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Accelerating SDGs Implementation Future Policy Roadmap

REPORT

Cities for All: Urban Innovation for Inclusive, Resilient and Sustainable Cities



Cities for All: Urban Innovation for Inclusive, Resilient, and Sustainable Cities

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Executive Summary

Cities in the UAE and around the world are facing dramatic demographic, political, and economic shifts. These shifts have the potential to leave people with disabilities and older persons behind. This paper provides a rapid assessment of equitable urban development and illustrates how leading cities around the world can leverage the Sustainable Development Goals, the New Urban Agenda and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to build innovative, resilient and inclusive cities for all. The paper provides recommendations on how to mainstream universal accessibility into all aspects of urban development including in policy, planning and design.

Overview of the Inclusion Imperative

Inclusion in the Urban Century

Over the next 30 years, cities will shape virtually every aspect of global development, including the manner in which innovative breakthroughs in housing, health, employment and education implemented are implemented or ignored. The urban century currently risks leaving people with disabilities and older persons behind. Estimates by the World Bank indicate that there are between 400-600 million urban citizens who live with disabilities. This number is set to increase dramatically by 2050 when 66% of the global population will be living in cities. Of the projected increase of 2.5 billion urban dwellers,¹ 15-20% are expected to be persons with disabilities.² Well-planned cities are leveraging technology and principles of universal design to dramatically improve the social and economic outcomes for individuals with a range of disabilities, their families, and the larger communities in which they participate. Smart Cities that fail to take into consideration disability, aging and the diversity of human experiences risk leaving out significant portion of the population may have difficulty seeing, hearing, or moving around without assistance.

A growing body of research shows the most pressing issue faced by millions of persons with disabilities worldwide is not their disability but rather social exclusion. Poor planning, unregulated urban development, and the lack of access to accessible information communications technologies have devastating consequences for persons with disabilities. According to the United Nations CRPD Committee, “Without access to the physical environment, to transportation... and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, persons with disabilities would not have equal opportunities for participation in their

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1. The proportion of the world’s urban population is expected to increase to approximately 57% by 2050. African Development Bank, <http://www.afdb.org/en/blogs/afdb-championing-inclusive-growth-across-africa/post/urbanization-in-africa-10143/>.
 2. Approximately 90% of this increase will be concentrated in African and Asian cities like Shenzhen, Karachi, Lagos, Guangzhou, Dhaka, Jakarta, and many others that have urbanized at a rate of 40-60% between 2000-2010

respective societies.”³ The committee also states that “Accessibility is a precondition for persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully and equally in society.”⁴

Cities are under immense pressure to ensure that the urban digital and physical infrastructure is inclusive and responds to the needs of marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities and older persons. What steps can urban planners, development practitioners, the technology industry and scholars take to promote a better understanding of digital and physical accessibility in cities?

This policy brief reviews the global status of disability rights in urban development and offers a set of recommendations to ensure that local city initiatives respond to the needs of persons with disabilities and older persons. The brief offers technical and policy recommendations derived from extensive research on disability-inclusive urban policy. The recommendations provide practical steps and guide immediate measures to (1) account for and report progress on the rights of persons with disabilities in urban planning, urban infrastructure, digital services, and development, and (2) ensure that key issues in the Sustainable Development Goals such as accessibility and equality, truly address the needs of everybody, including persons with disabilities.

The long-standing neglect, and marginalization of urbanites with disabilities will continue unabated unless immediate and bold measures are taken.

Disability in Global Development

Globally, more than half of all people with disabilities now live in towns and cities. By 2030, this number is estimated to swell to between 750,000 - 1 billion.⁵ Persons with disabilities face digital and physical barriers such as inaccessible websites or apps that provide city services, as well as the absence of lifts in multi-floor buildings. In many cities, the lack of

3. CRPD/C/GC/2

4. The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination guarantees everyone the right of access to any place or service intended for use by the general public, such as transport, hotels, restaurants, cafes, theatres and parks (art. 5 (f)). Thus, a precedent has been established in the international human rights legal framework for viewing the right to access as a right per se.

