

## ACCELERATING SDG 11 ACHIEVEMENT POLICY BRIEF IN SUPPORT OF THE FIRST SDG 11 REVIEW AT THE UN HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM 2018

### **Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable**

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*This policy brief presents progress made on SDG 11 and on the refinement of the monitoring framework for Goal 11 indicators with the complimentary work on preparation of global baselines. It is based upon the Standalone Report on SDG 11, a substantive analysis prepared by the United Nations as a contribution to the HLPF 2018. The policy brief highlights emerging critical issues related to urbanization and underscores how ‘urban’ is a cross-cutting or transversal dimension that can accelerate the achievement of other goals and targets. It provides insights for building effective partnerships for establishing more sustainable solutions for global and local monitoring. The policy brief draws upon evidence from primary and secondary analysis of qualitative and quantitative data provided by countries themselves, and by the Global Sample of Cities database, as well as geospatial analysis of cities. It relies on information derived from various other sources including voluntary national review reports, and reports from local governments, urban observatories, UN agencies, NGOs, the private sector and academia. This report has been developed by co-leads UN-Habitat, UNESCO, UNISDR, WHO, UNODC, UNFPA, UNDP with contributions from UNECE, UNESCAP, UNECA, UNESCWA, UNECLAC, UCLG, New York University and European Commission.*

### **The transformative potential of cities, the New Urban Agenda and SDG 11**

***Urbanization is a transformative force for development.*** This has been largely recognized by the international community in recent years, particularly with the adoption of the “post 2015 global agendas” including the role conferred to cities. The international community views cities as centers of innovation and investment and pivotal for economic growth and development in both the developed and developing world. Although cities are characterized by stark socioeconomic inequalities, social exclusion, extreme poverty, unemployment, poor environmental conditions, and high production of greenhouse gas emissions, their potential for growth and development makes them strong drivers for positive change. Their density and economies of agglomeration act as strings that connect all SDGs together, linking economy, energy, environment, science, technology and social and economic outcomes. With nearly 54% of the world’s population living in cities today—and potentially two-thirds by 2030—this critical mass of urban dwellers has an enormous potential for change both in urban and rural areas.

***Cities should be enabled to take the lead in addressing many of the global challenges as they are well-positioned*** to address air pollution, climate change, poverty, inequality, unemployment, crime and environmental degradation. The local dimension of development has been recognized by Member States in all major declarations and global agendas. City leaders, local and regional government networks are already developing global, regional and national systems for localization as they work towards contributing to awareness raising, alignments to work plans, learning exchanges and local monitoring and reporting. The pledge of Goal 11 to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable provides an unparalleled opportunity for the attainment of collective and inclusive progress, and for the achievement of sustainable development in the world.

***The implementation of the New Urban Agenda is an accelerator to the achievement of the SDGs, and SDG 11 in particular.*** It offers an opportunity for the global community to address several global urban challenges associated to growing inequalities, social exclusion, extreme poverty, high unemployment, particularly among women and youth, and the increase in disaster and climate risk. Goal 11 and other urban components of the SDGs can address persistent problems related to the sprawl of cities, the proliferation of slums, the vulnerability of populations, and the poor conditions of the urban environment. The agenda is clear: need of affordable housing, better transport, good air quality, efficient waste management, adequate public spaces, enhanced participation, resilience of cities and disaster risk reduction, among others. All these require sufficient planning and resilient strategies which can be supported by national urban policies. The New Urban Agenda (NUA), adopted in 2016 in Quito, provides member States a means to localize the SDGs, offering approaches on planning, design, management, governance and financing of cities.

