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SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



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

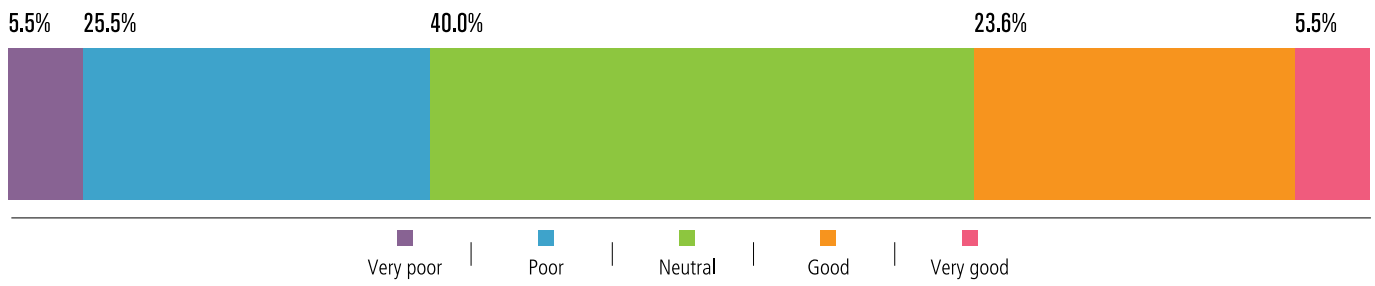
I. SUMMARY

Cities across the Asia Pacific region are experiencing rapid growth, which has accelerated urban development and provided opportunities for increased access to the diverse goods and services available in urban areas. However, despite significant progress in many areas, some indicators in SDG 11 reveal regression in the region since 2000, including in key areas such as inclusion, safety, equality and environmental impact. Challenges include providing housing and tenure security (with absolute numbers of slum dwellers still rising), lagging infrastructure needs and services for the rapidly increasing urban populations. Reversing increasing exclusion and inequality, and turning cities into safe spaces for women and girls is paramount. Significant action needs to be taken to make cities more resilient to the impacts of natural disasters and climate change, and to promote resource efficiency and circular economies to reduce pressures on natural resources and eco-systems. According to the Asian Development Bank, cities in Asia and the Pacific generate roughly 80% of the region's GDP output¹. If mobilized effectively, such economic strength and diversity in combination with cities' quality education and proximity to power has the potential to foster innovative solutions not only to support local needs, but to meet the targets of Goal 11 and support the achievement of many other Sustainable Development Goals. For this it is necessary to mobilize broad-based support for 'localizing' the SDGs – involving urban stakeholders in local implementation, in the process of national strategies development and in monitoring, evaluation and reporting.



II. CURRENT STATUS

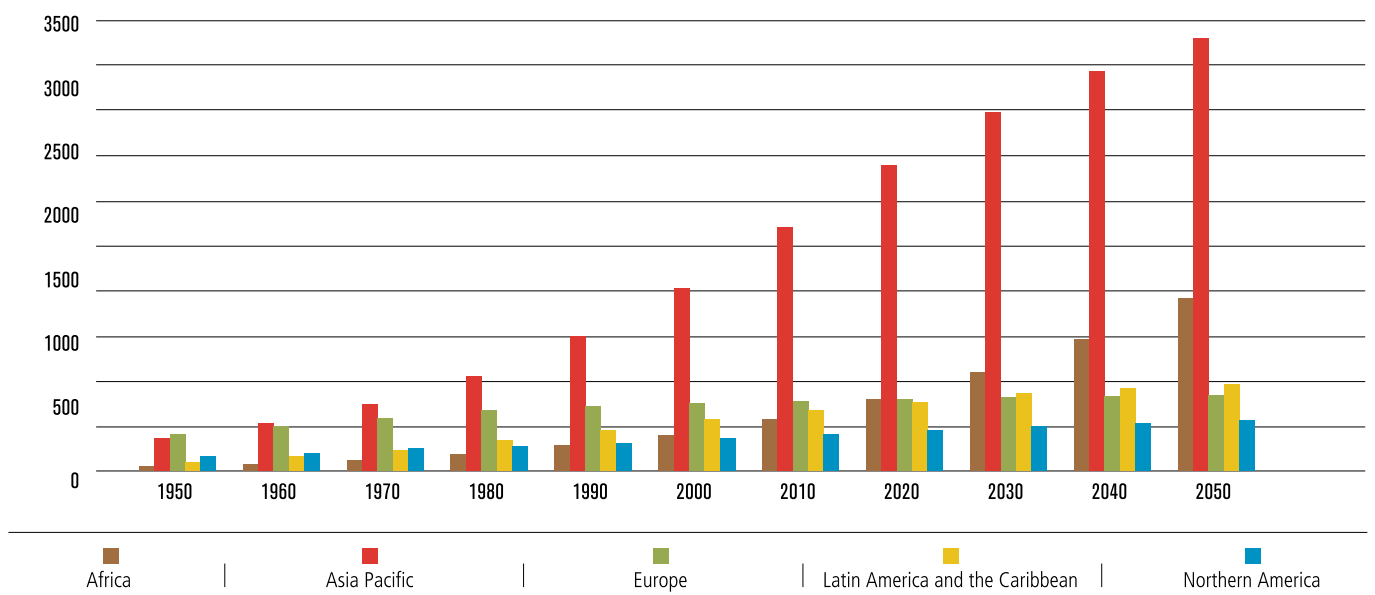
Perception on progress made on **SDG11**, based on a multi-stakeholder ESCAP survey