5. Utilizing 5 billion urban dwellers, we calculated that 15-20% of these would be persons with disabilities. Data sources derived from WHO World Disability Report (2011) and “Urbanization | UNFPA - United Nations Population Fund.” Accessed May 3, 2015. <http://www.unfpa.org/urbanization>.

enforceable accessibility standards, the lack of strict regulations, and the lack of training, tools, and guiding documents impede progress. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) includes digital and physical accessibility as key underlying principles — a vital precondition for the effective and equal enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of persons with disabilities. Both digital and physical accessibility should be viewed not only in the context of equality and non-discrimination, but also as an integral part of the sustainable development agenda.⁶

The international community, in the Outcome Document of the UN High Level Meeting on Disability and Development, reaffirmed its commitment to advancing a disability-inclusive development agenda, emphasizing among other issues, the importance of accessibility and inclusion for persons with disabilities in urban development contexts.⁷ As the international community implements the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is important to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, and sustainable. Forms of inclusion are explicitly mentioned in SDG No.11, stating that cities should be ‘inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable’. This goal should engage universal design principles and encourage cities to develop regulations and building codes that comply with the principle of universal design.⁸ Social inclusion is a central aspect of a global, and increasingly urbanized, form of development.

In addition to the SDGs, the principles of disability-inclusive urban development are well elaborated in the New Urban Agenda. The New Urban Agenda and the SDGs have the potential to transform geographies of exclusion, dependence, isolation, and despair⁹ into thriving active communities that according to Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen, afford disabled citizens the “capabilities to live the type of lives they have reason to value.”¹⁰ By creating a barrier-removal plan or a plan for accessibility cities, town and villages can implement the CRPD and other internationally adopted agreements concerning the human rights of people with disabilities.¹¹

6. CRPD/C/GC/2

7. General Assembly Resolution 68/3.

8. See targets 11.2 ‘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’ and 11.7, ‘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’.

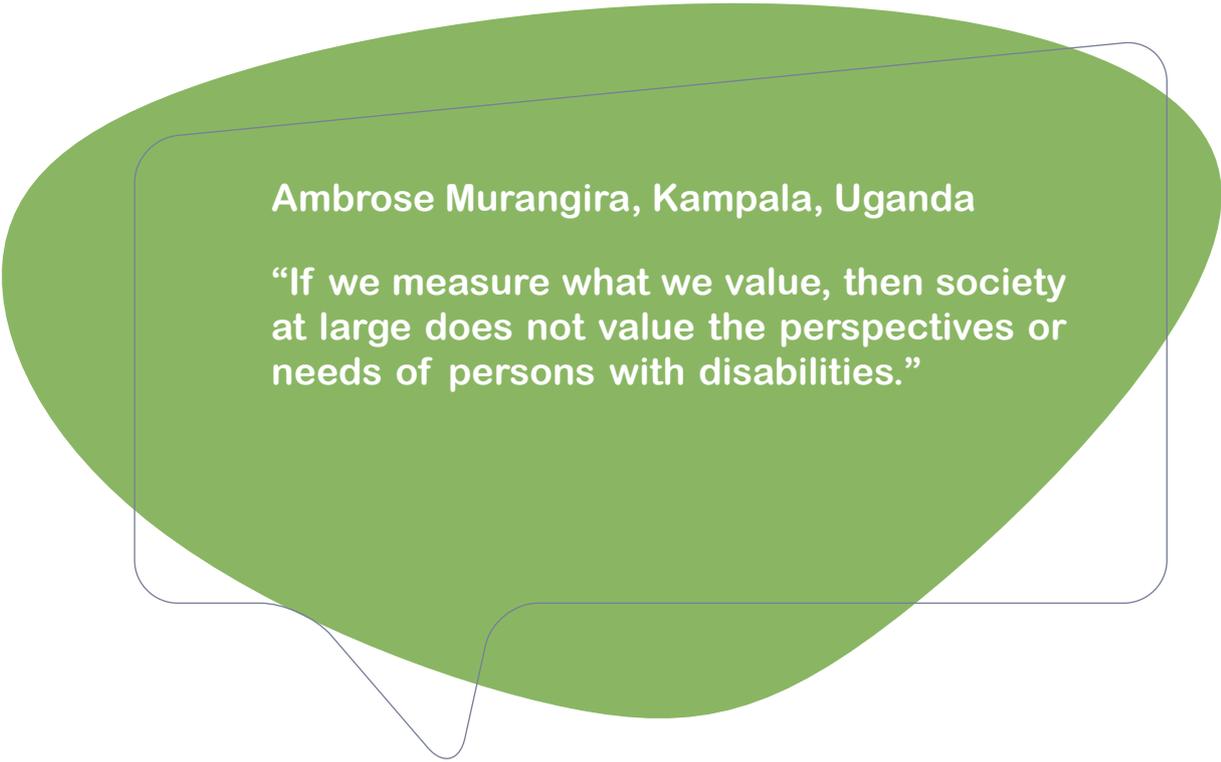
9. Likewise, in developed countries, rapid urbanization can result segregation ordinances, privatized spaces, and exclusions of undesirable or destabilizing social groups. Cities will increasingly be looking for ways to turn the tide on increasing concentrations of poverty, inequality, and social marginalization.

