

HLPF 2020

Accelerated Action and Transformative Pathways: Realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.

Theme 6: Bolstering local action to accelerate implementation

Co-convenors: UN-DESA, UN-Habitat, UNODC, UNECE and UNESCAP

Corresponding GSDR Entry point: Urban and peri-urban development

Specific lens: COVID-19 impact and responses

Please provide written inputs to the following questions:

1. How can transparent urban planning and design help in creating inclusive access to housing, basic services and infrastructure, environmental sustainability, improved air and water quality, and healthier communities?

The integration of disaster risk reduction in transparent urban planning is critical, and this must be informed by local and urban disaster risk reduction strategies and plans, in line with the Sendai Framework's target (e)¹ and SDG 11 (target 11.b),² integrated into urban development plans and complemented by sufficient financing. Anticipating and managing risk, including the unintended consequences of trade-offs is critical to reduce the risk of both anthropogenic and natural hazards, including air pollution, urban fires,³ the spread of disease,⁴ and exposure to natural hazards.⁵ Urban risk drivers such as the physical and spatial characteristics of cities, their settlement patterns, the standards of their built environment, socioeconomic vulnerability and poverty of urban residents, and environment challenges must be addressed to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Disaster risk assessments must be integrated into land-use policy development and implementation, including urban planning, land degradation assessments and informal and non-permanent housing, building codes and the use of guidelines and follow-up tools informed by anticipated demographic and environmental changes.

2. How can transparent urban and territorial planning and development support economic growth which is diverse, balanced, inclusive, safe, green and sustainable?

¹ Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020.

² By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels.

³ Historically, many megacities such as Chicago, London and Tokyo have experienced major urban fires, but have been able to progressively improve infrastructure and build structures that take into consideration the hazard. Similar intervention is needed in new megacities and other growing urban areas to protect urban communities from preventable risk.

⁴ The Zika virus outbreaks are an example of how cities are the locus of emerging environmental and health hazards. The larvae of the Aedes mosquito thrive in stagnant water, which is abundant, for example, in slum areas where open containers, tires, barrels and drums are used for gathering rainwater for household and garden use. Improving the human environment can therefore reduce exposure to the vector mosquitoes.

⁵ For example, coastal cities place large pressures on coastal and marine ecosystems, which can reduce natural defense systems and increase both exposure and vulnerability to hazards if risk is not appropriately managed, and urban development on mountain slopes can increase landslide risk if not appropriately factored into design.

For urban and territorial planning and development to support economic growth, it must be risk informed. Integrating DRR into development is proven to reduce loss and damage from disasters and requires clear normative and regulatory frameworks which set the necessary responsibilities and accountabilities.

3. Which kinds of policies, plans, governance, investments and partnerships can help create transparent, inclusive, healthier and safer cities and communities that are able to withstand destabilizing effects of negative social phenomena, such as corruption, drug and illicit firearms trafficking and terrorism, unregulated migration, lack of access to public goods, widespread public protests etc.?

National and local disaster risk reduction strategies, in line with the Sendai Framework and built on comprehensive risk assessments, are critical to manage risk in and increase the resilience of cities and communities. Exchanges between city governments and workshops on local disaster risk reduction strategies are useful towards the identification of tangible, practical activities that can facilitate a scale-up. Multi partner global campaigns to build networks of local governments, such as the “Making Cities Resilient Campaign” facilitated by UNDRR since 2010 and its successor the Making Cities Resilient 2030 (to be launched in late 2020), and tools such as the Disaster Resilience Scorecard for Cities, developed by the Campaign, are instrumental to helping cities, towns and local governments increase their overall resiliency to disasters by assessing risk, determining actions to reduce the risks, and implementing the actions as outlined in local DRR strategies. In this manner local governments can successfully implement the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, thus achieving a resilient 2030 Agenda.

A key challenge is capacity to access options for financing actions for reducing risks in urban and peri-urban areas. More effective partnerships, and increased sharing of experiences by governments is required to enhance these capacities. Partnerships of national governments, UN agencies and programs, multilateral development banks and financing mechanisms, the private sector, and knowledge institutions are necessary for disaster risk reduction including in urban and peri-urban areas. For example, the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) launched by the Government of India, in partnership with the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, and in collaboration with the World Bank, the UN Development Programme and the Global Commission on Adaptation, in 2019 at the Climate Action Summit, aims to promote the resilience of new and existing infrastructure systems to climate and disaster risks, thereby ensuring sustainable development. The MCR 2030 is designed to create partnerships which can serve this need.

4. What is the role of science, technology, communication and innovation in the transformation to sustainable and equitable urban systems, which also incorporate and address informality and help overcome the digital divide?

Science, technology, communication and innovation can increase the robustness of urban risk assessments, including the cascading impacts a disaster event may have across urban, peri-urban and rural systems once risk is realized. It is also critical for end-to-end early warning systems, and locally-led risk monitoring and assessment.

5. How can local and national governments work together to ensure adequate resources are available for sustainable, inclusive, safe and transparent urban development? How can local government financing be made more predictable and robust?

The Sendai Declaration of Local and Subnational Governments recognizes the role of local governments as the primary, responsible authority during disasters, emphasizing the need for greater international collaboration with local and subnational governments. Empowerment of local authorities through regulatory and financial means to work and coordinate with civil society, communities and indigenous peoples and migrants in disaster risk management at the local level is also needed. Local and national governments need to better coordinate and support each other's efforts for a resilient Agenda 2030.

6. How can urban, peri-urban and rural areas be connected through infrastructure that is resilient and integrated with transparent, urban and territorial development plans, focusing on access, affordability, inclusivity, resource-efficiency and innovation?

It is imperative that connections between urban, peri-urban and rural areas are risk-informed, and the potential cascading impacts of economic, social and environmental shocks and stressors across urban and rural areas due to the interactions and interdependencies are understood and integrated into development. The urban area needs to be seen as a system of systems, so systemic risks may be addressed, for a more sustainable resilience.