



“The pandemic is an opportunity to revisit inefficiencies, gaps and flaws of contemporary urban policy making, including direct infrastructure investments to cities, digital solutions for better services and citizen participation in integrated planning.”

– Carmen VOGT, GIZ, Bonn

Image Source: In the province of Nairobi, Kenya, and along the Neckar Valley in the Geidelberg-Mannheim metropolitan region, Baden-Württemberg, Germany.  
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### **Bridging the gap between global and community resilience to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals**

Amid the current global pandemic, how we address urban and community resilience has become even more critical. We can assume that the COVID-19 crisis will affect societies and economies not only in the upcoming two years but in the decades to come. Depending on actions taken now, the impact could be significant, including for the achievement of international commitments and sustainability targets or for the social and economic stability in many countries around the globe.

In the past year, we have witnessed in many partner countries how city governments and local actors have been under unprecedented stress during the fight against the pandemic. Unfortunately, the often fragile health, financial, political and social systems in developing countries and emerging economies have been affected disproportionately, amplifying existing inequalities and creating new ones.

As cities and citizens are greatly exposed to the physical, mental, social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, addressing basic needs and services at community level is as important as addressing the pandemic on global level. As partners and donors, we are asked to rethink how we provide financing and support for inclusive and green recovery to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and address the scarcity of resources sharpened by the pandemic. Without the right political will and the integration of SDGs in recovery measures, we face a high risk that economic restarts and stimuli in cities, if not countries, might fail or be pursued at the expense of social and environmental goals. The consequences would be fatal, especially, for informal settlements and workers that are already hit hard due to a lack of sufficient social infrastructure and basic services.

It is, therefore, essential that the most vulnerable benefit directly from recovery programs - for example from quality infrastructure investments spill-over effects. At this moment, only an estimate of 3 to 5 per cent of the USD 12 to 15 trillion international COVID-19 stimulus programs are targeting green initiatives and even fewer amounts are devoted to support for local and community resilience. On this account, together with our partners and commissioning parties, we work towards combining the opportunities of economic stimulus packages with necessary climate resilient, transformative structural reforms to trigger a double dividend and avoid a trade-off between economic growth and progress on social

equality, sustainability and climate goals.

The German Ministry for Economic Cooperation (BMZ), as the main commissioning party of GIZ, has recently introduced a reform concept that constitutes sustainable urban development as a stand-alone field of action, aiming to create climate impact and a green post-COVID-19 future. This reform concept was initiated before the pandemic crisis but has become even more relevant now. It will be reflected in GIZ's priorities and drive forward sustainable urban development projects.

Already now, GIZ provides structural support to the recovery of cities and citizens, by developing capacities, processes and organisations on different fronts, supporting multi-level-governance and fostering the exchange of knowledge. GIZ is present in partner countries and can react to their demands, while maintaining close relations to national ministries and city governments to strengthen the multi-level governance in recovery measures.

GIZ's engagement focuses on the several aspects of urban development, the first of which is evidence-based and participatory planning for the reorientation of the urban development strategies after the pandemic. This includes new political prioritization of green recovery measures and support for the functioning of public services, like mobility, health, education, buildings, housings, spatial planning, etc. To advance the implementation of the Agenda 2030 in the

context of the pandemic, a GIZ project in Ghana for example supports the decentralization reform at the local level while retaining a multi-level approach. This includes data-based development planning for the implementation of the Agenda 2030. Another illustration is the Transformation Fund Agenda 2030, which works towards achieving the SDGs in the Philippines by increasing the participation of relevant stakeholder groups to make COVID-19 stimulus programs more inclusive and sustainable. Further, the Open SDG Club, that is set up in India, addresses the needs of vulnerable groups in the context of reconstruction programs via multi-stakeholder dialogues on recovery plans, the identification of the core principles for inclusive reconstruction and the formulation of political advice on post-COVID-19 reconstruction plans for the Agenda 2030 decade of action.

Secondly, GIZ's engagement includes driving forward sustainable infrastructure development and investments in cities as they present a unique opportunity to combine economic stimulus measures with climate resilient, transformative structural reforms and job creation. An example for this is the C40 Cities Finance Facility (CFF), which develops fit for purpose solutions for its partner cities. As a project preparation facility, the CFF identifies and prepares climate mitigation and adaptation infrastructure projects, strengthens related capacities within city administrations and disseminates lessons learned and best practices. CFF helps to build a sustainable, low-emission and climate resilient infrastructure project pipeline and is an experienced broker between

financial institutions and city governments, supporting cities to access a broader range of financing solutions, including stimulus packages. An illustration of the project's impact can be found in Bogota, Columbia, where it has supported establishing the city's first large scale cycling avenue – one of the city's key response to the COVID-19 pandemic and for a green recovery. Further, the City Climate Finance GAP Fund, which is initiated by BMU and BMZ, similarly addresses the infrastructure investment gap. It will provide technical assistance to cities at an early stage of planning and project preparation to attract financing for sustainable infrastructure. Considering the entrenched local and national budgets, the lack of infrastructure development and investment, the GAP Fund and CFF realise an important task by enabling local governments to access infrastructure finance. Therefore, it is necessary that a considerable amount of the stimulus packages is directed in sustainable urban development and infrastructure. In this respect, the G20 as well as Multilateral and National Development Banks have a crucial role in deciding on financial resources and mechanisms, by which the local level can be included. They can contribute greatly to coordinated interventions with climate- and social-positive impacts.

Thirdly, GIZ's engagement in urban development revolves around innovation in and for cities. Fostering innovation will remain important during the COVID-19 pandemic and to manoeuvre out of the crisis. Citizen-centred innovation processes with the purpose to co-create digital solutions

can increase the resilience of cities and their transformative adaptation to climate change. GIZ focuses on inter alia mainstreaming digital solutions in urban processes and sharing successful models and experiences. An example of this is the initiative #solutionsforcities, and the "Call for Digital Solutions" initiated by the German Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community with the to identify scalable solutions for urban challenges caused by the pandemic. This is an interesting and important field for future dialogues with highly innovative potential.

In summary, GIZ's experience in partner countries and in the area of sustainable urban development shows how city governments and citizens - especially the most vulnerable groups - are under great stress while coping with the pandemic and its short- to long-term impacts. To address their needs and demands in this crisis and increase urban resilience, all current efforts will gain impact from a coordinated approach at global level. The pandemic is an opportunity to revisit inefficiencies, gaps and flaws of contemporary urban policy making and development, including direct infrastructure investments to cities, digital solutions for better services and citizen participation in integrated planning. In this respect, there is a need for new forms of productive and transformative partnerships, a confluence of so far unconnected knowledge as well as an exchange of data as public good between city governments and urban communities, political decision makers at national level and international financial institutions.