UNESCO Cities Platform

URBAN SOLUTIONS

Adapting Cities for Climate Resilience

The UNESCO Cities Platform (UCP) brings together the Organization's 8 city centered or related networks and programmes, comprised of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN), UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC), International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities (ICCAR), World Heritage Cities Programme, Media and Information Literacy Cities (MIL), Megacities Alliance for Water and Climate, Disaster Risk Reduction Programme (DRR) and UNESCO/Netexplo Observatory.

This year, under the global theme of *Adapting Cities for Climate Resilience*, the UNESCO Cities Platform is celebrating World Cities Day by emphasizing the importance of cities as hubs of resilience, sustainability, proactivity and innovation. UNESCO believes it is crucially important that cities and citizens work together to create climate resilient human settlements, especially as COVID-19 has underlined the unpredictable nature of future challenges. With the aim of encouraging cities and inhabitants to adapt with regards to climate resilience, and take proactive actions towards climate transition, the UNESCO Cities Platform, strongly supported by the aforementioned 8 member networks and programmes, has crafted adaptable and practical **Urban Solutions** for climate action, targeting both city policymakers and urban residents.

Solution 1 : **Urban Biodiversity**

For cities
Identify, preserve and strengthen biodiversity in urban environments, notably taking into account urban-rural symbiotic relationships.

For city dwellers
Create biodiversity spots at home, with the involvement of young people, to cultivate awareness.

Rationale

It has been widely recognized that biospheres can curb greenhouse gas emissions and consequently mitigate climate change. There are 727 UNESCO biosphere reserves in 131 countries,[1] of which urban areas make up a part. Due to the vulnerability and in particular the fragile nature of urban biospheres, sustainable management of biodiversity and ecosystems are vital to ensure the transition from rural to urban biospheres along with providing livable and sustainable human settlements, instead of disruptive urbanization. An effective response to preserve and nurture urban biodiversity is to build up a participative approach in urban policies and plans. It requires that cities give due consideration to the role and potential impacts of biodiversity and ecosystems, illustrated by policies and projects that target urban or urban-rural areas of outstanding conservation importance. Such initiatives could also involve the development of alternative livelihoods for the local community, including the inhabitants level such as the creation of biodiversity spots on balconies, in residential gardens and along walkways.

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[1] https://en.unesco.org/biosphere/wnbr

Solution 2 : **Sustainable Tourism**

For cities
Collaborate with local tourism actors, notably operators and professionals, to make cities eco-friendly destinations.

For city dwellers
Opt for sustainable tourism, especially when visiting environmentally vulnerable destinations, such as small islands and coastal regions, particularly in developing countries.

Rationale
Tourism is an important source of foreign exchange and employment, while being closely linked to the social, economic, and environmental well-being of many countries. The tourism sector as a whole is estimated to contribute 330 million jobs to the global market, while cultural tourism alone accounts for a significant share of tourism employment, generating 40% of world tourism revenues.[2] Not only are tourists crucial to economic growth, but they also have the ability to support trends towards sustainable tourism. Means of supporting and raising awareness of sustainable urban tourism, eco-tourism and cultural tourism, such as through the inclusion of a simple digital guidelines for local environmental preservation in relevant travel information sources, will contribute another dimension of sustainable development, as well as create jobs and promote local culture, products and services.

Solution 3 : **Culture and Creativity**

Proposed by **UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN)**

For cities
Establish incentive mechanisms to encourage all actors from the cultural and creative sector to integrate climate resilience and action into their projects and offers.

For city dwellers
Opt for climate-aware cultural and creative amenities, products and services in your daily life.

Rationale
Culture and creativity contribute in a myriad of ways to climate resilience and transition. As proof, not only can the mobilization of citizens for climate action be better achieved through culture and creativity, but also the acknowledgement of climate awareness and action themselves as culture, is among the most powerful means of passing on them from generation to generation. So as to amplify culture and creativity's impact on climate resilience, culture enabled and innovative local policies and strategies must be put in place to address climate change. The global export of cultural and recreational services in 2019 accounted for USD 67.13 billion[3], revealing as example the magnitude of the collective impact we could make if everyone starts opting for climate-friendly cultural products, services and amenities that integrate climate resilience into their portfolio in both form and content. This could range from the purchase of cultural goods made from sustainable materials, to consciously choosing to visit museums powered by renewable energy, among many others.

Solution 4 : **Risk Reduction and Preparedness**

Proposed by **Disaster Risk Reduction Programme (DRR)**

For cities
Include and mobilize all stakeholders, and particularly local communities, in developing people-centered and place-based policies, mechanisms and tools on safety and risk reduction.

For city dwellers
Make a plan for how your family or household would respond to an emergency, and keep yourself and the people around you informed about potential disaster risks.

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[2] https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/book/10.18111/9789284418978
[3] https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/statis_e/wts2020_e/wts20_toc_e.htm

Rationale

In 2019, 396 natural disasters were recorded in the International Disaster Database, resulting in 11,755 deaths, 95 million people affected and USD 103 billion in economic losses across the world.[4] Such extensive impact proves that we must improve emergency preparedness and collectively deal with natural hazards. The delivery and quality of early warning systems and response services, which greatly enhance the effectiveness of post-disaster recovery, can be improved by taking into consideration the local environment, as well as the citizens' needs, concerns, reactions and responses to natural hazards and other emergencies. New technology can also contribute to this effort by enabling customized information and issuing immediate reaction instructions to all citizens.

