



# HABITAT III ISSUE PAPERS

## 1 - INCLUSIVE CITIES

New York, 31 May 2015

*(not edited version)*





## ISSUE PAPER ON INCLUSIVE CITIES

### KEY WORDS

Inclusive growth, inclusion, equality, social inclusion/exclusion, human rights, non-discrimination, migrants, marginalized groups, security of tenure, balance of power, gender, empowerment, consultation and participation, speculation on housing and land.

### SUMMARY

Urbanization provides the potential for new forms of social inclusion, including greater equality, access to services and new opportunities, and engagement and mobilization that reflects the diversity of cities, countries and the globe. Yet too often this is not the shape of urban development. Inequality and exclusion abound, often at rates greater than the national average, at the expense of sustainable development that delivers for all. Two key types of drivers are needed to combat the rise of urban exclusion and put cities on a better path. The first is political commitment to inclusive urban development at multiple levels, in the face of many forces and stakeholders incentivizing uneven and unequal development. The second is a range of mechanisms and institutions to facilitate inclusion, including participatory policy making, accountability, universal access to services, spatial planning and a strong recognition of the complementary roles of national and local governments in achieving inclusive growth.

### KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- Cities often have much greater economic inequalities than countries overall<sup>1</sup>. The world's largest cities are also often the most unequal. However, big inequalities are found in small cities in Africa and Latin America.
- More than two thirds of the world's population live in cities in which income inequalities have increased since 1980<sup>2</sup>, sometimes to worrying levels above the United Nations alert line.<sup>3</sup>
- There are serious variances in income and consumption at the urban level in the same country, and the aggregate national value can rarely describe what happens in all urban settings.<sup>4</sup>
- 1/3 of urban dwellers in the developing world (863 million people) live in slum-like conditions.<sup>5</sup> While the slum measure does not generally apply to cities in developed countries, residents of these cities

---

<sup>1</sup> Variations between the Gini coefficients of the urban centres in an individual country are huge. In 8 out of 12 of the countries analyzed by UN-Habitat/CAF in Latin America and the Caribbean, the difference between inequality levels in the most equal and the most unequal city diverts 45 per cent from the national average.

<sup>2</sup> López Moreno E. (2012) *Concept Paper for the World Urban Forum 7*, UN-Habitat,

<sup>3</sup> The alert line is determined by the United Nations when countries/cities reach a Gini coefficient in income above 0.4

<sup>4</sup> UN-Habitat and CAF (2104) *Construction of More Equitable Cities: Public Policies for Inclusion in America Latina*, Nairobi and Caracas, <http://unhabitat.org/books/construction-of-more-equitable-cities>.

<sup>5</sup> Almost one billion people live in slums without basic services and social protection (UN Habitat: 2010/2011).



face major challenges associated with poverty, substandard housing and services, under- or informal employment, violence and more.

- Cities of the developing world account for over 90% of the world's urban growth and youth account for a large percentage of those inhabitants. It is estimated that as many as 60% of all urban dwellers will be under the age of 18 by 2030. <sup>6</sup>
- Poor women, especially those living in the slums, tend to concentrate in low-wage, low-skilled and often home-based jobs in the informal sectors. They also face unique barriers in accessing health and other services, thus denying them the advantages generally seen in urban living.<sup>7</sup>

## THE ISSUE

Urbanization can lead to a more harmonious and inclusive society. Evidence shows that urbanization can represent enormous opportunities for inclusive and sustainable development, including for gender equality and the empowerment of women:

- Urbanization provides a powerful potential for social mobilization and freedom of expression, including for the marginalized and excluded, and for wider participation and influence in politics and policy.
- In cities there are growing opportunities for women for education and to engage in professional activities. Cities have also increased demand for women workers in services and industries, in jobs that bring benefits but also risks including poor working conditions, gender gap in pay and health problems.
- The greater cultural diversity found in urban areas can deconstruct social norms, gender stereotypes and traditions or customs that hold women and disadvantaged groups back, thereby reducing associated discrimination.
- Local governments are closely connected to populations as the immediate provider of services, especially to those groups most at risk of being excluded and marginalized.
- Cities facilitate strong networks, enabling collaboration and partnerships to empower every woman and man, to promote the diversity, belonging and connectedness that is essential to combat disillusionment and radicalization, particularly among young people. Well-managed cities can promote a model of interaction that upholds the rights of every inhabitant.

