

# SDG 11

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

## Towards a New Urban Agenda

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Habitat III, the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, will be convened in Quito, Ecuador, 17–20 October 2016. The objective of this conference is to reinvigorate the global commitment to sustainable urbanization and to focus on the implementation of a “New Urban Agenda.”<sup>1</sup> This agenda can also be seen as the implementation programme for SDG 11 on inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities.

### These are the 10 key points for a New Urban Agenda:

- The generation of decent work opportunities for all as a precondition to urban socio-economic inclusion and local economic development;
- Universal access and public investment in essential public services such as water, energy, health care, transportation, waste management, social services, education etc.;
- The protection of public spaces and commons from privatization and gentrification;
- The inclusion of labour and environmental clauses in public procurement and public contract transparency and disclosure;
- The empowerment of local government;

- Decent working and living conditions and capacity-building for public sector and municipal workers who will have to implement the New Urban Agenda;
- An integrated approach to fight corruption;
- Tax justice for local governments and communities;
- The right to housing for all;
- The need for national governments to secure policy coherence between an inclusive New Urban Agenda and their tax and trade policies.

### 1. Decent employment opportunities for all workers in cities and local communities at the heart of the New Urban Agenda

If city government and urban economic development programmes are to deliver on social and economic inclusion and sustainable livelihoods, they must include opportunities for decent work<sup>2</sup>

2 Decent work must fulfil the eight ILO core Conventions: Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87); Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98); Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29); Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105); Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138); Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182); Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100); Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111). See also the chapter on SDG 8 in this report.

1 Cf. UN Doc. A/RES/66/207.

and place workers at their heart. Programmes must have a special focus on integrating potentially vulnerable workers, including women, young, elderly, informal, precarious and low-skilled workers, long-term unemployed, the working poor, migrant workers, indigenous communities and LGBT groups. Working people are the actors who build the cities and keep them running, and to do so they need empowerment, rights, protection and the right to organize. Every urban dweller over the minimum employment age is a worker or a potential worker, and it is only by creating decent work opportunities at a local level that national and local governments can sustainably empower urban populations, unleashing their potential to lift themselves and their families out of poverty, while contributing to local economic development, essential public services and social protection systems. The decent work deficit is also a key factor behind the failure of many urban development policies, as people cannot afford to live in cities where they cannot make a living and are pushed into low-income, segregated suburbs and slums. Implementing the ILO's Decent Work Agenda at a local and urban level means creating employment opportunities for all urban workers through active labour market policies and improving existing working conditions, especially for poor and informal economy workers. These employment opportunities must respect fundamental human and labour rights and guarantee:

- Equal treatment and non-discrimination at work;
- Adequate occupational health and safety standards (OSH);
- Universal access to social protection;
- Effective measures to facilitate the transition from informal to formal employment;
- Lifelong access to education, vocational training and skills development opportunities;
- A living wage and sustainable livelihoods.

## 2. Essential services and infrastructure that are public, accessible to all and democratically accountable to local communities

Universal access to essential public services has a major impact on equality among urban populations and is inextricably linked to respect for human rights. Essential public services are the foundation blocks of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and include: water, affordable energy, sanitation, waste management, health care, education, social services (e.g., child and elder care, social housing), public security (municipal police), emergency services (firefighters, emergency medical responders), culture services (e.g., libraries, museums), public spaces (e.g., parks) and natural resource management. Accessible, affordable quality public services are paramount for building inclusive, sustainable cities and for reducing inequality in urban settings.

These essential public services must be publicly owned. When market dynamics and profit maximization govern their provision, the social and environmental sustainability objectives that public institutions have a mandate and duty to pursue become distorted and are no longer achievable. Public resources and commons become endangered, transparency and democratic civic scrutiny are weakened and the overall economic and social costs to the community rise. There is no evidence that the private sector is more efficient than the public sector, in fact, experience as well as scholarly economic studies have shown the public sector to be as efficient or more so than the private sector.

This finding is consistent across all forms of privatization; be it a one-off sale of assets, outsourcing or concession or public-private partnerships (PPPs).<sup>3</sup> Effective alternatives to PPPs include restoring municipal ownership, public-public partnerships and inter-municipal cooperation.

3 Cf. PSIRU (2014), Hall (2015), Jomo et al. (2016).

### 3. Protection of urban public space, land and natural resources and the development of efficient, sustainable transportation systems

Just like public services, the preservation, accessibility and protection of public space in urban settings are major factors for urban equality and are inextricably linked to human rights.

