

ASIA-PACIFIC FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2018

“Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies in Asia and the Pacific”

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Report of Roundtable on SDG 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities



The Roundtable was co-organised by **UN ESCAP** and **UN-Habitat** with inputs from **UNDP, FAO and other members of the UN family.**

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Presenting the Goal Profile: Stefanos Fotiou, ESCAP EDD Director

Panelists

- Honourable Kinlay Dorjee, Mayor of Thimpu
- Ms. Norliza Hashim, Chief Executive Officer, Urbanice Malaysia, Ministry of Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government, Malaysia

Discussant from civil society: Mr. Zakir Md. Hossain, CSO Bangladesh

Working group moderators

WG1: Ms. Susan Vize (UNESCO)

WG2: Ms. Loretta Hieber-Girardet (UNISDR)

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Outcome of the Roundtable

Asia-Pacific countries need to accelerate progress against SDG 11 by empowering local governments and community groups to deliver against this goal in an integrated fashion across all SDGs and global sustainability agendas. While it has been estimated that 65% of the total SDG targets need to be delivered by local authorities and actors, this is not matched with requisite decision-making authority required to drive local implementation of SDG11 and all urban related targets. Our further efforts to build an enabling environment and policy coherence across different spheres of government for stronger progress against this goal should include the following:

1. National government partnerships with local and regional governments and their communities in operationalizing SDG11 should be enhanced. Greater decentralization of functions to local authorities to support their efforts to deliver SDG11 on the ground should specifically focus on deepening fiscal devolution processes to address the issue of “unfunded mandates” which is hindering progress against this goal.
2. Inclusive implementation of this goal, specifically its social dimensions, should be strengthened through more targeted commitments to empower local communities, especially associations of the urban poor, who are vital to upgrade informal settlements and leave no one behind in our cities.
3. Innovative local examples of effective implementation of SDG11 by local governments and a diverse range of urban communities should be documented and scaled up to accelerate progress in countries leveraging South-South leaning platforms for replication.
4. Finally, many of the indicators under SDG11 require data collection, including disaggregated data and for spatial indicators, from sub national actors to effectively measure and report on progress. Harmonization, cooperation and capacity development aimed at sub national data collectors in partnership with national statistical authorities should be a priority moving forward for this goal.

Outcome of the working groups

1. Working group 1 on “Current status on SDG 11 in Asia and the Pacific, including areas where good progress is made and areas requiring specific attention and associated key challenges”

1. The lack of data for many indicators and the absence of disaggregated data (across different groups and sub-national territories) constrains the ability of governments and other stakeholders in assessing the status of SDG 11 in the region.

2. The absence and/or lack of consensus on definitions of some urban concepts and issues is resulting in restricted rights and access. For example, what constitutes "slum" or "homelessness" is different across countries. This is not a trivial matter considering that definitions influence how the "right to housing" is defined by governments. Definitions also affect the targeting and scope of social protection schemes. In some cases, the legal physical boundaries of informal settlements are not well-defined. As a result, it is difficult to identify the municipal authority which has jurisdiction over those settlements and therefore difficult to hold the relevant authority accountable.

3. Many countries in the region are facing key challenges in making progress on the social aspects of SDG 11. Unfortunately, there has been a lack of systematic research on the social aspects of inclusion in cities.

a. Leaving no one behind - Delivering on leaving no one behind needs targeting and a detailed profiling of the populations that are in the danger of being left behind. However, the composition of 'vulnerable populations' in cities is not disaggregated. There are also no indicators that capture how well the governments are meeting the rights and needs of populations who are in danger of leaving no one behind (e.g. those of people with disabilities, LBGTIQ, stateless people, homeless, sex workers, migrant workers, drug users and people who inject drugs).

b. Barriers to accessing basic services - There is currently a big gap in providing shelter for all in many countries in the region. In some areas, the problem is not shortfalls in supply per se but access. Vulnerable populations face serious constraints in accessing basic services, such as shelter and sanitation. For example, when refugees move into cities, they are not able to access shelter. Similarly, people with disabilities have difficulty accessing a whole range of services, including housing, public transportation, sanitation.

c. The current space for participation for effective participation of civil society needs to be widened to encourage innovations.

d. Safety of people - Vulnerable populations, including LBGTIQ, stateless people, homeless, sex workers, migrant workers, drug users and people who inject drugs do not feel safe in their cities.

4. The current SDG11 indicators are limited; they need to be broadened to capture social and cultural dimensions. For example, the metric for protecting people from disaster -related shocks (11.5) should not just capture loss of lives but also losses of livelihoods and assets. Similarly, the definition of cultural and heritage sites (11.4) should be broadened to include not just monuments but also intangible cultural heritage and culture practices (e.g. dance, music, expressions, clothing).

5. The tracking of progress and finance for implementing SDG11 needs to be strengthened. Considering that the SDG 11 will be implemented mostly at the local level, local level reporting and accountability should be promoted. The potential for aligning and jointly monitoring SDG11 and the New Urban Agenda needs to be looked into, similar to the integration of Sendai Framework for DRR indicators into the SDGs. More importantly, financing and budget targeting for vulnerable groups should be monitored - e.g. what percentage of public budget is allocated to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Validation of the Goal Profile:

1. Targets 11.3 and 11.7 are missing in the profile which are generally about the social aspects of this goal - safety, inclusion.
2. The goal profile does not talk about who are excluded - nothing about inclusion and the safety of those who are excluded
3. Disproportionate emphasis on mega cities; the status of SDG 11 in low-income cities should be captured.