10. Amartya Sen. 1999.

11. The United Nations, and other organizations such as the World Bank, UNICEF, UNDP, WHO, UNDESA have undertaken important work in the area of disability-inclusive development.

Cities and human settlements should be ‘inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable’ and targets should explicitly state that universal design principles must be at the center of urban development regulations and building codes.

Generating a Commitment to Inclusive, Innovative Urban Infrastructure



Ambrose Murangira, Kampala, Uganda

“If we measure what we value, then society at large does not value the perspectives or needs of persons with disabilities.”

Cities are at the epicenter of the global sustainable development agenda; how technology is leveraged in cities will determine the character of our future cities and towns. The international community affirmed to change the current status quo and guide a smarter and more inclusive future for cities. The Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Development (Habitat III) and the meetings that led up to the conference provided a critical opportunity for the disability community to help shape a smarter and more inclusive urban future. Habitat III defined cities as the principle drivers of sustainable development, and vanguards for addressing global development challenges. Upcoming National Urban Forums and the 10th World Urban Forum in Abu Dhabi in 2020 have the potential to enrich national reports and share perspectives on disability-inclusive development.¹² These Forums

12. At the sixth session of the World Urban Forum (Naples, September 2012), WUC partners endorsed and launched the ‘Manifesto for Cities – The Urban Future We Want’ a statement about the urgency to address urbanization challenges and calling for an inclusive partners process for the Habitat III Conference. This statement failed to mention disability as a specific area of focus.

contribute to building a knowledge base and provide a forum for policy debate and advocacy activities supporting the national preparations. These programs must explicitly show how cities are making concrete efforts to respond to the needs of people with disabilities and older persons.

Mohammed Loutfy, Beirut, Lebanon

“We should unite with all stakeholders to anchor disability inclusion into the New Urban Sustainable Development Agenda.”

Assessing Specific Challenges

Multidimensional and Cross Sectional Analysis is Needed

The World Report on Disability Summary, published in 2011 by the World Health Organization and the World Bank within the framework of the largest consultation on disability to date and with active involvement of hundreds of professionals in the field of disability, stresses that the built environment, transport systems, and information and communication are often inaccessible to persons with disabilities (p. 10).

Poorly planned cities create a series of interconnected barriers, limiting mobility options, increase environmental hazards, and ultimately preventing persons with disabilities from enjoying their right to accessible housing. Such barriers put persons with disabilities in a precarious, often challenging position, whereby the rights to education, employment and security of tenure are denied. Urban Centers in all developing nations struggle to control the expansion of informal and inaccessible housing, and unplanned growth, which often results in housing that has limited access to latrines, water and sanitation, electricity and other energy sources, and affordable transportation. Many informal developments increase the marginalization of resident populations by crowding them together, restricting their mobility, and consequently depriving persons with disabilities wellbeing, dignity, and the

benefits of social and economic development on an equal basis with others. The lack of accessibility requirements in a city's procurement policy further excludes large portions of the population from benefiting equally from city services.

Capability enhancing communities are increasingly offering innovative approaches to long-standing urban challenges.

Growing a Base for Empirical Evidence

The following insights have emerged from limited but emerging literature on disability, inclusion, and urban development:

- Cities can promote innovation and/or fragmentation of disability policy.
- Urban centers can potentially create opportunities for persons with disabilities or additional barriers for them.
- The experience of persons with disabilities in urban environments varies widely not only with respect to local conditions, but also in terms of the intersecting identities of people with disabilities within the borders of the same municipality.

