Chapter 6:

UNDERSTANDING THE SDGs

| Sustainable Cities and Communities

What is SDG 11- Sustainable Cities and Communities

Making cities safe and sustainable means ensuring access to safe and affordable housing and upgrading slum settlements. It also involves investment in public transport, creating green public spaces, and improving urban planning and management in a way that is both participatory and inclusive.

A **sustainable city** reduces environmental impacts through its activities and promotes sustainable consumption and production patterns in accordance with its own territorial, geographical, social, economic, and cultural conditions. It is a city that is resilient to the impacts of climate change reducing the vulnerabilities of its population. The perfect sustainable city would be one that is self-sufficient in energy, manages waste to produce energy, has more sustainable transport, maintains green spaces and manages and uses its natural resources correctly. It would be a city that is built on the principles of ecology, education, and equality.

A **sustainable community** considers, and addresses, multiple human needs, not just one at the exclusion of all others. It is a place where people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives feel welcome and safe, where every group has a seat at the decision-making table, and where prosperity is shared. It takes a long-term perspective – _focusing on anticipating and adapting to change in both the present and future. A sustainable community manages its human, natural, and financial capital to meet current needs while ensuring that adequate resources are available for future generations.

SDG 11-Sustainable Cities and Communities is about making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. Today, more than half of the world's population live in cities. By 2050, an estimated 7 out of 10 people will likely live in urban areas. Cities are drivers of economic growth and contribute more than 80 per cent of global GDP.

However, they also account for more than 70 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions. If well-planned and managed, urban development can be sustainable and can generate inclusive prosperity. The deep inequalities exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and other cascading crises highlight the importance of sustainable urban development. Strengthening the preparedness and resilience of cities is crucial in responding to future crises.

Social Dimension of SDG11-Sustainable Cities and Communities

Sustainable cities and communities are a living space built to protect the environment, defend social justice, and promote inclusive economic development.

There is a strong link between the quality of life in cities and how cities draw on and manage the natural resources available to them. To date, the trend towards urbanization has been accompanied by increased pressure on the environment and accelerated demand for basic services, infrastructure, jobs, land, and affordable housing, particularly for the nearly 1 billion urban poor who live in informal settlements.

Due to their high concentration of people, infrastructures, housing and economic activities, cities are particularly vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters impacts. Building urban resilience is crucial to avoid human, social and economic losses while improving the sustainability of urbanization processes is needed to protect the environment and mitigate disaster risk and climate change.

Resource efficient cities combine greater productivity and innovation with lower costs and reduced environmental impacts, while providing increased opportunities for consumer choices and sustainable lifestyles.

SDG 11-Sustainable Cities and Communities and the transition to sustainable and resilient societies Cities are the heartbeat of most societies. They are complex systems that bring together diverse communities to work, live and play. Just as the battle against climate change will be won or lost in cities, so too will the battle for sustainable, resilient, equitable and just societies. By 2050, it is expected that 75 percent of the world's population will live in cities, up from more than 50 per cent presently. As cities grow, especially in the global South, it will be vital to create infrastructure and policies that ensure universal access to all urban services. As we see increasing impacts from climate change, the most sustainable, resilient societies will be those that have resource-efficient systems in place to provide essential services to their residents and that are prepared to withstand and adapt to climate-induced disasters. Achieving these two mandates will help to provide and maintain quality of life for the world's growing urban population in the face of extreme weather activity, resource shortages and population migration.

Everyone can help to make sure that we meet the Global Goals. These ten targets create action to make cities and communities sustainable:

- Inclusive and sustainable urbanization
  By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries.
- Safe and affordable housing
  By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services

and upgrade slums.

- Affordable and sustainable transport systems
  By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.
- Protect the world's cultural and natural heritage
  Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.

- Reduce the adverse effects of natural disasters
  By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations.
- Reduce the environmental impact of cities
  By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management.

- Provide access to safe and inclusive green and public spaces
  By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive, and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

- Strong national and regional development planning
  Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning.

- Implement policies for inclusion, resource efficiency and disaster risk reduction
  By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels.
- Support least developed countries in sustainable and resilient building
  Support least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, in building sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing local materials.

Education for SDG11-Sustainable Cities and Communities

Education is at the heart of sustainable development and the SDGs. For people to live sustainably, they need to learn. Certain key skills, values and attitudes are required to meet the challenges of people's daily lives and to contribute to the creation of sustainable societies. But it today's fast changing world where social, economic and political norms are constantly being reshaped, people also need to re-evaluate and refresh their learning continuously throughout their lives. Lifelong learning can be a critical resource in supporting individuals and communities to achieve sustainable social and economic advancement. A fundamental change is needed in the way we think about education's role in global development, because it has a catalytic impact on the well-being of individuals and the future of our planet. Now, more than ever, education has a responsibility to be in gear with 21st century challenges and aspirations and foster the right types of values and skills that will lead to sustainable and inclusive growth, and peaceful living together.