It is estimated that in 2016, Asia and the Pacific was home to 53.6 per cent of the global urban population and that by 2019 more than half of its total population will live in cities². 19 of the world's 31 mega cities are situated in Asia³. However, they account for only 15 per cent of the region's urban population, while over 40% live in cities and towns with fewer than 300,000 inhabitants. Also, most rapid urbanization now takes place in less urbanized and least developed countries of the region, such as Lao PDR with an average annual urbanization rate of 5.6 per cent between 2000 and 2016, or Nepal with an average rate of 3.7 per cent over the same period. It is these cities that absorb most of urban growth and need more support in terms of capacity and resources to progress with SDG 11 and the other urban-related SDGs.

Cities in the region face converging challenges, including migration and population growth, changes in family structure and social cohesion, increases in informal settlements, vulnerability to climate change and disasters, exclusion, rising inequality and rising insecurity. With the growth of the middle class in cities, emissions and wastes are likely to increase unless there is change in production and consumption patterns.

Figure 1: Urban population, 1950-2050 (thousands)



Source: World Urbanisation Prospects: The 2014 revision, File F03

At the same time, cities have the potential to solve many of these challenges. They are hubs of innovation, culture and progress, and account for as much as an estimated 80 per cent of the region's economic output. Thus, the performance of cities drives the region's prosperity, which is why it is so important that it is inclusive and environmentally friendly.



A. AREAS WHERE GOOD PROGRESS IS MADE

Urban Water and Sanitation (targets 11.1 and 11.6)

In 2015, the share of urban populations in the region with access to improved water sources was 97.2 per cent. Progress with access to safely managed sanitation in urban settlements has been more mixed. China has managed to reduce the number of people living in its cities without access to safely managed sanitation from 339 million in 2000 to 207 million in 2015, which given the high urbanization rates over the same period translates into an increase from 26 to 73 per cent of the urban population having access to safe sanitation.

Basic services, transport and heritage sites (targets 11.1, 11.2, 11.4)

Meanwhile, India has significantly increased its focus on urban development through its new urban missions overseen by a strengthened Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) that show some encouraging results for basic services provision (e.g. more than 500 cities now declared open defecation free) and new focus on better integrated planning with green spaces, mixed land-use, better public transport and walkable cities but also protection of heritage sites.^{4, 5, 6, 7, 8}

Green spaces and transport (targets 11.2 and 11.7)

The region has many cities that lead with successful green approaches and low urban transport emissions, such as Hong Kong, China, Seoul, Republic of Korea, or Singapore. Surabaya, Indonesia, has implemented a notable urban park initiative and the participatory “Clean and Green Surabaya” initiative for its poorer neighbourhoods. Shenzhen (China) meanwhile is applying green and low-carbon planning principles to open space as well as industrial development. Of particular relevance as well are emerging developments with respect to smart cities, smart energy grids, and high-speed digital connectivity, including India’s Smart Cities Mission which seeks to promote smart solutions and technologies in planning for new and retrofit developments in 100 cities through 2020.