2. Working group 2 on “Promising innovation and best practices to build upon for making further progress on SDG 11 in Asia and the Pacific”

Comments on promising innovations and best practices as presented in the Goal Profile:

1. There is a need to understand how to define baseline and progress, in terms of both data and in terms of approaches and practices.
2. Lots of examples were provided, including:
 - a. In Kyrgyzstan, water heating councils within high rises and condominiums project was seen as a good practice.
 - b. Within urban disaster preparedness and response programmes, communities must be involved. Examples from the region include: the training of first responders in Malaysia; village response community committees in Viet Nam; a new tax to levy funds to support disaster recovery with local governments in Nepal; and an overhaul

of building codes to make them more earthquake proof in Bhutan were cited as promising solutions.

c. Inclusive and gender responsive governance examples from the region were cited. These included: multi-stakeholder platforms for sustainable development in Republic of Korea, where towns have already defined their own local SDG indicators; in Nepal there is a targeted local budget for vulnerable groups (10% children, 10% women, 10% other vulnerable groups).

d. Innovations regarding data were also discussed. Singapore for example consolidates diverse data sets from different line ministries, which is then put on one website with a digital planning map of Singapore - all the data is in one place in a transparent fashion for the benefit of Singapore's citizens.

Validation of the Goal Profile:

Some of the examples in the goal profile were seen to be dated – participants requested the organizers to present more recent examples in subsequent updates to the profile.

3. Working group 3 on “Policy recommendations on priority for action, to be ideally structured around: thematic areas, means of implementation (as per SDG 17) and regional collaboration”

Priority policy actions to make further progress on SDG 11 in Asia and the Pacific:

1. Urbanization and the circular economy – resilience is not just about climate change and disasters, but about livelihoods and social resilience, and resilience for marginalized groups.
2. Inclusive cities – the definition should be broadened to include accessibility for all, road safety (3.2), protecting LGBT youth who move to cities, and mental and health stresses from urban living. There is currently a low priority on urban inclusivity in the region, and even where there are accessibility laws, implementation is challenging.
3. Integrated urban planning – the definition of the term is not always clear and should be expanded to include different urban systems, built and natural environment as well as partnerships with different constituencies.
4. Localizing SDGs – there is a need to operationalize the SDGs, and in particular to localize data. For this, the value must be recognized and used more systematically by national authorities. Urban data, when it exists, currently resides in silos.

4. Working group 4 on “Policy recommendations to address interlinkages between goals- a background document will be provided on this, mapping interlinkages between SDG 11 and other SDGs”

The group reflected on three main issues in their discussion on how to accelerate inter-linkages between SDG11 targets and enable partnerships among the goals:

Key issues from the working group on SDG11 inter-linkages:

1. Underscoring nature-based solutions, culture and natural heritage across all goals as an important lens for implementation.
2. Ensuring mutual accountability from all stakeholders grounded in a human-rights based approach.
3. Recognizing the different types of human settlements (e.g. city corporations; newly developed cities; villages); and levels of governance (national, provincial, township, traditional).
4. Realizing the immense propensity for indigenous, rural and fisher folk communities to contribute to the production and maintenance of customary, agricultural and coastal lands.
5. Building inter-linkages especially with SDG 7 on “Affordable and Clean Energy” and SDG 13 on “Climate Change” in making cities more financially and environmentally sustainable.
6. Transitioning from a linear model of development to systems model of development.
7. Empowering city governments to take leadership in decision-making with their communities.
8. Helping to articulate among other SDGs the needs of cities and its citizens, especially in terms of provision of basic services, health, safety, nutrition and livelihoods among others.
9. Raising awareness of the SDGs at the local level including translation among local communities.
10. Enhancing the role of women through gender-responsive and participatory budgeting.
11. Recognizing public spaces as not only green spaces but community spaces being both indoor and outdoor spaces, serving to enhance livelihoods, health and social cohesion.
12. Institutionalizing the role of local governments in achieving long and medium-term plans.
13. Acknowledging urban and territorial planning as cross-cutting through all goals.
14. Appreciating that governance is not just about governments but all stakeholders in society, most notably the responsibility and contribution of duty bearers and right holders.
15. Ensuring adequate fiscal decentralization through appropriate financial instruments.
16. Accounting for the role of SDG 11 in achieving essential services and quality of life.
17. Harnessing new and innovative forms of data collection by communities across all goals.

18. Promoting an enabling environment of policy coherence, dialogue and collaborative approaches between all spheres of government to boost vertical and horizontal coordination.
19. Aligning global goals, national priorities and local development plans.
20. Protecting intangible and tangible cultural heritage including indigenous neighborhoods, as a vital condition to maintain credible participation and inclusion in urban context.
21. Safeguarding the platform of inter-generational and whole-of-society rights to the city.

Policy recommendation for integrated SDG 11 implementation with other SDGs in Asia and the Pacific:

Based on the principle of subsidiarity, 65% of the SDG targets across all the goals, including SDG11, need to be implemented by local actors. However, this places a significant responsibility on local governments and communities to deliver across goals without the requisite ingredients for an inclusive and enabling environment. Empowering local governments and communities in terms of financial authority, institutional mechanisms, and decision making is key to strengthening the interlinkages between SDG 11 across all goals as well as with other international agendas such as Sendai Framework, Paris Agreement and New Urban Agenda. The data and evidence to support integration across SDG11 and other goals needs to be strengthened at the local level in new partnerships between local data producers with national statistical authorities. To strengthen the interlinkages between SDG 11 across all goals, a spatial element to policies and investments needs to emerge which is implemented through a human-rights based approach. In this regard, public spaces should not only comprise green spaces but also those serving to improve livelihoods, health, nutrition, culture, nature, social cohesion and civic organisation. Finally, coherence, dialogue and collaborative approaches are required; to boost vertical and horizontal coordination to facilitate the alignment between global goals, national priorities and local development plans.