***The interlinkages of Goal 11 with other goals and with other development agendas such as the New Urban Agenda and the Sendai Framework are extensive and wide-ranging.*** Most of the 234 SDG indicators have a direct connection to urban policies and a clear impact on cities and human settlements. Nearly one third of indicators are also being measured at the local level. The goal on poverty is linked to access to land, slums and inadequate housing; health is often affected by ‘place’; and gender equality can benefit from access to public spaces, basic infrastructure, and

participation in local governance and decision-making. Urban waste management is strongly associated to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene; energy systems are critical for the development of safe, resilient and sustainable human settlements; and inclusive and productive cities are important for entrepreneurship and job creation. Similarly, resilient infrastructure and industrialization are essential for the prosperity of cities; intra-city and spatial inequalities are fundamental for understanding and addressing the goal on inequalities; and the efficient management of natural resources, safe disposal and treatment of toxic waste and pollutants can contribute to responsible consumption and production. The goal on cities offers many opportunities to develop mitigation and adaptation strategies to address climate change especially through environmentally sustainable and resilient urban development. The proper management of waste generated by cities has direct implications on the pollution of oceans and the degradation of natural habitats and the loss of biodiversity largely depends on the way cities are managed. The promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies requires cities free of violence and with a rule of law. Understanding the urban dimension of the different sustainable development goals is key to unlocking their full potential.

### **Progress in SDG 11 indicator monitoring**

Many of the Goal 11 indicators are new and challenging to monitor even for the most advanced countries. They require spatial or territorial analysis and the collection and computation of data at local level, and they depend on a technical definition of the city as a unique entity of analysis. An agreed method for the aggregation of values at national, regional and global levels is also required. Important gaps in methods and data availability in at least half of the indicators for Goal 11 have compelled governments and custodian agencies to use proxy indicators to assess progress in various targets for these early years of SDGs. Nonetheless, in the last three years important progress has been made in the design and finalization of methodologies, the definition of urban concepts related to the targets and indicators, the organization of pilot activities in support of proof of concepts for the proposed methodologies, the implementation of capacity development activities and the delivery of technical advisory services to countries.

This requires appropriate monitoring frameworks, sufficient technical and institutional capacities, and an adequate enabling environment to produce good data and information. This is particularly applicable to urban related indicators that depend on spatial data mechanisms and new systems for reporting. From the 15 indicators that constitute Goal 11, at least 10 require new monitoring approaches and tools for data collection, analysis and use of the information, and a complimentary definition of what constitutes ‘urban’ and the ‘city’, otherwise the aggregation of national and regional values can be seriously compromised.

In the last two years, UN-Habitat in collaboration with other UN agencies, National Statistical Offices, local governments, New York University, the Joint Research Center of the European Commission and other city leaders have developed reference guidelines for city and urban definitions. Specialized guidelines for applying a National Sample of cities approach; including tools for spatial urban monitoring and for the adoption of a unified global monitoring framework for SDG Goal 11 and the urban components of the development agendas has been developed. Additionally, metadata and training modules for the SDG 11 indicators were developed and are being used for building technical capacities for urban monitoring in all regions.

Urban observatories have been reinforced to address the need for reliable, high resolution urban datasets specific to the cities and immediate city-regions in which they operate. Some of these local think tanks are leading the local level engagements on collecting, analyzing and interpreting urban indicators related to the NUA and the urban SDGs through consultative and inclusive processes. Various countries and cities are using the City Prosperity Initiative<sup>1</sup> to measure city progress and to help decision-makers, investors and stakeholders to understand and leverage synergetic relations to adopt more informed policies.

Whereas there are ‘data rich and ready to go’ countries with strong systems and institutions, adequate technical capacities and available information in numerous indicators, there are others lacking basic systems and conditions. UN-Habitat, and all other custodian agencies in collaboration with ECA, ECLAC and ESCAP, provided training to National Statistical Offices in more than 40 countries on the monitoring of various SDG 11 indicators in Asia, Latin America and Africa. Specialized training to urban observatories on the CPI was conducted in several countries such as Kuwait, Jordan, Botswana, Zambia, Ethiopia, Mexico, Egypt, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, India, Vietnam, to name just a few.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://cpi.unhabitat.org/>

Countries like Botswana, Tunisia, Ecuador, Colombia, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Georgia, and Albania received training on the creation of National Sample of Cities to monitor and report on SDG 11 and the method to aggregate national level estimates.

