

*ISAP 2023*

*International Forum for a Sustainable Asia Pacific*

# **LEVERAGING CITIES TO GENERATE SYNERGIES IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

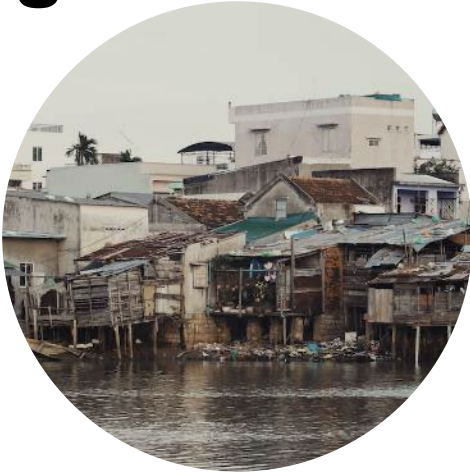
Curt Garrigan

Chief, Sustainable Urban Development Section

ESCAP

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# Cities in Asia-Pacific – key facts and opportunities for synergies



**>50%** of the Asia-Pacific population lives in urban areas and the number is expected to increase



**~70%** of the region's emissions come from urban areas



**99** of the top 100 cities facing environmental risks are in the region



**7** in every 10 cities in Asia suffer from poor air quality

# Cities amid crises and changing demographics

The Asia and Pacific region is urbanizing at unprecedented speed and scale.

The region's urban population will swell from



**2.5**  
billion people

to

**3.4**  
billion people

by **2050**

putting strain on infrastructure, public services and the environment



Cities are facing a range of urgent crises, such as...

**Climate** change  
**Energy** access to sustainable  
**Food** insecurity  
**Recovery** Pandemic  
**Housing** affordable

