UNESCO CITIES PLATFORM

UNESCO believes that for cities to become truly **liveable places**, we need innovation in all spheres of human activity.

Innovation — whether it be social, cultural, educational or in science and technology — strenghtens resilience and builds more cohesive societies.

City stakeholders are the **engines of sustainable development** at the local level, and can offer valuable success stories and experiences.

UNESCO, as a **laboratory of ideas** and a **catalyst for international dialogue**, brings these city stakeholders together to share good practices and strengthen action towards the sustainable development of cities.

The new platform gives UNESCO a more **strategic comprehensive vision through coordinated action,** and reinforces the linkages between all our areas of action in education, culture, the natural and human sciences, as well as communication and information.

The bedrock of our approach is a **people-centered philosophy** and **participatory decision-making** so that all city-dwellers, including the most vulnerable, have a say in their collective future.

19%
of the world's **foreign-born population**
live in global cities (large, economically important) **although they are increasingly also moving to smaller, secondary settlements**

2.2 billion
people are estimated to live in slums in 2030

156 million
urbanites live without improved water sources

3%
of world GDP
is generated through cultural and creative industries, most are based in cities

90% of urban expansion
will be in the developing world in the coming decades

$ 314 billion
is the global average of annual economic losses from disasters in urban areas

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UNESCO'S WORK WITHIN THE BROADER PICTURE

The seventeen goals of the globally endorsed **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** have given fresh impetus to collective efforts to strengthen the linkages between the social, economic and environmental aspects of development. Goal 11 in particular aims to **"make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable".**

Whilst many countries have made progress on the seventeen goals of the 2030 Agenda, **cities have proven to be particularly agile and innovative partners.**

Well-designed policies in cities can also have positive effects on neigbouring rural areas, meaning urban development resonates beyond municipal boundaries.

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UNESCO STANDS AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL AMBITIONS AND LOCAL REALITIES

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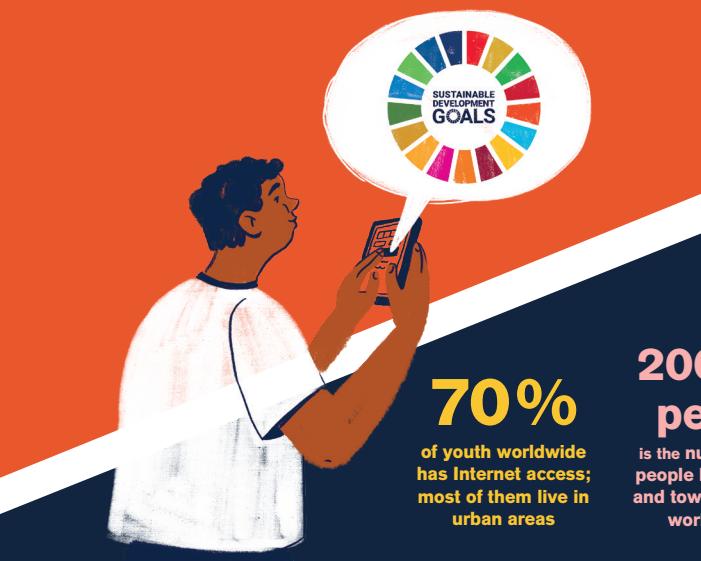
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT **GOALS**

CITIES DRIVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

By 2050, two out of every three people will live in cities. We are truly living in the Urban Age. Our cities are now **denser, more diverse, more multicultural, more educated and more connected** — locally and internationally — than at any point in human history.

Yet, all cities are facing the threats of **poverty, social inequalities, environmental degradation, health threats, discrimination and disaster caused by natural hazards.**

With so much at stake, we have **to 'get cities right'** for the future of the planet and all of its inhabitants. All countries have committed to making urban spaces **more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable** through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

70%
of youth worldwide has Internet access; most of them live in urban areas

200,000 people
is the number of new people living in cities and towns around the world per day

UNESCO PROGRAMMES & NETWORKS OF CITIES

CREATIVE CITIES PROGRAMME

The 180 cities from 72 countries of the UNESCO Creative Cities Programme have put culture and creativity at the heart of their sustainable urban development policies. Covering the fields of crafts and folk art, design, film, gastronomy, literature, music and media arts, Creative Cities share their innovative resources, knowledge and practices towards building more sustainable and better cities for all.

