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?

There is modest to moderate evidence that suggests that both Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) and urban renewal interventions demonstrate modest impact on crime and violence. Urban renewal can include urban design that incorporates improvements across the transportation, lighting and vegetation areas. (See Abt and Winship 2016; Cassidy et al 2014; Farrington et al 2007.) In this sense, these intervention models support healthier communities through a slight lowering of intentional criminality and violence.

There is also evidence that urban planning that is not done in a people-centered way can contribute to the very inequalities that advance discrimination, marginalization and lack of justice. With the rapid growth in urbanization, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, how transparent processes include informal settlements and peri-urban areas will be essential in order to ensure that improved health in the wealthier parts of the city are not advanced at the expense of further deterioration in the less powerful and more marginalized parts of the city.

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

N/A to my area of expertise.

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.?

The best available evidence suggests that policies that are fair, balanced and coordinated tend to have the most significant impact on improving particular aspects of urban safety, namely addressing serious physical violence. This question is actually quite large in scope, which makes it hard to be precise in terms of evidence and data. However, broadly, it is accurate to say that communities most commonly harmed by the various social ills included in the question tend to be those communities least politically

powerful and most politically, socially and economically marginalized. Therefore, policies that address inequality and marginalization goes a huge way towards reinforcing community resilience broadly.

One challenge to this fact is that corrupt systems have very little incentive to address inequality, which very often they are benefiting from themselves. It is therefore necessary to not just consider economic inequality, but fundamental political inequality as well, much of which will have deeply embedded historical roots. Much of which will also face political resistance from the in-charge elite. Supporting, therefore, advocates, activists, journalists and civil society groups that are engaged in addressing inequality is essential. Cities today are less equal than they were 20 years ago. A program style approach that does not fundamentally look at the distribution of who benefits and who is left out within society will not go far enough to push back against harmful existing trend lines.

Finally, for many of the areas mentioned in the question, city or other relevant sub-national authority would benefit from cooperation with national level authorities. Bringing to bear such cooperation in the arena of law enforcement, for example, can help to ensure that national operations (against terrorist or trafficking organizations for example) both lead to appropriate criminal justice responses while not undermining or harming local communities in the process.

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?

Remarkable work is being done in the technology and communication space to make, for example, reporting of sexual violence or intimidation against women more accurately reported and acted upon. This includes apps in Mexico for women to report sexual violence to trusted partners who can then work to provide safe access to resources and separation from an intimate partner or family member – if relevant and requested. In India crowdsourcing is being used to report on areas of high sexual assault to work with police to improve things like lighting, public safety presence and other measures to make the areas less dangerous and to be able to hold perpetrators accountable for transgressions. These technology tools are often being developed by civil society organizations, often in concert with public officials and private sector. In South Africa tools are being developed using SMS, which is more accessible to a broader number of people than internet-enabled technology, to support effective distribution of resources during the COVID-19 stay-at-home orders. There is an explicit intention to use technology to reach those otherwise left out of resource distribution. This is one attempt to overcome the digital divide.

Communication more broadly is essential. As COVID-19 continues its spread, those whose voices are already diminished will find fewer opportunities to advance the priorities of their communities. Powerfully amplifying the voices of those who are least heard across the urban landscape is a priority now more than ever. Many people who prioritize safe urban contexts remain woefully unknowledgeable about the people who live in the shadows. The people who make a city run, but who are kept out of the powerful and influential circles. There is a moment right now when attention is being placed on these individuals as their essential functions are being seen through the lens of COVID-19. We would do well

to amplify their voices in this moment to advance broader thinking about inclusive and transparent urban growth in the longer term.

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?

Not an area of expertise. That said, within the violence prevention space, one key area of collaboration is local <u>and</u> national government operating under the same evidence-based framework that understand the range of investments necessary to effectively reducing violence and building resilience. In the US, for example, the Department of Justice makes significant grants available to cities. When these are evidence based and promote urban safety, the reinforce local policy thinking, thereby increasing overall impact. Conversely, cities that have applied evidence-based mechanisms can help to build a movement that can influence how DOJ distributes funds. This kind of local to national knowledge bridge is important both financially and substantively.

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?

N/A to my area of expertise.

Each question will be examined from the lens of Policies, actions and trade-offs; Leaving no one behind; Knowledge gaps; Means of implementation and partnerships; and science, technology and innovation.