Cities Promote Innovation for, but also the Fragmentation of National Disability Policy

Disability inclusion policies vary greatly across countries, within countries, and between cities. For example, municipal policy innovations have allowed persons with disabilities to enjoy a greater degree of autonomy and individual choice. Such innovations can occur in states undergoing administrative decentralization, where greater responsibility in implementing policies are given to local governments which are, in turn, empowered to test innovative ideas and formulate policies in close collaboration with local groups.¹³ In Yerevan, the city architect formed a partnership with disability rights groups, whereby they worked together to identify, prioritize, and monitor the construction of hundreds of sloped curb

13. Although support for decentralization has grown so has the proliferation of short-term policies. As such urban interventions promoting inclusion fall short with technical or financial support to effectively implement comprehensive transformations on the local level.

cuts in the historic city center. This initiative was successful, with the end result that it is now being replicated to address bus stops and the provision of other municipal services. Such responsive and collaborative approaches to broader social issues are needed.¹⁴ But, decentralized policies can also lead to inequalities and exclusions on the basis of residence, where opportunities available in one city or human settlement are not available in others within the same national context.

In China, national and local employment policies encourage development of competitive market, where municipal governments incentivized and supported businesses to include persons with disabilities through “welfare production” policies that provide tax breaks to businesses that employ significant numbers of persons with disabilities. Within ten years, this policy quadrupled the number of persons with disabilities employed. However, local markets’ integration into the global economy determined the availability and distribution of jobs. For example, in one of China’s fastest growing cities, 90% of persons with disabilities eligible for jobs were employed, but in an equally sized city that had been much less successful in supporting competitive enterprises, fewer than 50% of those eligible have been integrated into the workplace.¹⁵ Thus, the decentralization of disability employment policies has meant that opportunities vary widely for persons with disabilities in China on the basis of municipal residence, despite persons with disabilities in China living under the same national government.

Similar to China, Australia divides responsibilities between national, state (regional), and municipal governments. Medical care is national, education is state, and respite care is local.¹⁶ Likewise, in India the provision of disability services is supposed to be coordinated between agencies at different scales. Oftentimes this coordination fails, duplicating efforts in certain sectors such as medical care, and neglecting efforts to promote independent living. The fragmentation of disability policy between administrative units creates both challenges and opportunities in policy design, implementation, and monitoring efforts. In some cases, it provides the opportunity for innovation at the local level and allows local governments to tailor policies to their distinct local populations. However, it can also create large inconsistencies in the protection and provision of rights and benefits on the basis of residence.

Cities can create opportunities, but also barriers

Cities are forums for citizen engagement with political, economic, and social development; they can also force modernization efforts to be more inclusive. In Egypt, in 2010, persons

14. Pineda, Victor Santiago. “Enabling Justice: Spatializing Disability in the Built Environment.” *Critical Planning Journal* 15, no. Summer 2008: 111–23. and Pineda, Victor Santiago. “The Capability Model of Disability: Assessing the Success of the UAE Federal Law No. 29 of 2006.” University of California Los Angeles, 2010.

15. Ibid.

16. Stevens, Carolyn S. “Disability, Caregiving and Interpellation: Migrant and Non-Migrant Families of Children with Disabilities in Urban Australia.” *Disability & Society* 25, no. 7 (2010): 783–96.

with disabilities demanded more equitable distribution of jobs, housing, and income support. By 2011, they expanded their demands by using a modernization frame, ensuring the right to participate in elections by demanding that voting places be made accessible, and by asserting their right to independence through demands for modernizing transportation systems to be made accessible.¹⁷

Cities are often at the forefront of digital transformation or modernization in comparison to their surrounding areas. This development, however, can also have negative consequences for persons with disabilities. In New York City the deployment of Link NYC public wifi-fi hubs created a challenge for blind users as accessibility features were not turned on the touchscreen displays. Cuenca, Ecuador, the modernization of the bus system created barriers to access rather than remove them. New buses intended to be more efficient through the installation of turnstiles made it difficult for many persons with disabilities to board.¹⁸ This example supports the findings of a comparative study between rural and urban persons with disabilities in South Africa. While persons with disabilities living in South African cities were less likely to experience barriers rooted in negative social attitudes towards persons with disabilities, they were much more likely to experience barriers resultant of inaccessible products and technology they used on a daily basis.¹⁹ For this reason, it is vital that cities and states develop technical standards, inspection regimes, and penalties that ensure the deployment of barrier-free digital and physical infrastructure, such as in the deployment of accessibility features in apps for urban transit, as China has recently done.²⁰ In Turkey, the local government Istanbul has moved swiftly in recent years to establish new institutions and implement new policies for persons with disabilities. These changes have been top-down and framed by traditional notions of charity and benevolence, rather than resulting from the engagement of disabled residents in defining their priorities.²¹

Cities are often at the forefront of modernization in comparison to their surrounding areas. This development, however, can have negative consequences for persons with disabilities.