All of these threaten the achievement of



PARIS2015  
AGREEMENT



IMPLEMENTING  
THE NEW  
URBAN AGENDA

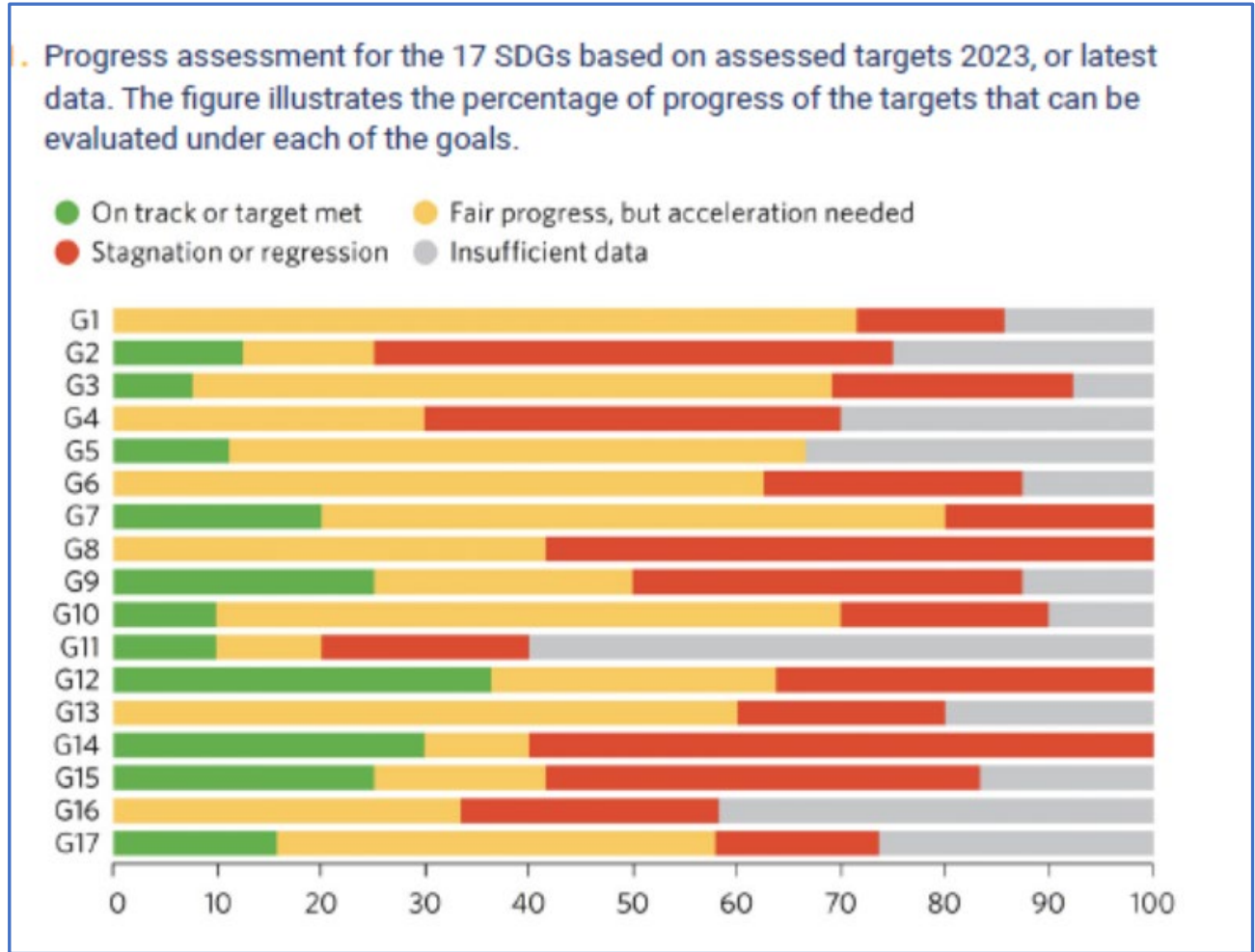
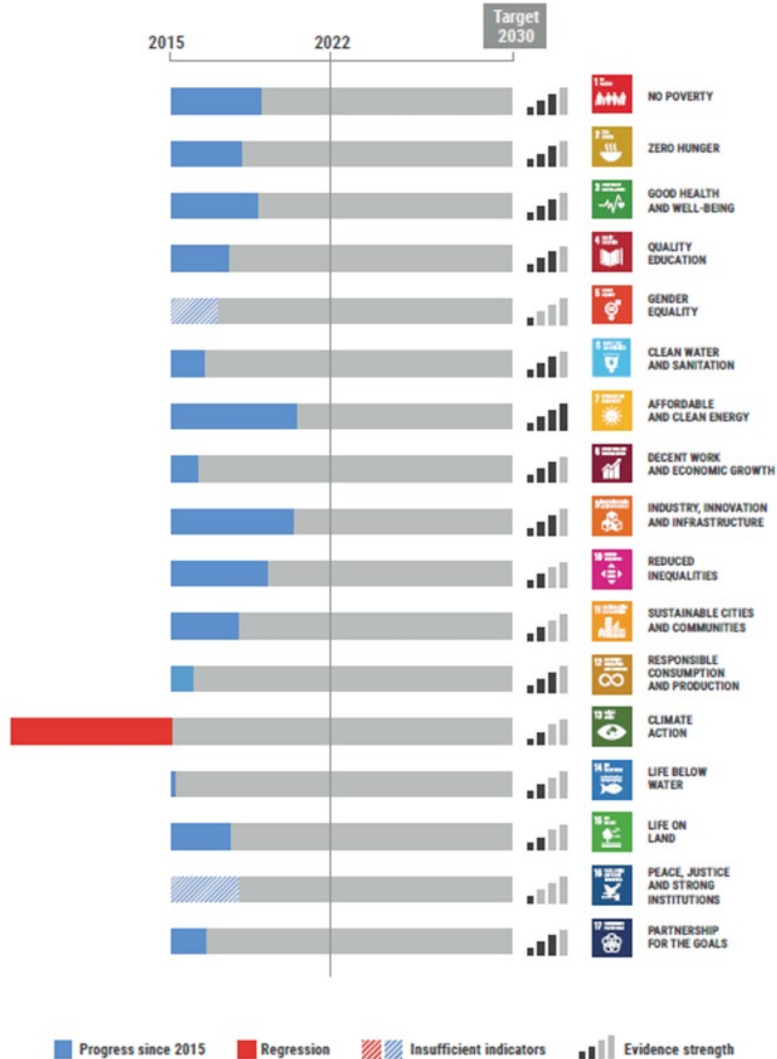


