

Global Policy Dialogue

Building Urban Economic Resilience During and After COVID-19

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has been affecting cities far beyond the health impacts. Urban areas produce over 80% of global economic output, but with over 95% of COVID-19 cases located in these areas and continuous restrictive measures in place, the pandemic has triggered a profound socio-economic crisis in cities worldwide. While the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have hit urban areas particularly hard, cities as engines of growth are still expected to play a leading role in recovery from the crisis.

The *Building Urban Economic Resilience during and after COVID-19* project, part of the UNDA rapid response to COVID-19, is a collaboration among the five UN Regional Commissions—United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), and United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC)—and technical partners the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) and the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF).

The project focuses on strengthening the capacities of local governments globally—starting with 16 partner cities— to design, implement, and monitor sustainable, resilient, and inclusive COVID-19 economic responses, recovery, and rebuilding plans. It aims to contribute to planning for more resilient cities and local governments that are better able to manage shocks such as COVID-19 and other broad-based socio-economic stresses likely to reoccur in a predominantly urban world. To achieve this, the project has already produced a variety of knowledge and capacity-building resources, which are being used by the project cities in the development of their City Economic Resilience Performance Reports and their Economic Resilience Building Plans.

The body of knowledge generated by the project and the work of the project cities conform the backbone of Regional Policy Briefs that mainly covers:

- Collective diagnoses of each region’s economic and financial resilience to the COVID-19 urban effects and associated major common issues and responses gaps in terms of a) labour market conditions, b) economic governance, c) business environment, d) financial environment, and e) infrastructure and connectivity.
- Common priorities and policy recommendations for each region across the above mentioned economic and financial dimensions.
- The way forward for preparing cities recovery and resilience plans building on the region’s policy recommendations, the project diagnostic and planning tool, and the expertise and collaboration of local actors.

The Global Policy Dialogue, organized by UN-HABITAT, would provide a platform for knowledge and practices sharing from the different regions, exchange views within a wider global context, and synthesize the generated knowledge into an overarching guiding document.

Objectives of the Global Policy Dialogue

While considering that the Dialogue is taking place at the end of the process of Regional Policy Briefs preparations, the following objectives are set to achieve an added value at the policy level in guiding the preparation of cities recovery and resilience plans:

- Providing a global reference to be better prepared and better react to any hazard that the city may face. Such preparedness must stem from a process where regions and cities assess their economic and financial resilience and explore similarities and differences with other regions. Hence, pave the way for: well informed further work on resilience planning, collaboration and opportunities for partnerships.
- Discussing policy options for similar issues and identifying viable policy recommendations and solutions to common barriers.
- Providing feedback, lessons learned, and more evidence based knowledge for consensus among regional policies while considering some agreed guiding principles.
- Identifying needed actions and next steps for making the project outcomes available to cities for use in their recovery and response plans.

Global Policy Dialogue Outcome

A Global Policy Paper that provides an overview of cities common global urban economic resilience gaps and issues, with a consolidated set of relevant policy recommendations and guiding principles for cities economic recovery and resilience building.

Global Policy Dialogue Process

1 Pre-Dialogue: Regional Bilateral Meetings

For facilitating an adequate, and representative process of consultations and discussion of the regional policy briefs, while considering the limitations imposed by the time difference between the regions, and the face to face meetings because of COVID 19, there would be a series of virtual regional bilateral meetings between invited participants from each region, the project team and UN-HABITAT, conducted over a period of one week. These meetings are seen important for harmonizing, confirming and completing the coverage of the specific urban economic and financial resilience issues to be raised as common and global issues in the intended policy dialogue and policy paper.

Focus of bilateral meetings:

- Solicit feedback from each region about common economic and financial resilience issues and gaps that were identified in some of the regional briefs, and assess their order of priority in each region.
- Reach a consensus on general recommended policies for addressing the identified common issues.
- Discuss guiding principles for advancing the processes of recovery and resilience planning by cities.