Education can, and must, contribute to a new vision of sustainable global development.

Quality education provides the appropriate tools to ensure the monitoring of waste management and air quality. It prepares communities to manage their resources properly and tackle climate

change. Through participatory approaches, communities are engaged in discussions and in planning activities for the improvement of their own cities.

The understanding of basic human needs is deepened at this stage, as well as the knowledge of how these are addressed in local urban, peri-urban, and rural settlements. On this basis, students can contextualize these human needs within the needs of the greater surrounding eco-systems and become more interested in and responsible for protecting their immediate environment.

The role of NGOs

Educators and NGO activists working with adults at risk of exclusion play a crucial role in promoting the sustainable cities and communities SDG. Through our activities we can support our beneficiaries and advocate for changes in our communities, so that they become more livable for all. Here are some strategies as for how we can do that:

- Promote community engagement and participation in local decision-making processes related to urban planning and development. Encourage community members to share their views and ideas for creating sustainable and livable communities

- Advocate for policies and regulations that support sustainable urban development and infrastructure, such as promoting energy-efficient buildings, public transportation, green spaces, and waste reduction initiatives.

- Develop and implement programs that promote sustainable living practices, such as recycling and composting, water conservation, and eco-friendly transportation options.

- Foster partnerships between community organizations, government agencies, and private sector stakeholders to support sustainable urban development initiatives.

- Use technology and data to monitor and evaluate the impact of urban development initiatives on the environment and communities, and use this information to make data-driven decisions and improve sustainability outcomes.

- Provide education and awareness-raising initiatives to promote sustainable behaviors and practices among residents and businesses, including information on energy conservation,

waste reduction, and sustainable transportation options.

• Support the development of green infrastructure, such as green roofs, rain gardens, and permeable pavements, to reduce the impact of urbanization on natural resources and improve urban resiliency.

Good practices

Organizations are already working on building traction and strong foundations in reaching the SDGs. A list of NGOs that are focused on achieving the SDG11 goals is the following:

• C40 is a network of the world's megacities committed to addressing climate change. It rings together a unique set of assets and creates a shared sense of purpose. C40 offers cities an effective forum where they can collaborate, share knowledge and drive meaningful, measurable and sustainable action on climate change.

• IUFN is a sustainable food system for city regions international hub, bringing together international research community and local authorities around local food challenges.

• 100RC supports the adoption and incorporation of a view of resilience that includes not just the shocks— earthquakes, fires, floods, etc.—but also the stresses that weaken the fabric of a city on a day to day or cyclical basis.

• ICLEI Helps members to make their cities and regions sustainable, low-carbon, resilient, eco-mobile, biodiverse, resource-efficient and productive, healthy and happy, with a green economy and smart infrastructure.

Task 1: Reflections about your community

1. Find a quiet and comfortable space where you can reflect on your personal experiences living in urban environments. Consider setting aside 30-45 minutes for this task.
2. Take some time to reflect on your experiences living in urban environments. Think about the environmental and social challenges that you have observed or experienced. Consider questions such as:

   - What environmental challenges have you observed or experienced in urban environments?

   - How have social factors, such as income inequality or discrimination, affected your experiences in urban environments?

   - Have you noticed any patterns or trends in the environmental and social challenges that you have observed or experienced in urban environments?
3. Once you have reflected on your experiences, consider how these challenges align with the Sustainable Cities and Communities SDG. This SDG seeks to create cities that are sustainable, inclusive, and resilient. Consider how the environmental and social challenges you have identified align with this goal. You may want to consider questions such as:
   - How do the environmental and social challenges you have identified contribute to unsustainable or exclusionary urban development?

   - What changes or improvements could be made to address these challenges and promote sustainable and inclusive urban development?

   - How can you, as an educator working with adults at risk of exclusion, help to promote sustainable and inclusive urban development?
4. Write down your reflections and share it with your team to brainstorm what changes you could implement in the organization you are working at to contribute to the achievement of the sustainable cities and communities SDG.