**ESCAP**  
Economic and Social Commission  
for Asia and the Pacific

# Cities and progress against SDGs

From ESCAP 2023 SDG Progress Report

From UN Climate SDG Synergies Report



# Cities and synergies



From UN Climate SDG Synergies Report

Near-term adaptation and mitigation actions have more synergies than trade-offs with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The length of each bar represents the total number of mitigation or adaptation options under each system/sector. As the number of adaptation and mitigation options vary across system/sector, they have been normalized to 100% so that bars are comparable across mitigation, adaptation, system/sector, and SDGs.

Key ■ Synergies ■ Trade-offs  Both synergies and trade-offs/limited  Limited evidence/no evidence/assessment

Source: IPCC Synthesis Report 2023.

# Cities are critical to achieving sustainable development

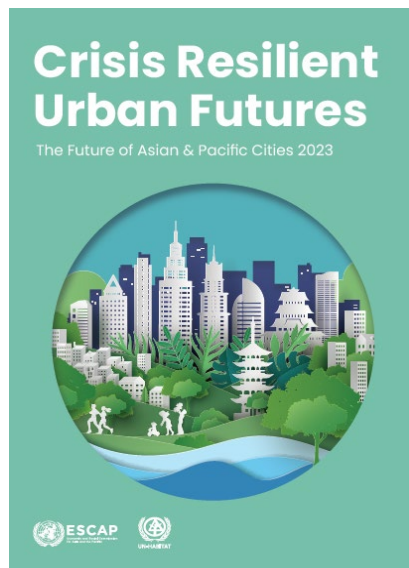
*....yet, multiple and interlinked crises are creating significant challenges to achieving the SDGs and realizing potential for local climate action*

**UN Climate SDG Synergies Report Recommendation: ‘Treat cities, sites of major population growth and expansion of economic activities, as an opportunity for focusing on climate and development synergies.’**

The **Future of Asian & Pacific Cities Report 2023 Report**, entitled “**Crisis Resilient Urban Futures**”, developed by ESCAP, UN-Habitat and partners, offers a forward-looking agenda to shape post-pandemic pathways for a sustainable urban recovery.

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The report identifies four key areas:



**01**

31 Chapter 01

**Urban and territorial planning for a resilient future**

**02**

49 Chapter 02

**Urban resilience at a crossroads: multilevel climate action**

**03**

67 Chapter 03

**Urban digital transformation: linking innovation to inclusion**

**04**

79 Chapter 04

**Urban finance during turbulent times**



# Why Cities and Climate Action in Asia-Pacific?

*Context*

Most cities located in climate vulnerable areas, such as low elevation coastal zones, valleys, etc.

Most emissions from cities in Asia *predominately from transportation & energy*

*Current state*

Asia-Pacific economic impact of climate is increasing in cities prone to loss and damage