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17. Barnartt, Sharon N. "The Arab Spring Protests and Concurrent Disability Protests: Social Movement Spillover or Spurious Relationship?" *Studies in Social Justice* 8, no. 1 (2014): 67–78.
 18. Rattray, Nicholas A. "Contesting Urban Space and Disability in Highland Ecuador." *City & Society* 25, no. 1 (2013): 25–46.
 19. Maart, S., A. H. Eide, J. Jelsma, M. E. Loeb, and M. Ka Toni. "Environmental Barriers Experienced by Urban and Rural Disabled People in South Africa." *Disability & Society* 22, no. 4 (2007): 357–69.
 20. Pan, Haixiao. "Implementing Sustainable Urban Travel Policies in China," 2011. http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/transport/implementing-sustainable-urban-travel-policies-in-china_5kg9mq40ldvg-en.
 21. Bezmez, Dikmen. "Urban Citizenship, the Right to the City and Politics of Disability in Istanbul." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37, no. 1 (2013): 93–114. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2427.2012.01190.x.

Della Leonor, Roxas City, Philippines

We don't need more laws. We need to implement the laws we have... My desire for the cities of the future is that we Persons with Disability will no longer demand accessibility but rather that it is readily available.

Effective solutions are inhibited by policy fragmentation, poor accountability, and lack of political will. Legal reforms can create new incentives elevating accessibility and stimulating new investments in infrastructure, and innovations in design. In addition, the lack of a cohesive disability policy at the local and national level limits the impact of existing efforts to include accessibility requirements in planning, policy, and design. This is compounded by gaps in local leadership, budget allocation, local capacity, lack of engagement with targeted groups, and by limiting beliefs about persons with disabilities.

Voluntary measures towards accessibility, however, will not bring needed changes. Mandatory regulation is necessary to institutionalize urban transformation. For example, Australia set a goal that by 2020 all new housing stock will meet a basic level of visitability, or the capacity for a dwelling to facilitate inclusion and participation of all people in family and community activities. A study of Australia's voluntary national guidelines on visitability showed that voluntary practices failed to ensure the right of adequate housing. Without the legal mandate, Australia will fail to reach its accessible housing targets.

22. Ward, Margaret, and Jill Franz. "The Provision of Visitable Housing in Australia: Down to the Detail." *Social Inclusion* 3, no. 2 (2015): 31–43.

Juan Angel De Gouveia, Caracas, Venezuela

“Our needs and aspirations as urban or rural citizens are often overlooked by our national or local governments. We are invisible and our economic, social, or cultural contributions too often unrealized due to unnecessary physical or social barriers. Rights-based development needs substantial coordination, financing, and leadership. Mayors, State Governors, Parliamentarians, need to understand the challenges in our cities, and the ways they have failed us.”

Cities that are successfully implementing programs are still few and far between. For example, in Kampala, disability-inclusive laws protect the rights of persons with disabilities and people with disabilities participate in the public policy process, but too often local administrative agencies lack the capacity to deliver services and implement laws. Likewise in Lima, Peru laws and public attitudes match international norms, but low political will and administrative and coordinating failures limit progress. In other cases, a city may need to develop policies programs to bolster efforts in all five sectors. Very few governments can do this successfully without the active engagement of civil society or the private sector.

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Governments must revolutionize their approach to urban development and unite broad-based local coalitions for inclusion that mandate local disability rights groups, urban planners, architects, policy makers, and other groups to jointly develop detailed technical guidance for inclusive urban development efforts, and develop a coalition to overhaul existing approaches.

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Recommendations for Global Reporting

The Rio+20 outcome document and subsequent meetings encourage member states to take urgent steps to improve the quality, coverage and availability of disaggregated data to ensure that persons with disabilities were not left behind. In addition, to comply with national implementation and monitoring of the SDGs and the CRPD, States must maintain, strengthen, designate or establish a framework, with one or more independent mechanisms to monitor efforts at all levels of government.

To monitor the implementation of the SDGs, it will be important to improve the availability of and access to data and statistics disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, and disability to support the monitoring of the implementation of the SDGs. States parties must actively work to identify and address the barriers faced by persons with disabilities in exercising their rights.²³

To support global reporting efforts, this paper offers five interrelated criteria or pillars for evaluation and assessment of inclusive urban development. With the following evaluative criteria, which help structure data collection efforts and help city managers determine concrete steps needed to ensure that local efforts are aligned to international normative framework, member states can easily conduct rapid assessments at the level of a neighborhood, city, or state or nation.

