

## Adapting Cities for Climate Resilience

— LUXOR, EGYPT —

# Climate Adaptation for the Most Vulnerable People

The world stands at a crossroads in its efforts to hold global warming to non-catastrophic levels. Even if we start reducing greenhouse gas emissions significantly, global temperatures will continue to rise, causing severe climate and disaster impacts on cities. Between now and 2030, weather-related disasters will cost cities USD 314 billion annually if we fail to enhance resilience to climate shocks and stresses (UNISDR, 2015). The latest IPCC Working Group I report on **The Physical Science Basis of Climate Change**, launched in August 2021, stresses that there is no going back from some changes in the climate system.

Despite the increase in available finance for climate change, the climate adaptation finance gap is not closing. Globally, according to some estimates only 5 per cent of climate finance supports adaptation, with another small fraction of resources addressing multiple objectives (CPI, 2019). In 2015-2016, approximately USD 30 billion per year, under 10 per cent, translated into city-level adaptation (IIED, 2017). Often neglected are adaptation measures where it matters most: Investments to build the resilience of the most vulnerable to climate change in informal settlements, the "urban hotspots of vulnerability".

Globally, more than 880 million people live in slums in developing countries (UN-Habitat, 2016). Of these, an estimated 70% are vulnerable to one or more impacts of climate change (UN-Habitat, 2019). The heightened vulnerability is due to three underlying factors:

- (i) these communities are often built on fragile sites exposed to high risks of climate impacts such as steep slopes, coastlines or floodplains;
- (ii) the socio-economic characteristics of the residents, such as high levels of poverty and illiteracy mean that these communities have low capacity and resilience to withstand climate impacts; and
- (iii) the political and institutional marginalization of these communities, in many cases stemming from insecurity of tenure, informality and the absence of adequate basic services as well as non-recognition of informal settlements as part of the larger city fabric, often results in the absence of meaningful investments in risk-reducing services and infrastructure.

Amid this climate crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed deep inequalities in how people live in cities, and how cities serve their residents. A pro-poor approach to planning, building, and managing cities for climate action and pandemic recovery is needed, because both climate change and COVID-19 are additionally marginalizing the urban poor deepening urban poverty.

## Way forward

- Pro-poor climate action is mainstreamed in national and city climate policies, plans and commitments, and into the priorities and strategies of important parts of the global climate action & finance architecture respecting fundamental rights.
- Increased investment and financing for inclusive pro-poor adaptation projects in urban vulnerability hotspots, with a specific focus on small and medium sized cities in developing and transitioning countries, LDCs and SIDS.
- Enhanced capacity and a new way of working together among all levels of government and core partners such as local development partners, climate finance facilities, planning and infrastructure firms, non-government actors and scientists, to effectively build the resilience of the urban poor, and to access and mobilize investments.
- Since three quarters of the infrastructure that will exist in 2050 has yet to be built, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented us with the opportunity to plan, build, manage and power cities differently. The UN Secretary-General concluded that, the COVID-19 recovery efforts present “a generational opportunity to put climate action, clean energy and sustainable development at the heart of cities’ strategies and policies”. A call to invest in a green and sustainable recovery in cities.
- Upscaling the UN Habitat flagship programme, Resilient Settlements Settlements for the urban poor (RISE UP). The Flagship presents an integrative approach, engaging with multiple sectors, hazards and stakeholders to mobilize and coordinate large scale investments for urban adaptation and resilience-building across hotspots of vulnerability, globally. It has the three main objectives of (1) mainstreaming pro poor climate action in national and international policy and frameworks; (2) increasing investments for pro poor adaptation projects in urban vulnerability hotspots, and (3) enhancing capacity amongst key actors through training and engagement with a range of stakeholders from government to the private sector. The implication of investment is an opportunity to not just improve the urban fabric of cities, but to set a roadmap for tackling social and spatial inequality for more resilient and adaptive cities
- Vulnerable populations are at risk of “slipping through the cracks”, with less than 10% of international climate funds reaching local level activities. The ‘Building the Climate Resilience of the Urban Poor’ (BCRUP) programme uses community focused approaches to build the climate resilience of the poor living in slums and informal settlements in developing countries through the transformation of urban practices. This community level work also functions at a higher level, facilitating the integration of climate resilience of the urban poor into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), as well as other sectoral or integrated plans and policies.
- Global initiatives: The 1000 Cities Adapt Now global program aims to accelerate and scale climate adaptation in 1000 cities worldwide, with a focus on people and nature, vulnerable communities and resilience against climate events.

## Objective

This Roundtable will explore ways to finance, plan, build, and manage urban adaptation and climate resilience in the urban hotspots of vulnerability. Jointly with representatives from national and local governments, multilateral development banks, civil society and grassroots organizations, the Roundtable will offer a platform for discourse on:

- Accelerating climate finance to secure the breakthrough on adaptation and resilience for the urban hotspots of vulnerability.
- Vertically aligning ambitious and verifiable urban climate action in national and city policies that are responsive to the needs of the most vulnerable people.
- Seizing opportunities resulting from the COVID-19 recovery efforts to invest into a green, just, and resilient future.
- Voicing the urban vulnerable groups as stakeholders of the participatory resilience building process who contribute to verification of vulnerable data and the feasibility of resilient solutions.

## Potential Speakers

- City of Johannesburg, South Africa
- Ms Monika Kuffer, ITC, University of Twente
- African Development Bank
- Governor of Kisumu, Kenya
- Ms Alice Siragusa, Joint Research Centre – European Commission
- Mr David Doddman, Director of Human Settlements at the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)
- Ms Lauren Sorkin, Global Resilient Cities Network
- Ms Sheela Patel, Founder of SDI, Founder Director of SPARC

## Moderator

- UN-Habitat