Lack of NDC localisation, vertical and cross municipal climate cooperation

*Tools and targets*

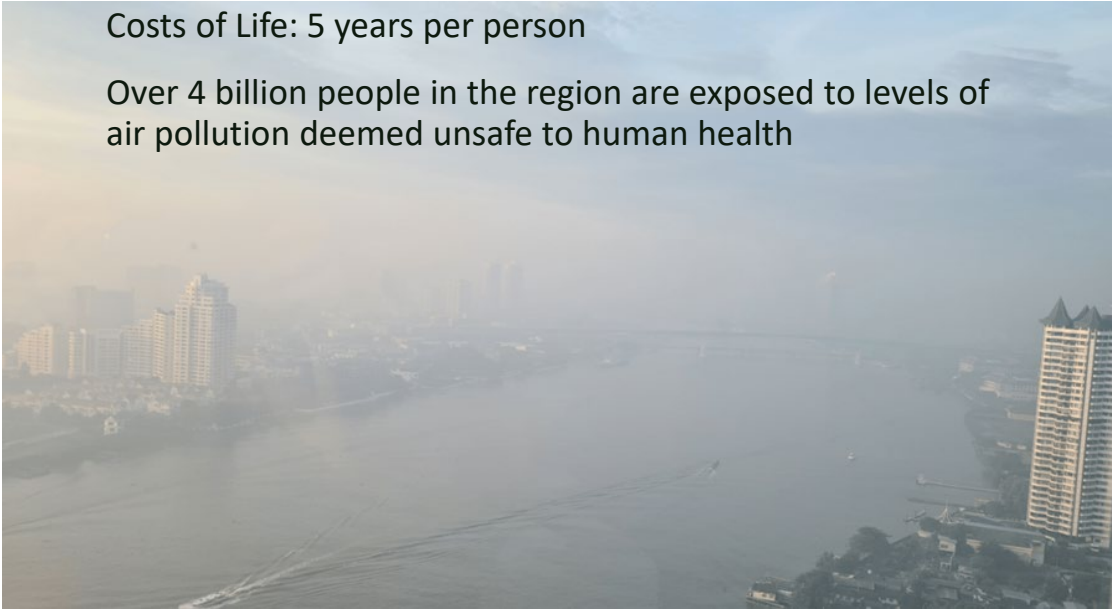
Climate action has positive co-benefits *to the well-being and health of society, the city and its surrounding area*

Addressing urban emissions (transport, waste, construction, etc.)  
↓ *reduces pollution*  
↑ *improve respiratory and overall health*

# Urban Air Pollution- synergies with healthy environments and climate

Costs of Life: 5 years per person

Over 4 billion people in the region are exposed to levels of air pollution deemed unsafe to human health



6.5 million people die annually from exposure to poor air quality. 70% of air pollution related death occur in Asia and the Pacific.

92% of people living in the Asia and the Pacific (or 4 billion people) are exposed to unhealthy levels of air pollution.

30 Most Polluted Cities in the world amid a high rate of urbanization

- Cities in Asia and the Pacific are disproportionately impacted by air pollution. They were estimated to have the highest death rates associated with exposure to PM<sub>2.5</sub>.
- Often, vulnerable people include women, children, the elderly and the poor, who have limited access to health services are exposed to the highest levels of air pollution.
- Clean air solutions and climate benefits



# Clean Air



## 7<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT & DEVELOPMENT

Protecting Our Planet  
through Regional Cooperation  
and Solidarity in Asia and the Pacific