1. Legislative Measures
2. Executive and Budgetary Support
3. Administrative and Coordinating Capacity
4. Attitudes towards PWDs in urban life
5. Participation of PWDs in urban development

23. CRPD Article 31

Figure 1: Urban Policy Framework based on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities can be used to conduct rapid assessments of inclusive urban development.



1) **Legislative Measures:** States parties must monitor legal or regulatory changes, policies or reforms at various levels of government, from local ordinances to national laws. Furthermore, states and local municipalities must document the local level laws to guide implementation of accessibility and disability-related policies. By looking at legislative measures, local governments can work to address non-compliance.

2) **Executive and budgetary support:** States parties develop and implement urban policy under varying types of political and financial structures. Public commitments, financial or budgetary appropriations should be continuously assessed by reviewing government reports, official press releases or from expert interviews with key stakeholders. Strategies should be developed to remove institutional barriers and secure political and financial commitments.

3) **Administrative and coordinating capacity:** Local agencies often lack institutional capacity and capable human resources to implement substantive changes. Governments must conduct stakeholder mapping to better understand possible deficits in administrative and coordinating capacity, and determine if the responsible parties are effectively working across sectors and scales. By looking closely at this pillar, program fragmentation and overlap can be avoided.

4) **Participation of targeted group:** States parties must report on the level of participation of targeted beneficiaries in urban development. States parties should also report on the number of persons with disabilities in leadership positions, as well as the quality and types of engagements between local governments and disabled persons organization.

5) **Awareness of needs and attitudes towards targeted group:** States parties must report on their efforts to promote and monitor awareness raising efforts. States can report on the metrics they use to assess communication and outreach initiatives (social media and traditional media). In addition, states parties should continuously study the prevalence of biases and negative attitudes towards people with disabilities, which can inhibit progress from being made.

For all the data collection efforts listed above, states must ensure strong, multi-stakeholder efforts that promote sustained collaboration, information sharing and knowledge exchange between all disability and development actors. Strong coordination of data collection efforts can help ensure that public sector efforts generate the desired changes.

Recommendations for an Inclusive Urban Future

National and local governments must ensure all elements of the built environment, including land use, transportation, housing, energy, and infrastructure, work together to provide accessible, and affordable places for living, working, and recreation, with a high quality of life that meets the livelihood needs of all citizens and groups. The Sustainable Development Goals require that people with disabilities and older persons benefit from development plans on an equal basis with others. In addition, the 2030 agenda calls for innovative partnerships (SDG 17) and requires that the planning process actively involves all segments of the community and includes persons with various types of disabilities in analyzing issues, generating visions, developing plans, and monitoring outcomes.

The following recommendations can help realize this goal:

I. Recommendations to Ensure Access in the Built Environment

1.1 Plan for Smart and Holistic Multimodal Transportation

A smart multimodal transportation system allows people to use a variety of transportation modes, including walking, biking, and other mobility devices (e.g., wheelchairs), and access the transit services and information digitally where possible. Such a system reduces dependence on automobiles, offers more choice, and encourages more active forms of personal transportation, improving health outcomes and increasing the mobility of those who are unable or unwilling to drive. Fewer cars on the road also translate to reduced air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions with associated health and environmental benefits.

1.2 Plan for Transit Oriented Development

Transit-oriented development (TOD) is characterized by a concentration of higher density mixed use development around transit stations and along transit lines to encourage transit use and pedestrian activity. TOD allows communities to focus new residential and commercial development in areas that are well-connected to public transit. This enables residents to more easily use transit service, which can reduce vehicle-miles traveled and fossil fuels consumed and associated pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. It can also reduce the need for personal automobile ownership, resulting in a decreased need for parking spaces and other automobile-oriented infrastructure.

1.3 Provide Complete Streets Serving Multiple Functions

Complete streets are designed and operated with all users in mind—including motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit riders (where applicable) of all ages and abilities—to support an accessible and affordable multi-modal transportation system. A complete street network is one that safely and conveniently accommodates all users and desired functions, though this does not mean that all modes or functions will be equally prioritized on any given street segment. Streets that serve multiple functions can accommodate travel, social interaction, and commerce, to provide for more vibrant neighborhoods and more livable communities.