In Preparation: Resilience Matrix

For this purpose, prior to the bilateral meetings, each region will receive a matrix inclusive of a consolidated list of the common identified resilience issues, and the relevant policy recommendations as concluded and synthesized from the policy briefs. Each region would populate the matrix with a summary explanation for each issue and policy that are relevant to their region and indicate the degree of relevance, to be ready for discussion during the meetings.

Overview of each virtual bilateral meeting:

A 75 minutes meeting for each bilateral meeting that can be structured as following:

Time	Topic	Participants
5 min	Introduction UN-Habitat	Regional commissions, focal points, UN-Habitat, UNCDF
20 min	Presentation by Region (regional policy overview and matrix feedback)	
45 min	Moderated discussion UN-Habitat	
5 min	Conclusion and closing remarks	

Venue: Online (via Zoom platform)

Meeting Schedule:

UNECLAC Date: 12 October, 2021
Time: 15:00-16:30 CEST

UNESCWA Date: 13 October, 2021
Time: 12:00-13:30 CEST

UNESCAP Date: 14 October, 2021
Time: 09:30-11:00 CEST

UNECE Date: 14 October, 2021
Time: 15:00-16:30 CEST

UNECA Date: 19 October, 2021
Time: 15:00-16:30 CEST

Meeting Participants:

- Representatives of the relevant regional UN-Commission, UNCDF and UN-Habitat
- Representatives of the participating cities local authorities and local consultants

Bilateral meetings output: revised and consolidated matrix with feedback from the five regions on common economic resilience issues and relevant recommended policies that should form the key reference for preparing the policy paper.

2 Global Policy Dialogue Session

The dialogue will take the form of an invite-only, virtual 2-hour session on Friday October 29, 2021. It is the key session that should be attended by all regions. It should allow for a structured dialogue with adequate time for all regions to share their views on the Global Policy Paper.

Focus of the dialogue:

- Offer an introduction and presentation that summarizes the most common issues and policy gaps across the five regions, and common recommended policy options and responses.
- Present the key guiding principles to be considered while preparing economic resilience policies and plans, and integrating within city-level strategies and programmes.
- Discuss the presented recommended policy options, guiding principles and targets as well as reaching consensus about the actions needed to consolidate and disseminate the body of work done by the regions to be available for other cities as a guiding reference.

Overview of the virtual Global Policy Dialogue:

Time	Topic
5 min	Welcome
10 min	Opening Remarks
20 min	Presentation by UN-HABITAT
60 min	Panel Discussion Moderated by: UN-HABITAT
15 min	Synthesis
10 min	Closing Remarks

Date: 29 October, 2021

Time: 13:00-15:00 CEST (TBC)

Venue: Online (via Zoom platform)

Dialogue Participants:

The dialogue should provide room for all concerned stakeholders to be present and participate in the discussions. The participants invited should include:

- Representatives of the UN Regional Commissions and all other UN Partners
- Representatives of the participating cities local authorities and local consultants
- Invited guests and discussants with relevant professional experience.

Dialogue session outcome: a consolidated paper that covers the outcomes of the introductory and regional sessions, common issues, and recommended policy options and as well as the agreed guiding principles and proposed actions.

3 Announcement of a Global Policy Paper during the World Cities Day

During the World Cities Day celebration (31 October 2021), an announcement will be made to present the Global Policy Paper and its publication in the upcoming months as a global reference for any city that wants to engage in economic resilience building.

4 Global Policy Paper Launch

Following the bilateral meetings, the final revised feedback, and the Global Policy Dialogue, a Global Policy Paper draft will be prepared by UN-Habitat to be circulated to all Regional Commissions. The agreed upon Global Policy Paper will be launched by the end of the year, and provides an overview of common global urban economic resilience gaps and issues, with a consolidated set of relevant policy recommendations and guiding principles.