29 November - 1 December 2022

BANGKOK AND ONLINE



ENVIRONMENT &  
DEVELOPMENT

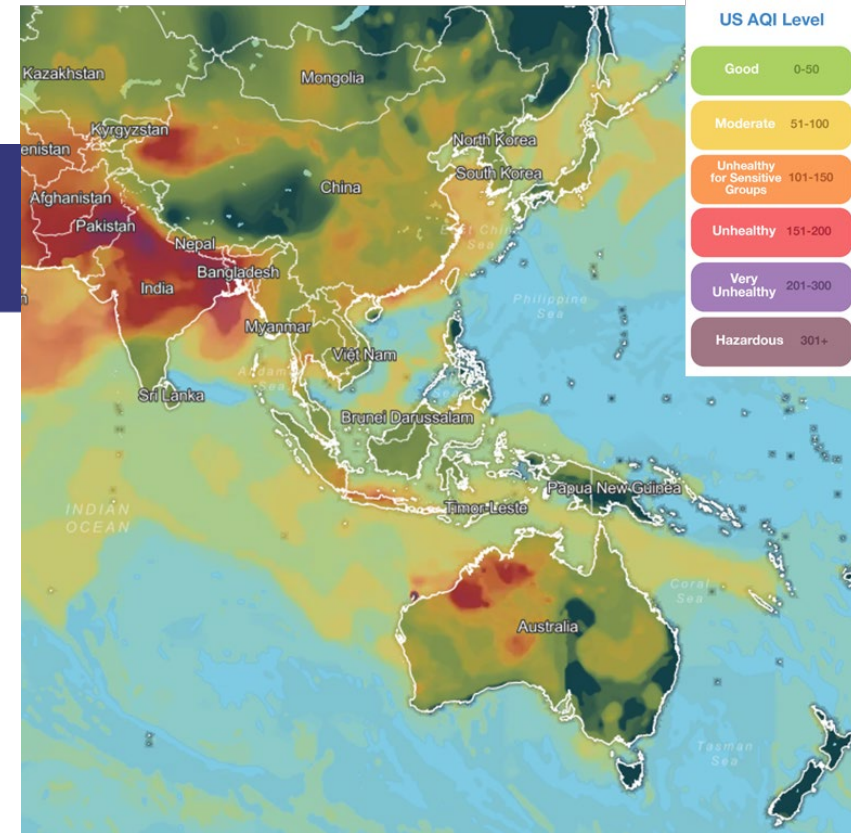
### Regional Action Programme on Air Pollution (RAPAP)

- First regional action programme negotiated and adopted by governments
- To promote science-based and policy-oriented cooperation for improved air quality management
- To establish an open regional platform for the exchange of information and best practices
- Involved 6 subregional and thematic consultations, technical projects and 9 intergovernmental consultations

# Clean Air

## RAPAP

### Action areas

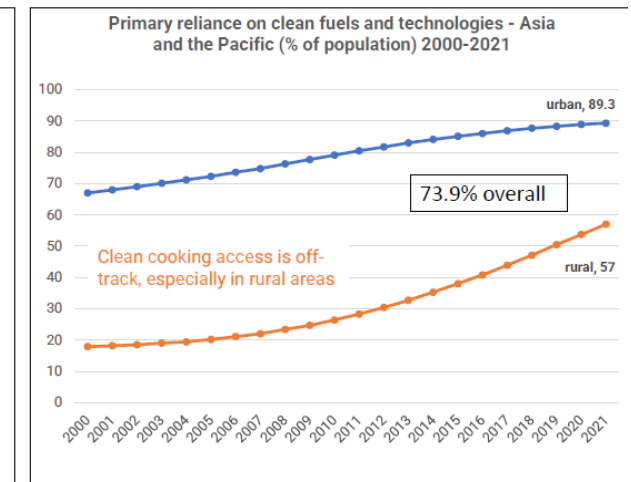
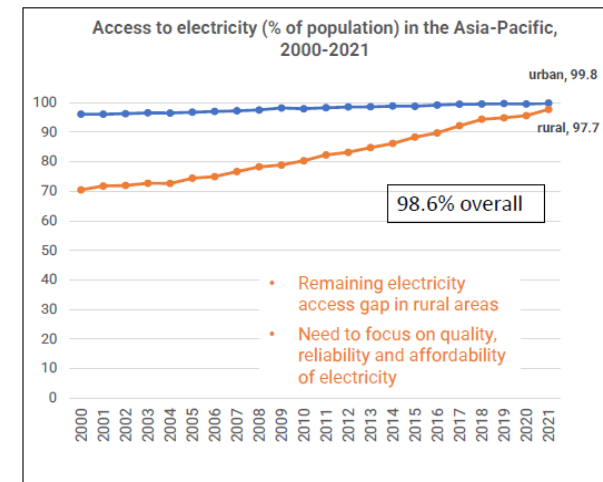


# Basic Urban Services- links to global challenges

Access to basic urban services contributes to a healthy environment and can generate sustainable development

benefits:

- Clean Energy (household/cooking)
- Urban Mobility and Transport
  - Access to employment, education, health services, etc.
  - Opportunities for reduced emissions
- Green and Open Space
  - Loss of biodiversity
  - Lack of recreation spaces for healthy living
  - Urban Heat Island effect and more emissions
- Solid Waste Management
  - Plastic pollution is a significant issue in the Asia-Pacific region, most generated from urban land sources
  - Underdeveloped waste management systems may be responsible for as much as 60 per cent of global plastic waste leakage.
  - Some municipalities spend up to 40% of budget on waste management (mostly collection and transport to landfill)



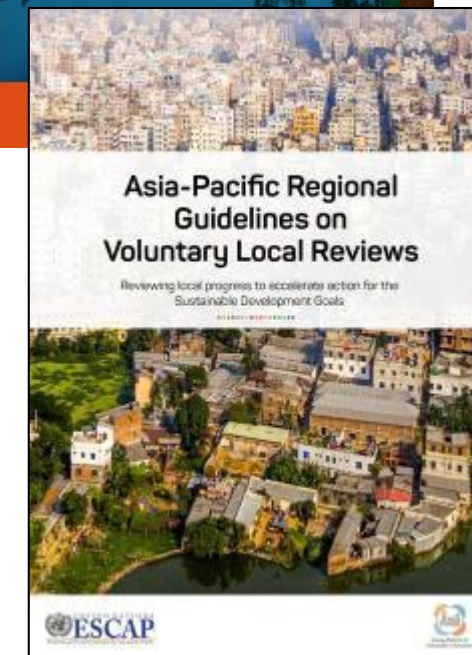
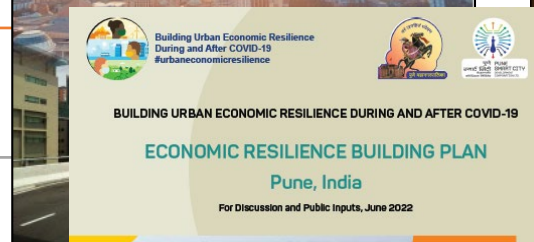
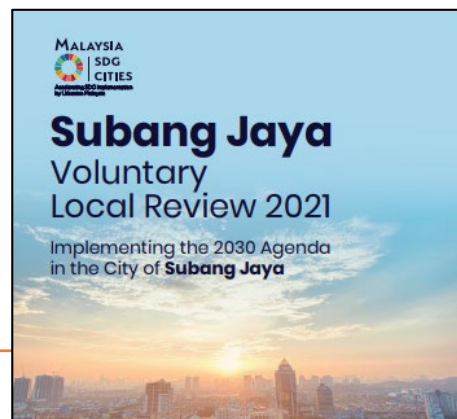
# Leveraging benefits from SDG localization

Enhance multi-level governance and  
urban policy coordination

Local climate action plans; Local Resilience and Recovery  
Strategies and Local air pollution action plans

Facilitate Multistakeholder and private sector  
partnerships for financing municipal SDG priorities

VLR as a practical tool for monitoring SDG localization



# Integrating National and Local Review of the SDGs



Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2018.

*Annual VNR-VLR sessions at the Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development*



