

Issue brief SDG 11

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MAKE CITIES AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS INCLUSIVE, SAFE, RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE

Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG 11) – making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable highlights the important role cities play in the global political agenda.

The SDG 11 targets identify key factors that must be addressed to make cities more sustainable, inclusive, resilient and safe:

- 11.1 safe and affordable housing and basic services
- 11.2 safe, sustainable transport systems
- 11.3 inclusive urbanisation and participatory, integrated planning
- 11.4 cultural and natural heritage
- 11.5 resilience to disasters
- 11.6 reduced environmental impact of cities
- 11.7 green and public spaces
- 11.a rural-urban linkages
- 11.b integrated policies and plans
- 11.c financial and technical support for sustainable and resilient buildings



Environmental dimension of SDG 11

The environment is intrinsic to SDG 11, recognizing the need for critical urban infrastructure to be low-emission, resource-efficient and resilient. For example, target 11.2 calls for universal access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems, which has direct environmental impacts on land use, resource use, air quality and climate. Target 11.6 explicitly calls on countries to reduce the per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and waste management. Target 11.7 calls for universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible green and public spaces, which, among other things, help to purify air and absorb rainwater.

Targets 11.5 and 11.B call for increased investment in disaster risk resilience strategies, policies and interventions. Indicators 11.5.1 and 11.5.2 specifically focus on reduction of economic loss and loss of life resulting from disasters, whereas 11.B.1 and 11.B.2 measure the development of disaster risk reduction strategies by both local and national governments in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. Lastly, 11.4 calls for stronger efforts to protect and safeguard natural heritage, which is aligned with many environmental conservation efforts around the world.

UN Environment and SDG 11

The United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) works with partners across the world to support the development of sustainable, resilient, resource-efficient urban areas, integrating a 3D strategy – decoupling, decarbonizing

and detoxifying – into urban planning and infrastructure decision-making. The 3D strategy harnesses benefits for citizen's health (SDG 3), jobs (SDG 8), innovation (SDG 9) and resource efficiency through the promotion of sustainable consumption and production patterns (SDG 12), and mitigates climate change by working towards sustainable energy for all (SDG 7).

For example, to deliver on SDGs 3, 7 and 11, the Paris Agreement, the Kigali Amendment and the New Urban Agenda, UN Environment is working with 33 cities across 12 countries to promote an enabling environment for cross-sectoral policies and interventions on district energy. We work with national coordination units that support integrated urban planning and mapping and promote sustainable heating and cooling in related and cross-sector policy frameworks at multiple levels. As part of this work, we look at the interaction between waste streams, transport, buildings and renewables to optimize heating and cooling. We have also developed a monitoring, reporting and verification framework for which data is collected at the local and national levels. This is carried out with Global Environment Facility (GEF) funding and bilateral support from Denmark and Italy, as well as through strong cooperation with private sector companies. UN Environment is also implementing projects on urban ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) in Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America, with funding from GEF and the Least Developed Countries Fund. Based on the results and good practices of those projects, UN Environment is elaborating a strategy for EbA in urban areas with the goal of supporting Member States in a coherent and effective way in their efforts to increase urban resilience to climate change. In parallel, UN Environment is catalysing

Cities account for 65 per cent of SDG targets and 86 per cent of SDG indicators. That means that making cities more sustainable, safe, resilient and inclusive will help us to achieve many of the SDGs.

As economic powerhouses with over 80 per cent of global GDP, cities have important environmental impacts:

- ➔ 2 per cent of land area usage
- ➔ 71–76 per cent of energy-related global greenhouse gas emissions
- ➔ Over 70 per cent of resource use

Cities present huge sustainable investment opportunities:

- ➔ As of 2015, 75 per cent of global urban infrastructure that will exist in 2050 has yet to be built
- ➔ Sustainable development in cities can save \$3 trillion in infrastructure spending by 2030

Social equity in cities:

- ➔ Global urban population is expected to grow from over 50 to 70 per cent by 2050, with a majority of that growth occurring in Africa and Asia
- ➔ Urban poverty rates are falling more slowly than global poverty
- ➔ Approximately 25 per cent of the global urban population (1 billion out of 3.9 billion) live in slums
- ➔ The fastest growing urban populations also have the least access to services per capita:
 - 279 million lack electricity
 - 780 million lack safe drinking water
 - 2.5 billion lack basic sanitation

university resources to address climate change and sustainability at the city level through the Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities framework.

UN Environment works with five cities around the world on urban metabolism, tracking resource flows to prioritize measures for greater resource efficiency and measuring progress towards a circular economy, and with cities in Latin America on an integrated approach at the neighbourhood level, involving communities.

Finally, UN Environment is cooperating with UN-Habitat on the development of methodologies (including metadata, guidelines, materials and tools) for indicators that are under different SDGs but linked to each other, notably SDG indicators related to waste, including 11.6.1, 12.4.1, 12.4.2 and 12.5.1, and pilot testing them in countries.