Urban public space is a prerequisite to inclusive, resilient and sustainable cities, as well as a prerequisite for participatory democracy and civic empowerment. Only by accessing adequate, safe, clean and properly equipped public spaces can people exercise their human right to freedom of assembly and expression and their right to a clean, healthy, sustainable environment. Public space is also key to local development and employment, as it is vital for access to transportation and for economic activities such as open markets, street vending and waste-picking that provide livelihoods for vulnerable workers in the informal economy, most of whom are women. Adequate urban public space is also a key factor in pre-empting the social tensions and security issues that go with social segregation, market-led gentrification, social marginalization and the proliferation of urban ghettos and slums.

Access to public urban land for participatory urban agriculture is also proving critical for building inclusive, sustainable cities and for ensuring access to food. Sound policies are needed to preserve urban heritage and cultural resources for future generations and maintain accessibility as a key vehicle for social inclusion and participation. A green, sustainable, accessible and shared transportation system is a prerequisite to secure the socio-economic connectivity and cultural vibrancy typical of inclusive urban public spaces, while contributing to air quality, safety, employment and active lifestyles.

**The New Urban Agenda can achieve this by:**

- Halting the privatization and commercialization of public space and commons (e.g. the enclosure of public space by private estate de-

velopers or the charge of a private fee to access a park) through appropriate legal frameworks;

- Requiring that local and municipal authorities provide for and invest in adequate, fairly distributed, safe public space for all in their urban planning, including appropriately separate, well-organized access for public transport, pedestrians, cyclists and commercial deliveries;
- Encouraging, promoting and investing in participatory, gender-responsive approaches for the identification, use and upgrading of public spaces (e.g., slum upgrading, urban food gardens and allotments);
- Investing in and promoting green, sustainable, safe, gender-responsive and shared public transportation systems.

### 4. Public procurement that is socially and environmentally responsible and accountable

Local governments and municipalities are some of the major clients of the construction industry and can therefore be powerful change agents for progressive changes towards fair, inclusive cities. The public sector has enormous potential to leverage its urban building and infrastructure development policies and purchasing power to demand the respect of social, labour and environmental standards from builders and suppliers, and require both decent work and sustainable local sourcing practices.

Public procurement in the New Urban Agenda must aim to achieve social, environmental and local economic development objectives, and not focus solely on cost considerations. Local governments and municipalities must use their purchasing power to specify social and labour clauses in procurement policies, in line with ILO Convention 94.<sup>4</sup> These include: explicit references to equal

<sup>4</sup> ILO Convention concerning Labour Clauses in Public Contracts, 1949 (No. 94).

treatment and conditions for all workers on building sites regardless of their origin and status; mandatory formal employment arrangements; health and safety standards and skills; as well as a chain of liability down the whole subcontracting process. The details of public contracts should be made publicly accessible in order to allow for review and evaluation. Good practices already adopted by several municipalities can serve as models for the New Urban Agenda.<sup>5</sup>

### 5. Local governments acknowledged and empowered to realize inclusive New Urban Agenda

Local governments are at the forefront of introducing and implementing inclusive, innovative local and urban policies, and of implementing global frameworks such as the Sendai Protocol on Disaster Preparedness, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda. It is therefore essential to ensure the political, fiscal and administrative empowerment of cities, municipalities, regions and other local government entities as key players in the creation of inclusive, sustainable urban development and effective urban risk and crisis management systems.

Local authorities also play a critical role in all decisions related to social inclusion, decent jobs, workers' rights and working conditions, and are essential in facilitating the inclusion of informal economy workers into the formal economy. Local governments therefore need to be empowered to implement the Decent Work agenda at a local level, including with regard to labour inspection, active labour market policies and worker participation in local democracy and decision-making. Additionally, municipalities must not suffer from unfunded mandates. Subsidiarity must be accompanied by adequate and sustainable funding that is not reliant on the vagaries of the political cycle.

### 6. Decent work and living conditions, skills and capacity-building for public sector and municipal workers

Local governments are not abstract entities: they are made up of working people, and only skilled, well-trained local government and municipal staff, with decent working and living conditions and access to adequate resources, can sustainably deliver quality public services to the communities they serve and successfully confront the many challenges posed by rapid urbanization. While elected local government representatives change with political cycles, professional local public servants often stay on and their work is critical to secure continuity, coherence and long-term sustainability of urban policy implementation. The New Urban Agenda therefore must protect and promote the right of local government workers to organize and bargain collectively<sup>6</sup> (in line with ILO Convention 151 on Employment Relations in the Public Service), to be free from the threat of unfair dismissal, and must take measures to build their capacity and professionalization, so that local government workers can develop and implement innovative, constructive solutions to make cities socially inclusive, sustainable and safe.

### 7. An integrated approach to corruption

Coherent, effective, enforceable transparency and accountability regulations and measures, addressing all actors and stakeholders, are needed to prevent and halt corruption and unethical practices in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, both at national and at local level, including in public procurement procedures. The details of public procurement contracts should be public and accessible to enable transparency, accountability and proper evaluation. This must include adequate measures for proportional and effective sanctions, public seizure of profits and gains attained through corruption and unethical

<sup>5</sup> E.g., the ICLEI's Respiro Guidelines for Responsible Procurement in Construction, cf. [www.respiro-project.eu/](http://www.respiro-project.eu/).