The economic dynamism of cities brings many benefits but can also exacerbate inequalities, as the rewards and benefits of growth are concentrated in the hands of those who have the strongest social and political claim. Gender, ethnicity and religion, physical ability, youth and age, migration and employment status (i.e. for informal workers) are all clear determining factors in the capacity of individuals and groups to access the full benefits of urbanization, or often to be denied the same. Unequal outcomes within urban areas are reinforced by exclusion in opportunity.<sup>8</sup> In complex urban systems, such outcomes and opportunities are tightly interlinked and interactive, strongly reinforcing one another.

---

<sup>6</sup> Ragan, Douglas. (2012). *Cities of Youth, Cities of Prosperity*, UN-Habitat

<sup>7</sup> UN 2014. *Framework of Actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the ICPD*.

<sup>8</sup> UNDP (2013), *Humanity Divided*



Around the world cities are usually more unequal than the countries they are found in. There are also serious variances in income and consumption at the urban level in the same country, and the aggregate national value can rarely describe what happens in all these urban settings. Studies show that income inequalities and discrimination are rarely if ever isolated to specific populations.<sup>9</sup> They intersect with other forms of inequalities in the social, legal, spatial, cultural, political and environmental spheres, reinforcing deprivation and exacerbating further inequalities.

Economic inequality is closely linked with gender inequality and spatial inequality, leading to the exclusion and often criminalization of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups such as slum dwellers, migrant workers, children, young people, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and minority groups. Disadvantages are greater for women within these groups as they also bear gender-based discriminations.

Migrant laborers who have moved from rural to urban areas, within and across borders, seldom share fully in the wealth and opportunities that are created. For many, the move to the city is associated with unstable, unequally remunerated or underpaid jobs, coupled with other abuses and deprivations. Many migrants have no choice but to settle in slums, with resulting exposure to pollution, crime and environmental threats, as well as limited access to basic services such as clean water and sanitation, health and education. Their deprivations are often aggravated by the informal or 'illegal' status of those settings, resulting in them being a blind spot in relevant government plans and policies.<sup>10</sup> For example, slum-dwellers often experience obstacles in access to school due to lack of residency status or birth certificates and higher drop-out rates because of child labour practices and stronger fear of violence and harassment. As a result they often depend on private schooling that requires additional expenditure and may be of poor quality.<sup>11</sup>

Women living below the poverty line, especially those living in slums,<sup>[1]</sup> tend to concentrate in the low-wage, low-skilled and often home-based jobs in the informal sectors, and non-core jobs.<sup>[2]</sup> The growth of slums also impacts women disproportionately, not only because they are, on average, poorer than men (three-fifths of the world's one billion poorest people are women and girls<sup>3</sup>), but also because they often lack decision-making opportunities and experience greater difficulty in accessing resources and services tailored to their needs.<sup>12</sup> The impact of such inequities is particularly notable in health outcomes, further influenced by social determinants of health.<sup>13</sup> <sup>14</sup> This is exacerbated by barriers the urban poor and slum dwellers face in accessing health services, including overcrowding, high cost, poor quality and major transport challenges.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> See analysis of the World Values Survey in the ICPD Global Report (UN 2014), which shows that where intolerance is high it is rarely isolated to a single group or subset of the population.

<sup>10</sup> UNESCO-IIEP. 2009. Educational marginalization in national education plans. Background paper for EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010.

<sup>11</sup> See the 2010 Education for All Global Monitoring Report on the theme *Reaching the Marginalized at:* <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001866/186606E.pdf>

<sup>[1]</sup> Almost one billion people live in slums without basic services and social protection (UN Habitat: 2010/2011).

[2] Urbanization, gender and poverty. Technical briefing. UNFPA in association with IIED, March, 2012.

<sup>12</sup> See State of the World's cities. Prosperity of cities 2012-2013. UN Habitat

<sup>13</sup> Hidden Cities: Unmasking and overcoming health inequities in urban settings. WHO & UN Habitat, 2010 [http://www.who.int/kobe\\_centre/publications/hidden\\_cities2010/en/](http://www.who.int/kobe_centre/publications/hidden_cities2010/en/)

<sup>14</sup> Commission on Social Determinants for Health; Final report of the Urban Settings Knowledge Network, 2008 [http://www.who.int/social\\_determinants/themes/urbanization/en/](http://www.who.int/social_determinants/themes/urbanization/en/)

<sup>15</sup> UN 2014. Framework of Actions for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD.



