



## 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



# SUSTAINABLE CITIES: WHY THEY MATTER

### What's the goal here?

To make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

### Why?

The world is becoming increasingly urbanized. Since 2007, more than half the world's population has been living in cities, and that share is projected to rise to 60 per cent by 2030.

Cities and metropolitan areas are powerhouses of economic

growth— contributing about 60 per cent of global GDP. However, they also account for about 70 per cent of global carbon emissions and over 60 per cent of resource use.

### What are some of the most pressing challenges that cities face today?

Inequality is a big concern. Over 1 billion people live in slums and this number keeps rising. The levels of urban energy consumption and pollution are also

60  
per cent  
of the  
world's  
population  
will live  
in cities  
by 2030

worrying. Cities occupy just 3 per cent of the Earth's land, but account for 60-80 per cent of energy consumption and 70 per cent of carbon emissions. Many cities are also more vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters due to their high concentration of people and location so building urban resilience is crucial to avoid human, social and economic losses.

### **I live in a city but I'm not affected by any of these issues. Why should I care?**

All these issues will eventually affect every citizen. Inequality can lead to unrest and insecurity, pollution deteriorates everyone's health and affects workers' productivity and therefore the economy, and natural disasters have the potential to disrupt everyone's lifestyles.

### **What happens if cities are just left to grow organically?**

The cost of poorly planned urbanization can be seen

in some of the huge slums, tangled traffic, greenhouse gas emissions and sprawling suburbs all over the world. Slums are a drag on GDP, and lower life expectancy. By choosing to act sustainably we choose to build cities where all citizens live a decent quality of life, and form a part of the city's productive dynamic, creating shared prosperity and social stability without harming the environment.

### **Is it expensive to put sustainable practices in place?**

The cost is minimal in comparison with the benefits. For example, there is a cost to creating a functional public transport network, but the benefits are huge in terms of economic activity, quality of life, the environment, and the overall success of a networked city.

### **What can I do to help achieve this goal?**

Take an active interest in the governance and management of your city. Advocate for the kind of city you believe you need.

Develop a vision for your building, street, and neighbourhood, and act on that vision. Are there enough jobs? Can your children walk to school safely? Can you walk with your family at night? How far is the nearest public transport? What's the air quality like? What are your shared public spaces like? The better the conditions you create in your community, the greater the effect on quality of life.

To find out more about Goal #11 and other Sustainable Development Goals, visit:

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment>