1.4 Plan for Mixed Land-use Patterns that are Walkable and Bikeable

Mixed land-use patterns are characterized by residential and nonresidential land uses located in close proximity to one another. Incorporating safe, convenient, smart, accessible, and attractive design features (e.g., sidewalks with sensors, bike street furniture, bicycle sharing, street trees, public wi-fi), mixed land uses and providing housing in close proximity to everyday destinations (e.g., shops, civic places, workplaces) can increase walking and biking and increase personal mobility.

1.5 Prioritize Access with Infill Development

Infill development is characterized by development or redevelopment of undeveloped or underutilized parcels of land in otherwise built-up areas, which are usually served by or have ready access to existing infrastructure and services. Ensure all new construction incorporate national or ISO accessibility standards.

1.6 Encourage Design Standards Appropriate to the Community Context.

Design standards are specific criteria and requirements for the form, function and appearance of development within a physical (neighborhood, corridor, special district, or jurisdiction as a whole) or digital space (an app, a website). These standards serve to improve accessibility or protect the function and aesthetic appeal of a community or neighborhood. Design standards typically address building placement, building massing and materials, and the location and appearance of elements (such as landscaping, signage, and street furniture), which should have accessibility considerations for people with disabilities. Access considerations can encourage development that is compatible with the community context and that enhances sense of place. While accessible design standards will not be specified in a comprehensive city-wide master plan, the plan can establish the direction and objectives that detailed accessibility standards should achieve.

1.7 Provide Accessible and Smart Public Facilities and Spaces

Public facilities play an important role in every city, and they should be able to accommodate persons of all ages and abilities. Public facilities including digital spaces such as online forums, social media, websites, apps, as well as schools, parks, civic or community centers, public safety facilities, arts and cultural facilities, recreational facilities, plazas, should be accessible to all regardless if they have difficulty seeing, hearing or speaking. They should be located and designed to be safe, served by different transportation modes, and accessible to visitors with mobility impairments.

1.8 Conserve and Enhance Historic Resources

Historic resources are buildings, sites, landmarks, or districts with exceptional value or quality for illustrating or interpreting the cultural heritage of a city. It is important to address digital accessibility in accessing information, as well as ensuring the conservation and enhancement efforts improve accessibility as much as possible. Examples of how to do this effectively exist.

1.9 Implement Accessibility Standards into Green Building Design and Energy Conservation

A green building is characterized by design features that, if used as intended, will minimize the environmental impacts of the building over the course of its lifespan. In addition, social sustainability including principles of Universal Design should be considered in parallel to environmental impact assessment. This reduces the need to retrofit in the future and supports change of behavior that is more accepting of accessibility.

II. Recommendations to Ensure Equity

2.1 Plan for Improved Health and Safety for At-risk Populations

An at-risk population is characterized by vulnerability to health or safety impacts through factors such as race or ethnicity, socioeconomic status, geography, gender, age, behavior, or disability status. These populations may have additional needs before, during, and after a destabilizing event such as a natural or human-made disaster or period of extreme weather, or throughout an indefinite period of localized instability related to an economic downturn or a period of social turmoil. At-risk populations include children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, those living in institutionalized settings, those with limited language proficiency, and those who are transportation disadvantaged.

2.2 Provide a Range of Housing Types

A range of housing types is characterized by the presence of residential units of different sizes, configurations, tenures, and price points located in buildings of different sizes.

2.3 Provide Accessible and Quality Public Services, Facilities, and Health Care to Minority and Low-income Neighborhoods

A public service is a performed for the benefit of the people who live in (and sometimes those who visit) the jurisdiction. A public facility is any building or property—such as a library, park, or community center—owned, leased, or funded by a public entity. Public services, facilities, and health care should be located so that all members of the public have safe and convenient transportation options to reach quality services and facilities that meet or exceed industry standards for service provision. Public services and facilities and healthcare providers often underserve minority and low-income neighborhoods.

2.4 Protect Vulnerable Populations from Natural Hazards

A natural hazard is a natural event that threatens lives, property, and other assets. Natural hazards include floods, high wind events, landslides, earthquakes, and wildfires. Vulnerable neighborhoods face higher risks than others when disaster events occur. A population may be vulnerable for a variety of reasons, including location, socioeconomic status or access to resources, lack of leadership and organization, and lack of planning.