A significant challenge that faces cities is the rise of racism and discrimination. Various forms of racism, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance have been perpetrated against individuals and populations, transgressing their fundamental human rights, and exacerbating exclusion, exploitation and even hatred. Consequently, the full enjoyment of these groups' rights, including their potential for democratic participation and socioeconomic inclusion, has been imperiled. The increasing role of cities as major actors in the fight against racism, with their own autonomy and resources, is therefore crucial in this respect. Collective action through initiatives such as the International Coalition of Cities against Racism<sup>16</sup> are a positive step to be recognized.

## KEY DRIVERS

### A. Establishing Political Commitment to Inclusive Urbanization

State authorities at national and local level are bound to implement national and international obligations, including the protection and promotion of the human rights of all without discrimination. Effective implementation of human rights, equality and non-discrimination cannot be achieved without the proactive involvement of local and subnational governments.

The role of state authorities is clear when it comes to ensuring access, affordability and adequacy of services to all in cities. Equal access of all to employment, education, adequate housing, health services, justice, water, sanitation, electricity and transports, all contribute to inclusiveness and social cohesion.

Despite obligations toward all inhabitants to uphold their rights and the evident benefits of having more inclusive cities, a wide range of factors drive exclusion in cities, including but not limited to:

- A policy focus on economic growth at the expense of inclusion;
- High competition between cities for investments, which incentivizes reducing social protections and provisions for the poor as part of efforts to attract national and international capital;
- Environmental threats to cities, including climate change, that result in eviction or relocation of the poor who often live in fragile or exposed areas within the city;
- Extreme power and resource imbalances in access to governance and decision-making
- Commodification of land and resulting speculation;

These factors have historically affected governance and planning systems across a wide range of development contexts, reinforcing the march of unequal development.

“Across the world, problems in ensuring the affordability of housing, land and property are responsible for the increasing number of people who are pushed away from well-urbanized and well-located neighbourhoods into inadequate, insecure housing conditions on the periphery. Urban planning directed to creating so-called “world-class cities” rather than controlling speculation and reining in rising rental and home prices through appropriate land management tools have contributed to boosting property prices in cities and diverted land for higher-income groups.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/fight-against-discrimination/coalition-of-cities/>



The resulting creation of spatially separated settlements for the rich and the poor in urban and rural areas can be defined — as the previous Special Rapporteur described — as “urban and rural apartheid”. Slums and squatter settlements arise in part from the colossal gap between supply and demand of affordable housing in well-located land and lead to discrimination, playing a strong role in keeping large groups in poverty and poor living conditions, with little access to opportunities for a better future. The result is fragmented and divided cities, with the erosion of social cohesion.”

Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing to the General Assembly, A/63/275

In the midst of these drivers and mechanisms of exclusion, it is therefore essential that local and national governments take a positive and proactive approach to achieving inclusive cities – as a means of delivering on their obligations and setting a course to urbanization that delivers effectively for all.

This includes promoting a more balanced approach to the perception of migrants: it is essential to improve the current migration “narrative”, which is essentially negative, to more accurately reflect contemporary migration realities; and the historically positive impact of human mobility on our societies, many of which have been built with the contributions made by migrants.

## B. Establishing the Pathway to Inclusive Cities

### 1. Participation and social innovation in planning, implementation and evaluation

Supporting excluded urban groups to share their views and represent their own needs: An essential aspect of ensuring inclusion and meaningful participation by all is through the mobilization of excluded groups themselves, whose ability to engage with more powerful stakeholders is greatly enhanced through collective action. Special emphasis should be placed on increasing women’s, young people’s and older person’s participation in democratic life and decision making at all levels. Gender equality perspectives should, for example, be mainstreamed into all decisions around budgeting, infrastructure investments, and land-use and development planning. Experience shows that collective action by communities, women’s organizations and organizations of the urban poor (i.e. organizations such as Shack and Slum Dwellers International or informal workers groups such as the Global Alliance of Waste Pickers, the Self Employed Women’s Association, or HomeNet) are highly effective in addressing key urban challenges (e.g. housing, environment, and disaster risk reduction) and negotiating with other stakeholders like government or private land owners.