SDG 11 and the transition to sustainable and resilient societies

Cities are the heartbeat of most societies. They are complex systems that bring together diverse communities to work, live and play. Just as the battle against climate change will be won or lost in cities, so too will the battle for sustainable, resilient, equitable and just societies. By 2050, it is expected that 75 per cent of the world's population will live in cities, up from more than 50 per cent presently. As

cities grow, especially in the global South, it will be vital to create infrastructure and policies that ensure universal access to all urban services. As we see increasing impacts from climate change, the most sustainable, resilient societies will be those that have resource-efficient systems in place to provide essential services to their residents and that are prepared to withstand and adapt to climate-induced disasters. Achieving these two mandates will help to provide and maintain quality of life for the world's growing urban population in the face of extreme weather activity, resource shortages and population migration.

Some key factors for countries to consider in tackling these challenges include:

- ➔ **Resilience:** By strategically densifying, investing in renewable energy and sustainable building techniques, valuing existing ecosystem services and increasing usage of sustainable transportation, cities can both significantly contribute to the mitigation of harmful climate impacts and improve their own resilience to the inevitable resource shortages to come.
- ➔ **Inclusive urban spaces:** Economic inequality has been increasing in recent decades. Nowhere is this more evident than in cities, where resource shortages and access to services disproportionately impact the most marginalized groups and communities, often also exposing

them to greater environmental risk. Policies and programmes that better support underserved populations, improve systems for participatory and democratic planning and decision-making and provide affordable access to resources and urban services for all will be critical. By investing in equity now, countries can start to close the inequality gap.

- ➔ **Cleaner, greener cities:** 75 per cent of the infrastructure that will exist in 2050 does not exist today. This provides a unique opportunity to ensure that the infrastructure we build today for tomorrow, is low-emission, resource-efficient and resilient. “Future-proofing” our infrastructure has many benefits:

- Creating incentives for investment in public transport and non-motorized transport infrastructure will improve air quality in cities and help to mitigate climate change.
- Creating frameworks towards a zero emission, efficient and resilient buildings and construction sector will help to reduce energy demand.
- Investing in parks and green spaces in urban areas will help to ameliorate the urban heat island effect and improve air quality in urban spaces.
- Investing in natural or efficient water treatment and management systems to improve water quality and sanitation in cities will reduce water-borne diseases and improve sanitation for poorer populations.

UN Environment stands ready to work with Member States, UN sister agencies and relevant stakeholders to ensure that SDG 11 is fully implemented. For further information or questions, please contact Martina Otto, Cities Unit, UN Environment at Martina.Otto@un.org.





11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



SUSTAINABLE CITIES: WHY THEY MATTER

What's the goal here?

To make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Why?

Half of humanity—3.5 billion people—live in cities today, and this number will continue to grow. Because the future will be urban for a majority of people, the solutions to some of the greatest issues facing humans—poverty, climate change,

healthcare, education—must be found in city life.

What are some of the most pressing challenges that cities face today?

Inequality is a big concern. 833 million people live in slums and this number keeps rising. The levels of urban energy consumption and pollution are also worrying. Cities occupy just 3 per cent of the Earth's land, but account for 60-80 per cent of energy consumption and 75 per

5 billion
people
are projected
to live in
cities by
2030

cent of carbon emissions. Many cities are also more vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters due to their high concentration of people and location so building urban resilience is crucial to avoid human, social and economic losses.

I live in a city but I'm not affected by any of these issues. Why should I care?

All these issues will eventually affect every citizen. Inequality can lead to unrest and insecurity, pollution deteriorates everyone's health and affects workers' productivity and therefore the economy, and natural disasters have the potential to disrupt everyone's lifestyles.

What happens if cities are just left to grow organically?

The cost of poorly planned urbanization can be seen in some of the huge slums, tangled traffic, greenhouse gas emissions and sprawling suburbs all over the world. Slums are a drag on GDP, and lower

life expectancy. By choosing to act sustainably we choose to build cities where all citizens live a decent quality of life, and form a part of the city's productive dynamic, creating shared prosperity and social stability without harming the environment.

Is it expensive to put sustainable practices in place?

The cost is minimal in comparison with the benefits. For example, there is a cost to creating a functional public transport network, but the benefits are huge in terms of economic activity, quality of life, the environment, and the overall success of a networked city.

What can I do to help achieve this goal?

- Take an active interest in the governance and management of your city

- Take notice of what works, and what doesn't in your community
- Advocate for the kind of city you believe you need
- Develop a vision for your building, street, and neighbourhood, and act on that vision. Are there enough jobs? Are you close to healthcare? Can your children walk to school safely? Can you walk with your family at night? How far is the nearest public transport? What's the air quality like? What are your shared public spaces like? The better the conditions you create in your community, the greater the effect on quality of life.

To find out more about Goal #11 and other Sustainable Development Goals, visit:

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment>



**SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**  **GOALS**