Disaster resilience (targets 11.5 and 11.b)

With respect to disaster risks and urban resilience, there is - to mention but one important indicator - a trend of declining casualties in many countries in the region. In Bangladesh, deaths from tropical cyclones, which used to be in the tens of thousands per year, reduced to 9 people in 2017, despite the concurrent increase in severity and number of storms. This indicates more effective disaster risk planning, preparedness, and response, and reflects an increased awareness of broader resilience approaches taking hold throughout the region. Twenty-three cities in the region have joined the 100 Resilient Cities network, and are applying systems approaches to infrastructure planning and investment to increase the resilience of their communities. There remains however, a lack of disaggregated datasets between the urban and rural populations preventing targeted analyses pertaining to disaster impacts on urban populations.

Partnerships and Networking (targets 17.6 and 17.17)

The region’s cities are increasingly collaborating, by sharing good practices and jointly influencing global agendas through initiatives and networks such as the Global Parliament of Mayors, the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, the 100 Resilient Cities, the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, ICLEI, UCLG, CityNet or the ASEAN Cities Mayors Forum.



B. AREAS REQUIRING SPECIFIC ATTENTION AND ASSOCIATED KEY CHALLENGES

Populations in slums and informal settlements (target 11.1 and targets from other SDGs including 1, 6, 7)

In 2014, an estimated 440 million people, representing about 26.9 per cent of the region's total urban population, lived in slums or informal settlements, which are characterized by lack of adequate housing, tenure security, and access to basic infrastructure and services. This included nearly two-thirds of the urban population in Afghanistan and Bangladesh, and more than half of the urban populations of Cambodia and Nepal. Although the proportion of people living in slums is decreasing, the absolute number is still increasing across Asia and the Pacific.

Financing gap (targets 11.c, 17.1, 17.5)

According to a range of projections, the current deficit in investment for Asia Pacific infrastructure is estimated to be over US\$1 trillion with this investment gap being particularly dire in developing countries and emerging economies⁹. The total infrastructure investment needs for the region are estimated to reach US\$22.6 trillion over 15 years (from 2016 to 2030), with most of this investment required in urban areas. In India alone, the urban infrastructure gap is estimated at US\$827 billion over the next 20 years¹⁰.

Urban air pollution (target 11.6)

The risk of stroke, heart disease, lung cancer, and respiratory diseases due to air pollution continues to rise at an alarming rate, especially in the region's low-income cities where concentrations of ambient particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10) are well above WHO recommended standards¹¹. At the same time, awareness is rising, and more cities are monitoring their air quality.

Solid Waste Management (target 11.6)

Urban areas in the region generate about 1.21 million tons of municipal solid waste a day. By 2025, this amount is estimated to more than double, to 2.65 million tons per day. Waste collection rates and segregation of waste streams in developing countries are low, and collected waste is often just dumped, highlighting an urgent need for improved solid waste management in urban centers.

Urban sanitation (target 11.1)