### **Progress on SDG 11 targets**

This section presents the baseline and progress, where available, for each target using available data and proxy indicators in some cases. Ongoing initiatives from regions and country-specific reports are presented, highlighting opportunities and challenges, as well as best practices in data collection.

#### ***Ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums (Target 11.1, Indicator 11.1.1)***

Inadequate housing impacts negatively on urban equity and inclusion, urban safety and livelihood opportunities, and causes negative health conditions. The indicator is measured by the notion of deprivation in three fundamental areas: slums, informal settlements and inadequate housing. Building on MDG methodology, and to ensure the indicator is universal, modifications were introduced to add housing inadequacy in the measurement that contemplates the use of geospatial technologies for slum identification. Data is available from UN-Habitat's urban indicators database, but mostly limited to the slum and housing informality components. According to updated data, while the proportion of the global urban population living in slums decreased from 28% to 23%, the absolute numbers of people living in slums increased, from an estimated 807 million people in 2000 to 883 million in 2015; with higher numbers recorded in the fast urbanizing sub-regions.

#### ***Provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport (Target 11.2, Indicator 11.2.1)***

Adequate transport infrastructure and affordable transport services are still widely lacking in many developing countries, hampering economic growth and poverty reduction efforts. Transport is the largest end-user of energy in developed countries and the fastest growing one in most developing countries making this target key to the achievement of most—if not all—SDGs. Experts consider it should have four attributes: equitable in access, efficient, safe and climate responsive. However, the SDG indicator focuses only on convenient access. Expert consultations focused on refinement of the method of analysis, proposing a new technique that will expand the utilization of diverse existing databases with more possibilities of conducting trend analysis over the years. Global transport data has been collected for several domains ranging from usage, road networks, safety, transport fatalities, frequency of transport. Latest data from 38 countries from Asia, Europe, North America and LAC depict a general increase in the global public transport demand between 2001 and 2014, estimated at nearly one fifth.

#### ***Enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries (Target 11.3)***

*Urban Sprawl (Indicator 11.3.1).* Cities are rapidly expanding, with the rate of land consumption increasingly overtaking that of population growth rate. As of 2017, the average rate of the physical expansion of cities remains about one and a half times that of population growth. The forces driving this urban expansion include, among others: population growth, rising per capita incomes, cheaper agricultural lands, efficient transport, and the proliferation of informal settlements, etc. Empirical data collected over two-time periods, 1990-2000 and 2000-2014, is used to compare the percentage change in cities' land area to the percentage change in their population to obtain the ratio of land consumption to population growth. On average, the value of this ratio for many cities is increasing, but with regional variations. For example, this ratio is increasing for Western Asia and Northern Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and East Asia and Oceania,) while the ratio is decreasing for South-Eastern Asia, Central and Southern Asia, Europe, North America and Japan (land-rich developed countries). Important progress has been made in the measurement of this indicator using remotely sensed data and image interpretation with the involvement of various agencies working in the field of geographic information and earth sciences.

*Urban governance and participation (Indicator 11.3.2).* Elections are the most common participation avenue for citizens followed by public hearings and public consultations, while participatory budgeting is the least utilized participation method. There are however huge variations in the levels of participation for each activity per region. For example, while participatory budgetary scores least in the Australia and New Zealand sub-region, it is quite common in the LAC sub-region. This indicator is formulated with subjective definitions on issues such as 'direct participation', and the notion of 'operate regularly and democratically', and experts have proposed unified mechanisms with score

cards to overcome this situation. Using proxy indicators, about 46 countries in all regions have data relevant to this indicator, covering activities such as public consultations, participatory budgeting, elections and local referenda, as well as protest and demonstrations, public hearings, neighborhood advisory committees, Town Hall meetings, formal petitions and social media campaigns. Data on participation varies greatly, but it has a demonstrated value to discuss public affairs and to take the most appropriate decisions based on consensus. Eastern and South-Eastern Asia demonstrates more developed public participation mechanisms at the city level with a total score of 35 out of 50 maximum, followed by Australia and New Zealand (33 out of 50) while central and southern Asia scores least (21.92 out of 50), followed by Europe and North America (25.47). Expert meetings on this indicator refined the method of analysis and the definitions used, adding capacity development activities and country consultations for consensus building.

***Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural & natural heritage (Target 11.4, Indicator 11.4.1)***

The contribution of culture to sustainable urban development is widely recognized, including the transversal role it plays in achieving the SDGs, and particularly Goal 11. Similarly, the way urbanization is planned and managed has a direct impact on the protection and safeguards of the world's cultural and natural heritage. In 2017, UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) conducted a metadata survey on heritage expenditure to understand the extent of data availability worldwide to collect this indicator. The response rate of this survey was 32% with 66 out of 207 countries/territories responding. Based on a preliminary analysis, many countries have public expenditure data but the amount of detailed data available to produce indicator 11.4.1 varies greatly. Due to the various dimensions of information that this indicator collects (i.e. public/private expenditure; type of heritage; level of government; type of funding), the data for private expenditure on heritage will be more limited. Initial results show that 71% of responding countries had at least one source of heritage data on public expenditure while only 29% of countries had a least one source of private heritage expenditure data. UNESCO, as the custodian Agency, is currently refining the method of data collection and analysis for this indicator.

***Significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations (Target 11.5, Indicator 11.5.1 and 11.5.2)***

The area of disaster related statistics is relatively new, with data being collected from multiple sources and with different criteria. Yet, the accessibility to disaster data in a timely manner is a major concern, particularly because of the dispersion of data sources among government offices and agencies which are originally from lower level of governments. Working with other partners, UNISDR, as a custodian agency for the disaster risk reduction indicators of the SDGs, has been leading monitoring efforts in this direction, supporting Member States to develop national disaster loss databases based on official data, academic records, and other sources. UNISDR also continues to strengthen the capacity of local governments through the delivery of targeted training, together with affiliated partners. This indicator is also included in the monitoring for the Sendai Framework global targets and will be monitored under both frameworks.

***Reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management (Target 11.6)***

***Urban Waste management (Indicator 11.6.1).*** Large and densely populated cities place significant pressures on public services, with poor waste management leading to negative side effects on health due to burning of waste leading to air pollution, open dump fill sites and biodiversity degradation. Managing solid waste well and in a very affordable manner is one of the key global urban challenges. Investing in improved urban solid waste management (SWM) systems has positive effects in various SDGs and other global agendas. It is strongly connected to health, but also to poverty, since SWM's informal sector self-employment collection and recycling provides sustainable livelihoods to many families especially women. Joint efforts led by UN-Habitat, UNSD and UNEP on methodology dissemination, capacity development, and development of databases is ongoing. Global data shows that cities are making progress in improving municipal waste management including relatively small cities with limited resources; but solid waste collection remains more efficient in high income countries. Expert meetings discussed inconsistencies in concepts, data recording, collection methods and seasonal variations in the quantities of waste generated, proposing new terminology and operational definitions.

***Urban Air pollution (Indicator 11.6.1).*** Managing air pollution in urban areas directly supports several other SDG goals such as those on health, inequalities, etc. Air pollution is today responsible for around 3.4 million deaths annually, affecting everyone, regardless of geography or social status and is indeed one of the global environmental

challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Studies indicate that in recent years' exposure levels have increased significantly in some parts of the world, particularly in rapidly industrializing countries with large populations. Despite the advancements in technologies in monitoring of air pollution, there are still many gaps in global monitoring to better understand risks to human health and ecosystems. Since 2016, urban health initiatives such as the global breath life campaign or the climate and clean air coalition, have been promoted, with the involvement of WHO, UNEP, WB, UN-Habitat and various countries. For countries to develop efficient national systems global standards must be adopted with better monitoring across cities and within cities, and offer higher levels of disaggregation of information. Capacity development must address the hardware side and systems that process the collected data including support for creating central database facilities for air quality. This indicator had a well-founded methodology and consistent sources of data available before the SDGs came into place.

***Provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces (Target 11.7)***

***Public spaces (Indicator 11.7.1).*** Public spaces are broadly associated with several benefits such as increases in property values, retail activity multiplication, effective and efficient transportation and mobility, city attractiveness, enhanced safety, social cohesion, equality, health and well-being, etc. UN-Habitat has been working with partners in the standardization of the methodology for monitoring public spaces. Data is now available for more than 300 cities across the world. Data on public spaces are collected at the city level, and requires aggregating at national level. Latest data shows that the expansion of cities in Europe, North America and Oceania has been accompanied by changes in land use, both in terms of form as well as structure. In these sub-regions, streets, as public spaces, lost their importance in terms of their share of land. Data has shown that the proportion of land allocated to streets between the city cores and suburbs, accounts for 25% and 15%, respectively. Most cities in Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean allocate less than 15% of land to streets in the city cores and less than 10% in the suburbs. This indicator is in the process of being refined--both in terms of method and global definitions--and upscaled with support to countries and cities for the collection of primary data.

***Safety of urban spaces (Indicator 11.7.2).*** Levels of safety in a city affect the level of accessibility and inclusivity, particularly for the vulnerable urban populations including women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities. People in safer cities thus enjoy the right to freedom of movement. To standardize data collection and reporting for the SDGs safety spaces related indicators, UNODC has developed the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS), which provides a standard classification of criminal offences enhancing the consistency and international comparability of crime statistics. Available data from UNODC shows a decline in victimization related crimes across the world for the period 1995 – 2009, but with more recent data showing an upsurge. Meanwhile, new concepts and methods of data collection have been proposed to support consistency in data collection and comparable data, with a plan for existing surveys conducted in EU to be replicated in other regions and contexts.

***Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning (Target 11.a, Indicator 11.a.1)***

A review of the indicator under SDG target 11a by experts working on regional development and national urban policy noted that “*the indicator is difficult to measure, ambiguous and not suitable for strengthening national and regional development planning*”. UN-Habitat work in the development of the National Urban Policy Database provides a global overview of the state of urban policy at the national level and serves the purpose of monitoring this indicator through four categories: Feasibility, Diagnosis, Formulation, Formulation and Monitoring and evaluation. Latest data from this database shows credible progress in national planning, with 150 countries developing national-level urban policies; of these, 73 are in the process of implementation, and 23 have reached the monitoring and evaluation phase. A comprehensive review of urban policies and the methodology used to assess the Global State of Urban Policy, including agreed qualifiers of national urban policies, constitutes the basis of this modified indicator.

***National and local disaster risk reduction strategies (Target 11.b, Indicators 11.b.1 and 11.b.2).*** These indicators are included in the monitoring for the Sendai Framework global target (e) and will be monitored under this global monitoring framework in conjunction with the SDGs monitoring.

***Support least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, in building sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing local materials (Target 11.c, Indicator 11.c.1)***

The construction industry has significant impact on material extraction, consumption of natural resources and human comfort, and this target is therefore an important attempt to link the global aspirations to local actions in the

construction industry. However, data is unavailable for this indicator, and so is the contribution of in-country investments, as well as other foreign direct investments linked to construction sector. Proxy indicators show that the construction sector may have indirectly benefitted from almost ten times capital injections compared to other development sectors. Nevertheless, formal definitions have been developed, with feedback from consultations recommending an adjustment in the framing of the current indicator to ensure its more aligned to existing data systems and already existing complimentary definitions and standards.

