constitute both a major challenge and an opportunity to reduce the global human footprint and adapt to limited resource availability. Therefore, sustainable urbanisation also requires broader planning perspectives that take consumption impacts, regional planning, and source-to-sea water planning into account. National and local governments need to enhance their collaboration to translate the implementation of national climate, water and resource policies on the ground, closest to where they can be effectively managed. Local authorities need to have access to funding and need to develop a multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral governance process to plan and implement accordingly.



## Sweden and the transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies

Sweden's transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies is well under way and is taking place throughout the country. More and more people in Sweden say that concern for sustainability affects their consumption decisions. Municipalities and county councils are committed to sustainable development. Large parts of the Swedish business community see sustainability as a competitive advantage. Civil society is paving the way through its own efforts and by pushing decision-makers. Young people are key for transformative change. The Swedish research community contributes cutting-edge research on sustainable development. Many Swedish public agencies have agreed on a joint declaration of intent to implement the 2030 Agenda.

On 14 June 2018, the Swedish Government presented its action plan for implementing the 2030 Agenda during the period 2018–2020. Sweden has the ambition to be a leader in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Implementation involves a step-by-step approach towards a modern and sustainable welfare nation at home, and as part of the global system. This transformation must take place jointly, in partnership.

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