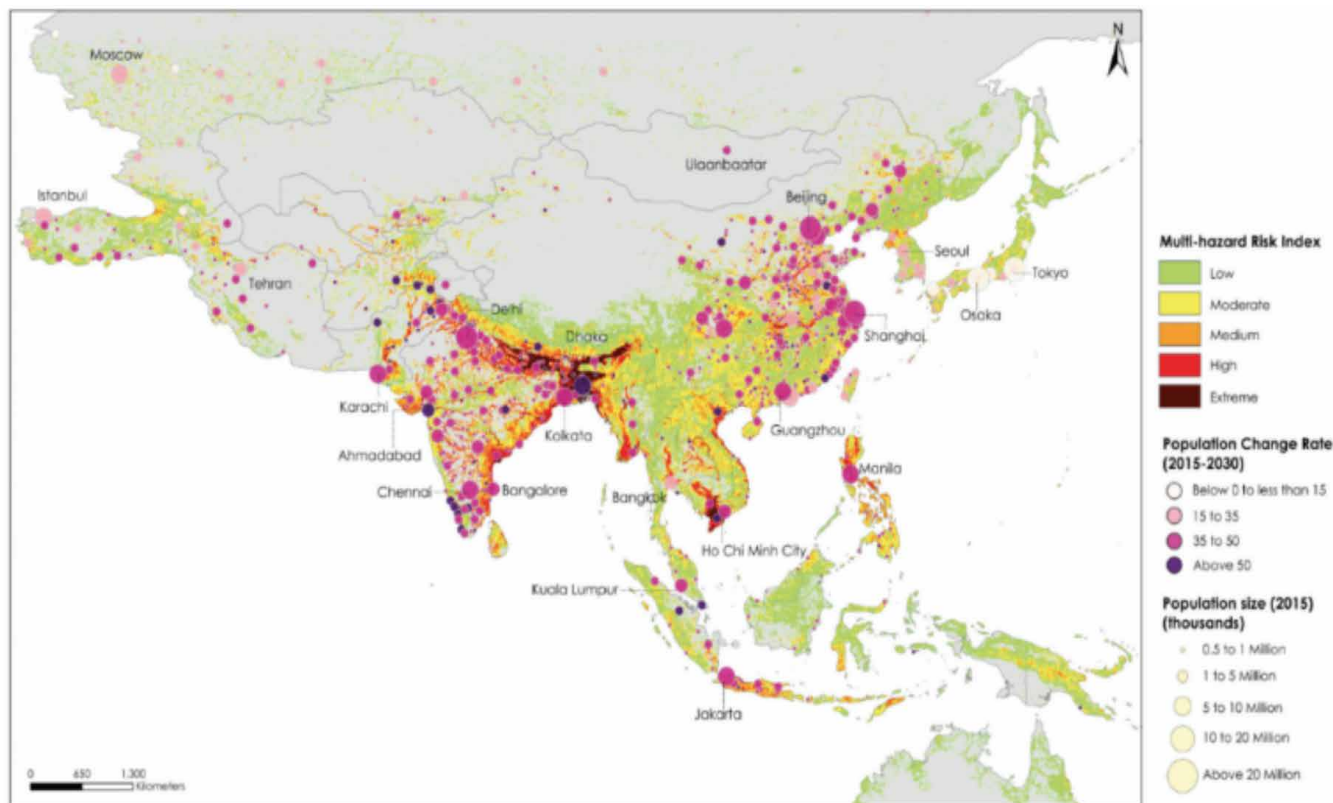
It remains a persistent challenge, especially for South Asia and the Pacific. In Palau for example, only 16 per cent and in Tuvalu only 6 per cent of the urban population had access to safely managed sanitation in 2015, while the number has been stagnating for just under half of the urban population in Turkey. In Bangladesh, meanwhile, in 2015 only 58 per cent of the urban population had access to basic hand-washing facilities.

Disaster risk (targets 11.5 and 11.b)

The high density of people, jobs and assets that make cities so successful also make them extremely vulnerable to disaster risks. Disaster related damage and losses are high, especially for coastal cities in Asia and the Pacific. Among the 10 cities that are projected to have the highest average annual loss from floods by 2050, six are located in the region (Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Tianjin in China; Mumbai and Kolkata in India; and Ho Chi Min City in Viet Nam)¹². Disasters in cities and peri-urban areas are also likely to exacerbate existing inequalities in Asia Pacific. 56 per cent of the population in nine mega-cities that are located in extreme disaster risk areas live under medium or high levels of inequality (as noted by their Gini coefficients). Overall in the region, it is estimated that one disaster can lead to a 0.13 per cent point increase in the Gini coefficient.¹³



Figure 2: Multi-hazard disaster risk of cities in Asia-Pacific^{14,15}



III. PROMISING INNOVATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES

Slums and basic services (target 11.1, but also SDGs 1, 2, 6 and 7)

With respect to access to adequate housing, tenure security and basic infrastructure, proven holistic and people-centered approaches to slum upgrading and community empowerment include the Baan Mankong Program of the Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI), Thailand or the ACCA Programme of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights which tried to replicate approaches of CODI Asia-wide. Both use community organization and community savings to then disperse collective loans for housing and settlement improvement, while enhancing communities' capacities to among other things collect data, negotiate with landowners, handle finances and direct technical construction projects.

Disaster resilience (target 11.5 and 11.b)

A good example of a functioning training program for local, regional and national government officials is the Sustainable Cities and Communities Program in Albay province, Philippines, aimed at protecting vulnerable populations with Zero Casualties since 1994 and minimizing damages to critical properties and resources. Key to success has been the institutionalization of the DRR office (the provincial DRR officer became a member of the Provincial Plan Use Committee) and integration of DRR programs and projects in the regular programs and projects of the local government. Another promising practice, used among others for example after Typhoon Hainan had hit the city of Tacloban, Philippines was a municipal cash for work scheme^{16,17}.