Task 2: Best practices research

1. Identify a sustainable urban development initiative in your community or in another community. This could be a program, project, policy, or initiative that promotes sustainable living, reduces environmental impact, or addresses social inequalities in urban areas.
2. Conduct research on the initiative using a variety of sources, such as government websites, news articles, academic journals, and community organizations. Pay attention to factors such as the initiative's impact on the environment, community engagement and participation, and its effectiveness in achieving sustainability goals.
3. Write a short report or create a presentation summarizing your findings. Be sure to include an overview of the initiative, its sustainability goals, the methods used to achieve those goals, and the impact of the initiative on the environment and the community. Also, include your thoughts on the initiative's strengths and weaknesses and recommendations for improvement.

Task 3: Planning the change

1. Choose a sustainability issue in your community that you care about, such as air pollution, waste management, or sustainable transportation.
2. Develop an action plan to address the issue. This plan should include steps to raise awareness, engage the community, and advocate for policy change. Consider strategies such as organizing community events, creating social media campaigns, and reaching out to local

government representatives.

3. **Implement your action plan** and evaluate its impact. Track the effectiveness of your strategies and adjust your approach as needed. Be sure to document your progress and any challenges you faced.

4. **Reflect on what you** learned from the experience and share your insights with your colleagues. Consider questions such as:
   - What worked well?

   - What challenges did you face?

   - What did you learn about sustainability and community engagement?

   - How could you apply these insights in your work as an educator?

Workshop: Sustainable Cities for All

Objectives:
- Understand the importance of sustainable cities and the role they play in achieving the SDGs.

- Identifying strategies for promoting inclusivity in urban environments

- Developing a plan for community action

Materials:
- Handouts with the definition and group activity instructions

- Flipchart paper and markers for group discussions and activities

- Post-its and markers for small group activity

Step by step instructions

1. Introduction (20 min)
   - Provide participants with the definition of the SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities (see Handout 1)

   - Have an opening discussion on the importance of cities and their impact on residents, focusing on the benefits of sustainable cities
2. Group work (45min)
   - Divide participants into small groups and ask them to prepare a small presentation on the main challenges they see in their cities and possible strategies to mitigate the identified problems (see Handout 2 for guiding questions)

   - Ask each group to present their findings
3. Developing an action plan (1 h 30 min)
   - Divide participants in small groups again and ask them to plan a small community action (see Handout two for guiding questions)

   - Ask each group to present their ideas
4. Summary (10 min)
   - Have a summarizing discussion focusing on what participants have learned and how they are planning to use their new competences in their daily lives

Handout 1: SDG 11 definition

SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities is one of the 17 goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. SDG 11 aims to "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable."

The goal has a number of targets, including:

1. Ensuring access to safe and affordable housing for all
2. Providing access to safe, affordable, and sustainable transport systems for all
3. Improving urban planning and management in a way that is participatory, integrated, and sustainable
4. Strengthening efforts to protect and safeguard cultural and natural heritage
5. Reducing the number of people affected by disasters and increasing resilience to disasters in urban areas
6. Reducing the environmental impact of cities and promoting sustainable resource use and consumption
7. Ensuring universal access to green and public spaces
8. Providing access to basic services and infrastructure for all, particularly those living in slums and informal settlements.

Handout 2: Guiding questions for the group work

1. What are the biggest challenges that you face in your daily life in the city?
2. What are some of the physical barriers that prevent you from accessing basic services and resources such as housing, transportation, healthcare, and education?
3. What are the social and economic barriers that you face in the city?
4. How do these barriers affect your ability to participate in social, cultural, and economic activities in the city?
5. Are there any cultural or linguistic barriers that prevent you from accessing important information and services in the city?
6. How does the lack of affordable housing affect your ability to live in the city?
7. What are the environmental challenges that you face in the city, such as pollution or lack of access to green spaces?
8. How do these challenges affect your health and well-being?
9. How do you feel about the safety of your community and what can be done to improve it?
10. How can the city be more inclusive of all residents, including those at risk of exclusion?

Handout 3: Developing the action plan

1. Identify the problem:

   • What are the most pressing issues related to sustainable cities and communities that you see in your local community?

   • What are some specific problems that you would like to address through your community action?

2. Set goals and objectives:

   • What are the specific goals and objectives of your community action?

   • How will you measure the success of your action?

3. Develop an action plan:

- What specific steps will you take to achieve your goals and objectives?

- Who will be responsible for each step?

- What resources will you need?

- What is the timeline for completing each step?

4. dentify potential partners:

- Who are the key stakeholders who can support your community action?

- How can you engage them in your effort?

- How can you build partnerships to leverage resources and expertise?

5. Plan for sustainability:

- How can you ensure that your community action has a lasting impact?

- What measures can you take to ensure that your action is sustainable over the long term?

6. Evaluate and adjust:

- How will you evaluate the effectiveness of your community action?

- What adjustments might you need to make to ensure its success?