Fostering inclusive social innovation processes can build partnerships amongst stakeholders with historically different interests to solve collective problems wherever possible. Marginalized, vulnerable and excluded groups can use the urban space to project their voices, to participate in community politics, and influence social and political processes. Examples from the Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network show how participatory vulnerability assessments engaging a wide range of stakeholders can help build mutual understanding of problems, trust among disparate actors, and new ways of working. Inclusive social innovation processes can lead to more inclusive outcomes – for instance, the awarding of solid waste management contracts to associations of informal waste pickers, development of independently managed



flood early warning systems (as in Hat Yai City in Thailand), or improvements in urban design that support elderly populations.

## 2. Realizing the rights of all to universal access to quality basic services

Promoting universal, age and gender responsive access to quality basic services: An urban age and gender-responsive development model with adequate policies and institutional frameworks, for promoting universal access to urban basic services, such as sustainable and affordable housing, health including sexual and reproductive health, nutritious food, water and sanitation, education and training facilities, including life-long learning and vocational education, and basic income security, especially for urban dwellers living in poverty and those experiencing discrimination, is another lever of change. Such services should be available and accessible to everyone, and meet certain minimum quality standards as established by international human rights law. It is essential to assess the way these services are accessible and utilized according to the different needs of other marginalized groups, such as indigenous peoples, migrants, ethno-cultural specificities of communities, women with disabilities, adolescent girls, older persons and others in the decision making processes related to urban planning.

Social protection and social services such as social transfers and health coverage can reduce vulnerability of poor and excluded populations, particularly when they are designed to be responsive to the particular needs of these populations. This along-side with generating decent work, prioritizes equality and investment in people, which are at the center of promoting inclusive cities. Focusing particularly attention on migrant populations is crucial in this regard, including removing internal mobility restrictions, removing obstacles linked to migration status for access to basic services such as health and education, addressing various forms of discrimination, including multiple discrimination, against migrants in different spheres of life – economic, social, political and cultural – and providing support to migrants for facilitating their full integration in host societies, inter alia by tackling stereotypes and promoting intercultural dialogue and understanding. Rural urban migrants are disproportionately young, meaning age-responsive support to housing, education, health services including sexual and reproductive health and employment are essential. Safe and generative urban spaces for youth have been linked to youth having greater access to training, health services, and a space to for youth to have their voices heard in local governance.

## 3. Spatial planning for inclusion

Improved spatial connection establishes a link between land use and accessibility, eliminates or reduces the imbalances between residential and working areas and reduces the gap between slums and consolidated neighborhoods. It facilitates access to the areas in which job opportunities, equipment and public services are located, thereby limiting territorial inequality.

Spatial planning for inclusion holds particular potential in countries and cities where urbanization is happening rapidly. Urban population growth offers the possibility of new spatial forms, new approaches to provision of services, and the creation of new opportunities for urbanizing populations. Spatial planning can create the infrastructural foundation for supporting economic transitions. New jobs emerge that, if in line with human



rights and labour standards, can provide pathways for individuals, households and communities to reduced poverty, increased well-being and greater equality.

#### 4. Accountability

Enhanced monitoring and accountability of local and national governments and private actors, especially related to urban planning and land administration. Decisions and processes that affect urban residents need to be transparent to all, subject to public scrutiny and to include free and fair dispute and complaint mechanisms – all critical to reducing instances of public corruption that work in favor of powerful interests. Gender responsive community report cards for instance allow communities to develop indicators to assess their own needs and evaluate government performance. Under the Urban Governance Initiative (TUGI), the use of report cards in Cebu, Philippines, helped assess the capacity of the city government to respond the needs of women, which further led to a gender code for the city and the adoption of a new ordinance on domestic violence.

Enhancing access to information: Initiatives and databases can provide free access to information to the public—for instance, on budgeting, urban development plans, zoning, and disaster risk. Across the globe, initiatives to promote transparency of decision-making are being adopted by municipalities. They are notably adopted in several Latin American countries and in Indonesia (for instance, the Solo Kota Kita project), where they aim at enabling informed citizen votes during participatory budgeting processes. These initiatives are mostly based on open data policies in the most connected countries, with the development of visual tools and neighborhood mapping. In other cities, governments are partnering with community members to collect information on informal settlements or informal economy.

#### 5. Understanding the roles of national and local government in generating inclusive urbanization

Much of the previous sections have addressed vital factors at the local level. Yet exclusion is reinforced by a variety of national and global factors that local governments and stakeholders are not in a position to address. Coherence and coordination between central and local governments is essential to ensure synergies and complementarities of interventions at different levels, incorporate urban growth into national and local planning, and avoid blind spots and lacunae in relevant policies and plans. Too often discrepancies and contradictions exist between central government policies and those implemented by local authorities.