<sup>6</sup> As per the ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87); and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98).

practices and the protection of whistle-blowers, their families and communities from harm and retaliation.

#### **8. Sustainable financing for the New Urban Agenda involves tax justice for local communities**

The New Urban Agenda requires sustainable public financing that includes the payment of a fair share of taxes by the private sector – including multinational corporations (MNCs) operating or sourcing within the jurisdiction of competent local and regional governments. Local government authorities must be involved in tax policy decisions, so that they can ensure balanced agreements with domestic and global business and investors and have the right to a direct say on setting fair returns for local communities in terms of tax revenues, local decent work creation, clean technology transfer, profit reinvestment, fair pricing for commodities, non-abusive dispute settlement clauses and protection of public services to the population.

#### **9. Global social housing shortage requires equitable solutions that uphold the right to housing**

When gentrification and real estate speculation, poor social housing and integration policies and the privatization and commercialization of public spaces in urban settings match with socio-economic exclusion and forced evictions, the result is an explosive mix that pushes vulnerable communities to the margins of cities and generates urban ghettos and slums. These socially-segregated, informal settlements reproduce socio-economic inequality, creating a vicious circle of informal employment or work in the informal economy, perpetuating inter-generational poverty, illiteracy and lack of skills and education and increasing threats to public health and security. Slums are also the urban areas that are worse hit by disaster and extreme climate events. Often it is the same workers who build and serve cities on a daily basis (e.g., waste collectors, builders, bus drivers, teachers, nurses, etc.) who cannot afford to live close to their workplaces and have to commute long hours at high cost.

Public housing deficits and unaddressed socio-economic issues related to informal settlements are a major threat to fair cities and to an inclusive New Urban Agenda. What is needed is an urgent, equitable, comprehensive solution that upholds to right to housing and includes the effective regulation of the housing market and equitable land reform, adequate, sustainable social housing for low-income and other vulnerable groups, as well as a halt to forced evictions. A coordinated effort is necessary to mobilize national, regional and local government resources and identify sustainable solutions, including credit and building cooperatives, for financing the development of adequate, affordable housing and to promote participatory slum upgrading. The employment of sustainable, environmentally disposable and renewable local materials, together with energy-efficient technology, must be encouraged for upgrading existing and in any new social housing to reduce carbon emission and enhance environmental friendliness in production and disposal processes.

#### **10. National governments play a critical role in setting an enabling regulatory framework and in ensuring policy coherence for fair cities and the implementation of an inclusive New Urban Agenda**

National governments have a major role and responsibility to ensure that local governments and communities are empowered to build fair cities and to successfully implement an inclusive New Urban Agenda, rooted in the generation of decent employment opportunities for all. They can create an enabling environment for local governments to thrive by implementing a domestic policy framework based on the following principles:

- Decentralization to local government in policy areas in which local populations have a direct stake and should have an opportunity to shape through participatory democratic processes.
- Subsidiarity in tax collection to fund local infrastructures and public services, so that local growth and economic development is reinvested in the local economy.

- National frameworks for the regulation of labour relations in the public sector, based on decent work and on ILO Convention 151, and supportive of good labour relations' practices at a local government level.
- Policy coherence, supportive and collaborative approaches with local government, especially concerning common, systemic challenges such as migration, environmental protection, natural disasters and climate change.

National governments also have a responsibility to ensure policy coherence between the New Urban Agenda and the global tax and trade policy framework by:

- Supporting the initiative for the reform of the international taxation system towards an equitable and comprehensive global tax cooperation system to redress the complex financial engineering and tax avoidance schemes designed by multinational enterprises and international

### Targets for SDG 11

- 11.1** By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums
- 11.2** By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons
- 11.3** By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries
- 11.4** Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage
- 11.5** By 2030, 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
- 11.6** By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management
- 11.7** By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities
- 11.a** Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning
- 11.b** 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
- 11.c** Support least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, in building sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing local materials

investors that starve local and national government of essential resources to service their communities.<sup>7</sup>

- I Opting out of the negotiations on global and regional trade agreements that:
  - I constrain national and local government sovereignty and regulatory powers in favour of business and corporations;
  - I allow foreign corporations to challenge local government regulations and actions by providing the rights to sue for damages in areas such as zoning, liquor licencing, waste disposal and others; and
  - I limit their ability to invest in public services, such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), and the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA), which jeopardize sustainable development efforts through investor-state dispute settlement mechanisms that limit the ability of national and local policy-makers to pursue non-profit objectives such as social and environmental goals in the interest of their communities.

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. ICRICT (2015).