Solution 5 : **Media and Information Literacy**

Proposed by **Media and Information Literacy Cities (MIL)**

For cities

Develop user-friendly and accessible information tools with reliable materials to reinforce media and information literacy on climate issues for citizens.

For city dwellers

Share only fact-based, science-supported climate information on personal social media accounts.

Rationale

The persistent rise of disinformation and misinformation, is threatening to undermine the facts, and stall science-based progress towards climate resilience and transition. Media and information literacy rates could be increased by proactive city and citizen engagement. The development of information toolkits by local authorities, can ensure the capability of citizens to tackle climate disinformation and misinformation, and thereby develop their own deeper knowledge based on reliable and verifiable sources. Cities must explore how to advance media and information literacy in urban policies, and mobilize civil society to magnify the dissemination of information to a wider audience.

Solution 6 : **Education and Lifelong Learning**

Proposed by **UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC)**

For cities

Create interactive information points in public spaces across cities to increase educational and learning opportunities for citizens regarding the climate transition.

For city dwellers

Teach children in your household about climate change by involving them in eco-conscious chores and household activities.

Rationale

Climate change has increasingly caught the attention of educators, who have expressed their concerns regarding climate education. Some studies point out that climate resilience is rarely mentioned in schools. Many teachers feel that they are not properly trained to educate their students on the topic. Therefore, formal and informal lifelong learning infrastructure should be provided for local communities, especially for young people. This could range from incorporating information and learning materials on environmental sustainability in local news outlets, to creating innovative online and offline interactive platforms aimed at building awareness, knowledge and skills prioritizing environmental conservation. Young people should also be supported to amplify their voices, calling for a climate resilient future.

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[4] https://reliefweb.int/report/world/natural-disasters-2019

Solution 7 : **Connectivity and Collaboration**

Proposed by **UNESCO/Netexplo Observatory**

For cities
Develop exchange and collaborations on data and technology based climate actions with other cities around the world, notably through existing intercity networks and platforms.

For city dwellers
Create your own daily-life initiatives contributing to climate action with the participation or involvement of other citizens.

Rationale

Climate change is a global challenge, therefore solutions and actions should be correspondingly global. Meanwhile, data-driven approaches and methods provide credible evidence and guide our action towards climate resilience and transition. This gives rise to the necessity of transversal, data-powered connectivity and cooperation, notably among cities who are on the frontline of climate change. Intercity connectivity, illustrated by cities covered by various networks and programmes on the UNESCO Cities Platform, and likewise through international collaborative responses, such as South-South Cooperation, not only creates social bonds between citizens, and functions as an ecosystem at the human level, but also allows for the exchange of data and information within the dynamic nature of cities, all which are the source of sound climate related policies and actions. This connectivity and collaboration are reflected at the inhabitants level. Instigating climate conscious lifestyle changes and mobilizing family, friends, colleagues to follow suit is one example of how connectivity and collaboration among city dwellers can contribute to the climate cause.

Solution 8 : **Cultural Heritage for Sustainability**

Proposed by **UNESCO World Heritage Cities Programme**

For cities
Promote climate sensitive regeneration, renovation, and repurposing of historic urban centers.

For city dwellers
Opt for eco-friendly traditional materials and techniques when renovating your house.

Rationale

Historical cities around the world provide examples of conservation, adaptation, regeneration in the face of changing environmental conditions and climate change. Today, many cities are facing emerging challenges from rapid, uncontrolled, unplanned development. This has led to energy-dependent urban models, which make direct and sizable contributions to climate change. The unbreakable links between historic cities' tangible as well as intangible heritage, and different aspects of urban life, from their geographical and natural setting, to the knowledge and practices of the local communities, particularly in terms of building, living, and managing natural resources, and the urban-nature relationship must be considered as a valuable, indispensable contribution to climate resilience.

Solution 9 : **Inclusiveness for Climate Justice**

Proposed by **International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities (ICCAR)**

For cities
Raise awareness and nurture climate justice especially with the inclusion of youth, Indigenous Peoples, minorities and marginalized populations.

For city dwellers
Stand up and act for climate justice and encourage the people around you to do the same.

Rationale

Climate change disasters are disproportionately affecting the most disadvantaged populations, such as women, minority communities, Indigenous Peoples, people with disabilities and low-income groups. This clearly demonstrates the disparity and inequalities related to climate defence systems and adaptation mechanisms. The wide array of stakeholders already active in the fight for climate justice can be leveraged at the city level by creating partnerships, especially with community-based, youth and female-led networks. All cities and their citizens must work in unison with the community to eliminate climate injustice. The first step is to allow voices to be heard.

Solution 10 : **Resilient Water Management**

Proposed by **Megacities Alliance for Water and Climate**

For cities

Opt for nature-inspired and technology-enabled systems to support water supply and distribution, wastewater treatment, and to reduce flood risks in cities.

For city dwellers

Commit to reducing your water footprint by adopting easily applicable gestures.

Rationale

Ensuring sufficient and safe water supplies for everyone is becoming increasingly challenging in light of climate change. About 4 billion people worldwide experience severe water scarcity during at least one month of the year, whether this scarcity in availability is due to physical shortage, or the lack of adequate and accessible infrastructure.[6] This is an even more critical challenge for cities given the size of urban population and the level of urban density. A major response to this issue is to improve the way cities manage water supply and wastewater. Solutions could include green infrastructure in urban planning and design as well as individual water conservation efforts, from using vegetation filtration at the city level to setting up a regular control for plumbing systems to avoid water waste from leakage at the individual level.

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[6] https://www.unwater.org/water-facts/scarcity/