Decentralization processes may fail to establish a clear division of labor with corresponding accountabilities, which will hinder the elimination of inequalities. This also requires cooperation between cities, and between urban and rural areas as a way to address the abovementioned issues and challenges. Through the exchange of expertise, competencies, good practices and practical experience in areas such as education, employment, housing and awareness-raising, cities and city-level actors can leverage achievements in sustainable and inclusive urban development, encouraging innovation and build mutually beneficial collaborative relationships.

National policies play an important role in enabling or constraining local actors from achieving inclusive outcomes at the local level. For example:





- Efforts to devolve authority and finance to the local level, paired with mechanisms for capacity development and accountability, can enable governments to better service their populations.
- Reform of laws and regulations that constrain movement (such as domestic registration systems in China and Vietnam) or limit the ability of migrants to access basic services, and strengthening laws and regulations on the integration of population projections, including those relating to urban growth, into development planning.
- Reform of policies that force cities to compete based on characteristics such as physical size or GDP – for instance, city classification systems – that do not promote efficient or social progressive resource allocation.
- Flexible fiscal policies and budget allocation processes that recognized the differentiated needs of various types of cities.

Cities and national government can moderate exclusionary outcomes especially related to urban planning and land administration. Urbanization processes should be more firmly entrenched in a human rights framework that ensures the alignment of goals and implementation processes to specific human rights obligations while promoting the accountability of local governments with respect to evolve from technocratic models to rights-based models that ensure the accountability and responsibility and the entitlements of city dwellers as, who are human rights-holders. Decisions and processes in cities need to be transparent with information accessible to everyone; foster women's agency and full and equal representation in decision-making; subject to public scrutiny; and buttressed by free and fair dispute and complaint mechanisms. City-dwellers and notably those belonging to disadvantaged groups should be empowered so as to be able to claim their rights when these are violated or remain unfulfilled.

## PLATFORMS

**Tool:** Population Situation Analysis, <http://www.unfpa.org/publications/population-situation-analysis>

This guide provides the basis for an integrated appraisal of population and reproductive health dynamics and their impacts on poverty, inequality and development, including the links with the demography of urbanization.

**Initiative:** Every Woman, Every Child, <http://www.everywomaneverychild.org/>

Launched by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon during the United Nations Millennium Development Goals Summit in September 2010, Every Woman Every Child is an unprecedented global movement that mobilizes and intensifies international and national action by governments, multilaterals, the private sector and civil society to address the major health challenges facing women and children around the world. It has a new locational focus -- Every Woman, Every Child, Everywhere -- that looks particularly at urban inequalities and human mobility.

**Process:** The special procedures of the Human Rights Council are independent human rights experts with mandates to report and advise on human rights.

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/Welcomepage.aspx>

**Process:** The human rights treaty bodies are committees of independent experts that monitor implementation of the core international human rights treaties.



<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/Pages/TreatyBodies.aspx>

**Tool:** Urban Health Inequity and Assessment Tool (Urban HEART)

Main Document: [http://www.who.int/kobe\\_centre/publications/urban\\_heart.pdf](http://www.who.int/kobe_centre/publications/urban_heart.pdf)

User Manual: [http://www.who.int/kobe\\_centre/publications/urban\\_heart\\_manual.pdf](http://www.who.int/kobe_centre/publications/urban_heart_manual.pdf)

**Platform:** Hidden Cities (WHO & UN Habitat, 2010)

[http://www.who.int/kobe\\_centre/publications/hiddencities\\_media/who\\_un\\_habitat\\_hidden\\_cities\\_web.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/kobe_centre/publications/hiddencities_media/who_un_habitat_hidden_cities_web.pdf?ua=1)

**Network:** The International Coalition of Cities against Racism, launched by UNESCO in 2004, fosters the exchange of expertise, good practices and practical experience to develop city-level policies to combat exclusion and discrimination; [www.unesco.org/shs/citiesagainstracis](http://www.unesco.org/shs/citiesagainstracis).

*This Issue Paper has been elaborated with contributions of UN DESA, UNDP, UNFPA, OHCHR, UN-Habitat, WHO, UNICEF, UNESCO and UN Women.*