Inclusive and gender-responsive governance (targets 11.2, 11.3, 11.4, 11.7)

A good practice and example of participatory governance has been the participatory and gender-responsive budgeting process in Penang, Malaysia where under the Penang Women's Development Corporation (PWDC) policies were formulated to realize gender and social justice in Penang and the Penang Gender Policy and Action plan was developed that focused on economic security for all, freedom from gender-based



violence, just distribution of power and influence and gender responsive and participatory governance. Approaches used included online surveys, town hall meetings and working groups.

Informal employment and SWM (SDGs 1 and 12 and target 11.6)

Addressing informal employment in cities, WIEGO, the global network of informal worker groups, has for example worked in Pune, India with the 8000-strong union of waste pickers, Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat (KKPKP) and its solid waste management cooperative SWaCH. The work has focused on integration of occupational health and safety into the union's general work activities; documenting case studies on health and safety, improving the organization's health, safety and social security data collection systems, and supporting KKPKP's campaign on Extended Producer Responsibility.

Data and Statistics (target 17.18)

Given huge gaps and limited resources and capacities for urban-level data collection, analysis and dissemination for evidence-based policy making, different types of organizations and stakeholders are striving to collect alternative forms of data from surveying and mapping of informal settlements such as the "Know Your City" initiative of Slum/Shack Dwellers International to the inroads into Asia of the World Cities Council on Data and its ISO 37120 that aims to help create a 'culture of data' in cities. However, such initiatives are still in their infancy and need strong support in terms of advocacy, finances and capacity development.

IV. PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

- **Governance (targets 16.6 and 16.7):** With increased urbanization and devolution of responsibilities to the local level, it becomes very important that policy-making, as well as the legal and institutional frameworks allow for effective multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance. Lack of clear responsibility, capacity and resources is seriously hampering good urban governance in cities and towns of Asia and the Pacific. The momentum to "localize the SDGs" can become an important impetus for more sustainable and integrated approaches.
- **Financing sustainable cities (target 11.c, 17.1, 17.5):** To achieve SDG 11 and the other urban-related SDGs, successful leverage of finance is paramount. It in turn depends on reforms that empower local governments through intergovernmental transfers, own source revenue collection, and enhanced creditworthiness of cities to create certainty for subnational investment. Local governments must improve their governance structures and institutional capacities to manage long term debt, leverage their own finances, and engage in PPPs - thereby reducing risk and exposure to develop needed infrastructure.
- **Urban resilience and circular economy (target 11.b):** Both urban resilience to natural disasters and climate change as well as urban resource efficiency and circular economy approaches need to become much more prominent aspects of urban development if SDG 11 is to be achieved.
- **Inclusive cities (targets 11.3, 11.7 and 11.a):** More needs to be done to make cities more inclusive and accessible for different social groups such as women and girls or persons with disabilities. This includes improving safety and availability of public transport or street lighting or making all parts of the city accessible to wheelchair users or the visually impaired.
- **Integrated urban planning (target 11.a):** Traditional urban planning needs to be rethought along lines of being more integrated, people centric, and focusing on area-based development. The importance of evaluation, new partnerships, and better technology should be emphasized, and urban needs mainstreamed into national economic planning.



- **“Localizing” and integrating the SDGs:** Local governments and other urban stakeholders crucially need to be enabled to understand and use international development frameworks such as the SDGs in their local context. It is indeed estimated that the engagement of urban stakeholders is necessary to achieve up to 65% of the SDG targets¹⁸. Further, in an increasingly urbanized world, many of the SDGs intersect in cities: in particular, SDG 11 intersects with infrastructure and basic services reflected in SDG 6 (Water and Sanitation), SDG 7 (Energy) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), while critical environment, resources and resilience-related actions are required at the local level to achieve SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). “Localizing” the SDGs is one way to enable them to plan, advocate, implement, and monitor and evaluate not only SDG 11 but all other urban-related goals – which cannot be achieved without focused, transformative action at the local level.
- **Indicators and data for “localizing” the SDGs (target 17.18):** Goals need to be simplified and decentralized and ‘translated’ for different urban stakeholders. Moreover, not all SDG indicators related to measuring progress in cities have been clearly defined or “localized” and even where the indicators are clear and measurable, significant limitations in resources and capacities hamper collection, analysis and reporting of good quality, timely and disaggregated data.

TARGETS

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

END NOTES

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