III. Recommendations for Authentic Participation

3.1 Engage Stakeholders at All Stages of the Planning Process

Engaging stakeholders throughout the planning process through digital and physical forums—from creating a community vision to defining goals, principles, objectives, and action steps, as well as in implementation and evaluation—is important to ensure that the plan accurately reflects community values and addresses community priority and needs. In addition, engagement builds public understanding and ownership of the adopted plan, leading to more effective implementation.

3.2 Seek Diverse Participation in the Plan Development Process

A robust comprehensive planning process engages a wide range of participants across generations, ethnic groups, and income ranges. Especially important is reaching out to groups that might not always have a voice in community governance, including representatives of disadvantaged and minority communities.

3.3 Promote Leadership Development in Disadvantaged Communities during the Planning Process

Leaders and respected members of disadvantaged communities can act as important contacts and liaisons for planners in order to engage and empower community members throughout the planning process. Participation in the process can encourage development of emerging leaders, especially from within communities that may not have participated in planning previously.

3.4 Provide Ongoing and Understandable Information for All Participants

Information available in multiple, easily accessible formats and languages are key to communicating with all constituents, including non-English speakers. Such communication may involve translating professional terms into more common lay vocabulary.

3.5 Continue to Engage the Public after the Comprehensive Plan is Adopted

Stakeholder engagement should not end with the adoption of the comprehensive plan. An effective planning process continues to engage stakeholders during the implementing,

updating, and amending of the plan, so that the public remains involved with ongoing proposals and decisions.

IV. Recommendations for Implementation and Coordination

4.1 Be Persuasive in Communicating a Plan for Digital and Physical Accessibility

A persuasive plan communicates key principles and ideas in a readable and attractive manner in order to inspire, inform, and engage readers. It uses up-to-date visual imagery to highlight and support its recommendations.

4.2 Coordinate with the Plans of other Jurisdictions and Levels of Government

A coordinated plan for disability-inclusive development is aligned horizontally with plans, priorities and forecasts of adjacent jurisdictions and vertically with federal, state, and regional plans.

4.3 Comply with Applicable Anti-Discrimination Laws and Mandates

A compliant plan meets requirements of mandates and laws concerning preparing, adopting, and implementing integrated plans, programs, and policies.

4.4. Be Transparent in the Plan's Substance

A transparent plan clearly articulates the rationale for all goals, objectives, policies, actions, and key plan maps. It explains the “what, how, and why” of each recommendation.

4.5 Use Accessible Digital Formats and Go Beyond Paper

A plan that goes beyond paper is produced in a web-based format and/or other accessible, user-friendly formats in addition to a standard printed document. Planning websites can be used both to engage and to inform citizens and different constituencies about the plan.

Conclusion

Cities' efforts to promote disability inclusion are often fragmented and insufficient to address the magnitude of the problem. This paper reviewed key urban challenges to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals in urban environments and offered recommendations for making global reporting on the SDG's more disability-inclusive. The multi-dimensional and interdependent nature of social exclusion demands a comprehensive and integrated set of solutions.

Innovations in technology are unleashing new approaches to inclusive urban development. Additional energy needs to be put towards data collection and the deployment of digital accessibility standards in the provision of city services. Accessibility in digital transformation efforts can also help improve transparency, accountability and reach of public services to all. Furthermore digital accessibility can help unlock new user insights and offer data needed to improve policy deliberations and measure in a disaggregated manner the realization of existing global commitments; and, indeed, context-specific methods of assessing negative social attitudes, as well as mobilizing civil society to address complex factors and persistent challenges.

The recommendations presented herein will make a meaningful contribution to the effective implementation of SDG's in global urban development. Coordinating efforts to improve and scale up disability-inclusive urban development can spur innovations in other areas of urban policy, such as poverty alleviation, environmental sustainability, access to quality education, and increasing participation, and decreasing the digital divide. In doing so help eliminate the root causes of persistent inequality, marginality, and dependence not only for persons with disabilities but for other marginalized groups.

A smart, comprehensive, scalable, universal, and inclusive approach to urban development can address the ills that confront cities, ills that continue to marginalize, stigmatize, and disenfranchise millions of urban citizens that live with disabilities. Unnecessary physical and digital barriers should be identified and eliminated by leveraging technology, and engaging target populations in innovative and cooperative manners. The voices of persons with disabilities and older persons attest to the urgency and need for global leadership on this cross-cutting development issue.

Smarter and more inclusive approaches to urban development are opening new efforts towards equity and inclusion well beyond 2015. It is helping to steer the New Urban Century away from repeating costly mistakes and towards a smarter and more inclusive urban future for all.

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