Fill information gaps



Enhance vertical and horizontal coordination

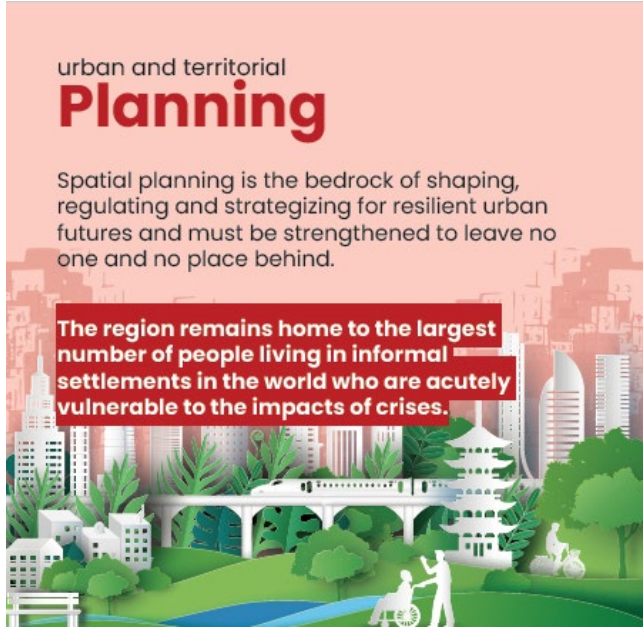


Broaden stakeholder engagement



Strengthen legitimacy of local follow-up and review of the SDGs

# Crisis Resilient Urban Futures



- *Create a policy environment for transformative and resilient urban planning, enabled by multilevel governance*
- *Ensure the provision of capacity-building and coordination for effective urban planning and local action*
- *Develop holistic housing, urban planning and disaster-risk management policies, strategies and regulations to address the affordable housing crisis in cities*
- *Promote integrated, compact, mixed-use neighbourhoods and cities supported by public transport and active mobility to meet climate and sustainability targets*

Compact, low-carbon development enhancing the efficiency, liveability and sustainability of cities

Greener and more carbon neutral cities and neighbourhoods

Harmonize and enhance nature into cities to address climate, clean air and biodiversity crisis

Disaster risk reduction for urban areas, especially coastal communities

# Crisis Resilient Urban Futures

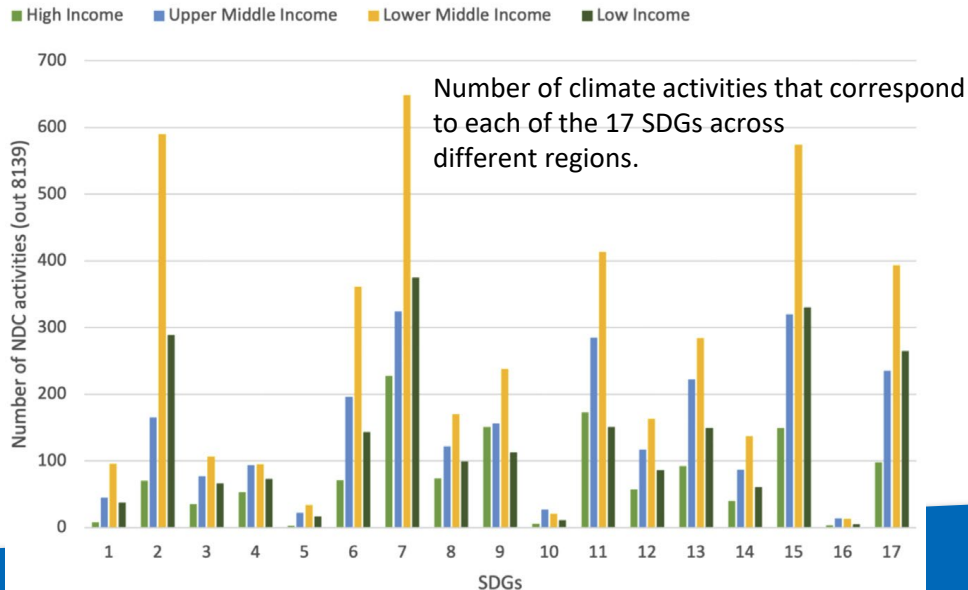
## Climate change

To ensure cities meet their climate targets, resilient and low-carbon climate action must be scaled up.

**67% of urban infrastructure in the Pacific is located within 500m of the coastline under threat from climate-induced sea level rise.**



- Integrate urban communities as key actors to build resilience against climate and other shocks
- Deploy innovative urban adaptation pathways to address existing and new climate risks
- Enhance data collection and local evidence to inform and accelerate climate action in cities
- Shift to low-carbon sources to tackle the urban energy crisis
- Provide platforms for monitoring, reporting, verifying and integrating multilevel climate action



Public health and mobility factors intersect with decarbonization goals

Nature-based solutions for infrastructure and address climate and clean air targets

Climate crisis is heavily intertwined with the global biodiversity crisis, impacting vast food and material production systems

# Crisis Resilient Urban Futures

## Digital

transformation

To address persisting digital inequalities and build people-centred smart cities, true digital transformation across the region requires inclusion as well as innovation.