UNESCO/ NETEXPLO OBSERVATORY

Since 2011, UNESCO has partnered with Netexplo, an independent observatory that studies the impact of digital technology on society, including in cities. These technologies include artificial intelligence, big data, biotech, the Internet of Things, gaming, cybersecurity, robotics, blockchain, social media and 3D printing.

MEGACITIES ALLIANCE FOR WATER AND CLIMATE

Providing sufficient drinking water and basic sanitation in cities of over 10 million inhabitants is a challenge, especially taking into account the effects of climate change. The Megacities Alliance for Water and Climate brings together policy-makers, water utilities and researchers to develop effective water management systems, as well as research and technology, to make populations less vulnerable to water shortages and risks such as disease and floods.

GLOBAL NETWORK OF LEARNING CITIES (GNLC)

The UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities, comprising of 170 active cities from 53 countries, is an international policy-oriented network providing inspiration, know-how and good practices. A learning city promotes lifelong learning for all, from primary to higher education, within families, communities and the workplace. It promotes the use of modern learning technologies, while encouraging both global citizenship and sustainable development.

WORLD HERITAGE CITIES PROGRAMME

More than 315 World Heritage cities function as inhabited urban centres worldwide. They are facing difficulties in balancing heritage conservation and urban development. The UNESCO 2011 Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape provides guidelines for urban planning that respects humanity's rich urban heritage. The World Heritage Cities Programme promotes practical solutions and tools to meet the needs of local communities.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND RESILIENCE

Urban populations are vulnerable to natural hazards, such as earthquakes, floods or extreme weather events. Planning is required to ensure they do not become disasters. UNESCO's Disaster Risk Reduction programme harnesses science, technology and innovation, as well as traditional knowledge, to mitigate risks. It also works with city authorities to develop strategies to protect critical infrastructure such as schools and UNESCO-designated sites.*

*UNESCO-designated sites include cultural and natural World Heritage sites, geoparks and biosphere reserves, as well as sites protecting documents that appear on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register.

MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY (MIL) CITIES

New technologies have led to new information flows and media platforms. Cities are reaping the benefits of big data. Not all citizens have the media and information literacy knowledge, skills, and attitude to critically engage with information, media, and technology in their lives. MIL Cities enable city actors to creatively use MIL as a tool to address hate speech, disinformation, privacy, and to foster freedom of expression, access to information and dialogue.

INTERNATIONAL COALITION OF INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE CITIES – ICCAR

Racism, discrimination, xenophobia and exclusion are challenges in cities worldwide – a problems that have become more acute with increasingly diverse populations. Fortunately, many cities are taking action. ICCAR supports local decision-makers and service-providers, through its seven regional and national coalitions, to implement their Ten Point Action Plans ensuring equal opportunities in education, employment and cultural activities.

CITIES IN ACTION

INNOVATION AND CREATIVE THINKING

Dakar, the heritage-rich, cosmopolitan capital of Senegal, is using digital arts to explore the linkages between education, science and technology. Young artists in this UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts are working with UNESCO Creative Cities Network partners in Montreal to create projection mapping to enliven Dakar's vulnerable public spaces, fostering inclusion through creativity.

CLIMATE ACTION

Several coastal World Heritage cities in Southwest Asia, the Pacific and Africa have worked together to tackle the challenges associated with rising sea levels and changes in weather patterns. The joint capacity building and experience-sharing project incorporates education and inclusive policy making into Disaster Risk Reducation policies to preserve vibrant, historical centres for future generations.

LEARNING FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Tackling the risk of urban flooding is not only an issue for water engineers. The RainReady programme in Chicago raisies public awareness about the use of rainwater resources by engaging with civil society organizations. Meanwhile, the Egyptian Learning City of Aswan has implemented projects, including gardening and water-conservation programmes in schools, to educate children and their parents about water scarcity and solutions brought by traditional knowledge.

LIVING TOGETHER AND TRANSFORMING SOCIETIES

Almost one in five of Montevideo's residents are Afro-Uruguayan, and many face regular discrimination. To tackle this, the City of Montevideo, a member of the International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities, opened the Afro-Uruguayan House of Culture to use cultural practices, such as music, dance and folk art, to teach the local population about the the city's cultural diversity and rich history.