## **Means to accelerate and improve SDG 11 monitoring**

More resources are needed to build strong data systems, aligned to new methods and definitions, with appropriate legal and institutional frameworks. This requires addressing numerous challenges such as the need to *agree on a global definition of cities, set up local data collection systems, advance on methods to disaggregate information, particularly gender and youth data, support countries to cope with the new demand of monitoring large numbers of cities or adopt the national sample of cities approach, strengthen capacities of NSOs and reinforce functional linkages among various levels of government*. Opportunities for mass data generation from alternative sources such as self-evaluation tools using mobile devices, community-based efforts, and the use of technology to enhance data generation and processing need to be integrated to this process.

### **1. Adopt a functional statistical definition of what constitutes the city and its boundaries**

Important progress has been made with targets that now have reliable baselines to work with, and better methods for monitoring. Still, a major obstacle is agreeing globally what constitutes ‘urban’ and the ‘city’ as units of analysis; otherwise comparability in various indicators that have a spatial component would be seriously compromised. The international community needs to adopt a functional statistical definition of what constitutes the city and its boundaries. This will help to standardize values and harmonize results to prevent technical inconsistencies.

### **2. Develop a National Sample of Cities to facilitate aggregation at the national level**

A unique challenge for Goal 11 indicators is the need to collect local city data and information prior to countries aggregating the national level performances. The creation of these national aggregates in a consistent manner is not an easy task, and without a proper method, it is very likely that national, regional and global values would be difficult to produce in a more systematic way and with comparable standards. Countries with numerous cities, and those with limited human resources and funds, need to adopt various strategies to cope with large data demands. The National Sample of Cities (NSC) approach developed by UN-Habitat, is a recommended solution. If adopted by countries, NSC offers the low-cost option of monitoring fewer representative sets of cities consistently over time, and the ability to seamlessly report on national level performance of their cities.

### **3. Strengthen supportive frameworks and capacity development for better SDG 11 monitoring**

Goal 11 monitoring and reporting creates major challenges that other SDGs do not necessarily present. National Statistical Offices need to coordinate with local authorities in the data collection process, including the integration of spatial information. Nearly 60% of Goal 11 indicators are to be collected locally and this demands resources and effort towards the establishment of sound monitoring mechanisms. There are countries that are ‘data rich and ready to go’ with solid systems and adequate human and financial capacities and they are already producing the necessary data on various indicators. There are also countries that do not have capacities or systems to support local and national monitoring on specific urban indicators. Strengthening national and local capacities is therefore paramount for collecting, analyzing and disseminating data and information including different forms of disaggregation,—accompanied by spatial analysis—and the necessary mechanisms to aggregate urban data at country level. This requires partnerships, institutional coordination, adequate systems and monitoring and reporting frameworks. And for an effective implementation, it necessitates adequate governance structures and supportive frameworks, the planning and management of urban and territorial spatial development, finance, innovations and capacity.

### **4. Improve resourcing to complete the refinement and testing of SDG 11 indicators**

The pace and depth of addressing these urban monitoring challenges is reflected in the status of the Goal 11 indicators classification according to the Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDGs where Goal 11 still has several indicators classified as “Tier III category” amidst a scarcity of resources to test or pilot the fully developed methodologies in many countries.

#### **5. Establish complementary datasets to support global and local policy work**

UN-Habitat's City Prosperity Initiative (CPI) has over 450 cities with 72 urban indicators data points available, and this has been complimented by other global data from 200 cities from a Global Sample of Cities. The growth of this large set of cities data has offered a platform to study the systems of cities in countries and across regions within several indicators, helping city managers to assess the urban policy implications at the national or regional levels that go beyond the silo assessments of the single urban indicators. The adoption of the CPI as a local monitoring platform contributes to integration of the different SDGs urban indicators to address, in a structured manner, the environmental, social and economic components of sustainability.

#### **6. Mainstream gender, youth, persons with disability and culture in SDG 11 monitoring**

SDG 11 indicators must be disaggregated based on these parameters, making mainstreaming of this data and information a monitoring requirement for policy purposes as opposed to an inclusion-at-will or optional undertaking.