Nearly **40%** of Asia-Pacific's population remains unconnected or poorly connected to internet resources.



- *Develop people-centred national smart-city policies as an enabler of inclusive and sustainable urban development*
- *Enhance capacities of governments at all levels to design and implement inclusive digital strategies with a clear resilience mindset*
- *Promote citizen engagement and multi-stakeholder partnerships for digital transformations in cities*

Need to overcome social, economic and technological inequalities which limit access to urban employment, education, health information, wider urban networking

Opportunities for merged digital data to support extension of services

Utilize smart and digital innovation for more efficient management of traffic, energy use, safety (with road safety, air quality and climate benefits)



# Crisis Resilient Urban Futures



- *Expand, diversify and increase municipal revenue collection to stimulate a local economic recovery*
- *Establish a transparent framework for intergovernmental transfers for greater economic resilience against future shocks*
- *Ensure that land-based financing instruments are aligned with the development of compact polycentric urban areas*
- *Create more stable and predictable policy, regulatory and incentive frameworks to enhance private sector investment for an urban economic recovery*
- *Promote enabling environments to facilitate climate responsive urban finance and municipal finance instruments in support of local climate action*

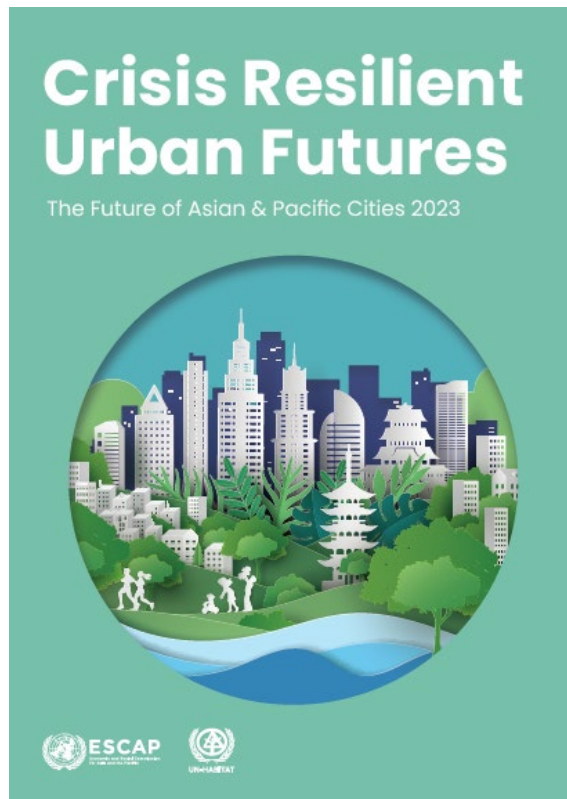
Loss of tax revenue and expenditure on pandemic response further strained the financial resources of cities, exacerbating budget deficits.

Governments 'rebalancing' following diversion of resources and funds towards public health emergency, reducing the allocation of grants and transfers for urban development.

Cities Climate Finance remains limited and often inaccessible to cities needing it most (emerging secondary cities)

Targeted incentives, such as tax breaks, grants or subsidies, can encourage private sector investments in health care, digital infrastructure, renewable energy and urban development.

# Crisis Resilient Urban Futures



A sustainable urban future can only be realized through **joint action and regional urban partnerships** in every area.

More than ever, **cities must rise** to overcome the crises threatening resilient, sustainable and connected urban development.

By embracing the urgent challenges of today and jointly putting ideas into action for tomorrow, cities across the Asia and Pacific region can **build a crisis resilient urban future** for all.

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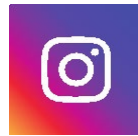


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