



Dear colleagues,

Did you know that 90% of reported COVID-19 cases are concentrated in urban areas? That urban economies account for 80% of global GDP? That 24% of the world's urban population live in slums? That less than half the global population can walk to open public spaces from their homes?

These numbers are a stark reminder that **cities are on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic**. They face unprecedented public health and unemployment crises while also navigating sudden budget shortfalls. Moreover, the pandemic has **exposed deep inequalities** in and across cities, disproportionately impacting Black people and people of colour, Indigenous and low-income communities, isolated elderly, women, and those living in informal settlements.

The focus of COVID-19 response efforts should therefore be on addressing these inequalities, ensuring stimulus investment and recovery funds create more just and inclusive societies and communities. The Build Forward Better Briefing #02 looks at how government, multilateral organisations, academia and other actors at the national and international level **reconsider how people live, work and travel in and around cities** – during and after the pandemic. It compiles the **latest “green” stimulus measures and propositions on what a sustainable, inclusive and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic could look like**.

Many thanks to the GIZ colleagues who contributed to this briefing; from the projects Climate Policy Meets Urban Development (CPMUD), Climate Policy Support Programme, Financing Energy for Low-carbon Investment – Cities Advisory Facility (FELICITY), Integrated Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Cities and City-Regions, and Urbanisation, Municipal and Urban Development.

We hope you find this BFB Briefing insightful and look forward to your **feedback and thematic suggestions for future issues**.

Best regards,
CDCPIII, GET, SDG-RI & SPA

#02 CITIES - 6 August 2020

The biweekly **Build Forward Better Briefing** compiles the latest “green” stimulus measures and propositions by government, multilateral organisations, academia and other actors at the national and international level. It shares insights on what a **sustainable, inclusive and resilient** recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic could look like. The current briefing focuses on **cities’ efforts to build forward better**.

This briefing is a **collaborative product by several Berlin-based GIZ IKI projects** (Capacity Development for Climate Policy in Southeast & Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia, Phase III; Green Economy Transformation in Cooperation with the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE); Support Project on SDG Review and Implementation Processes; Support Project for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement). The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily coincide with views of the organisation. All previous issues of the BFB Briefing can be accessed [here](#).

Many thanks to the GIZ colleagues from the projects Climate Policy Meets Urban Development (CPMUD), Climate Policy Support Programme, Financing Energy for Low-carbon Investment – Cities Advisory Facility (FELICITY), Integrated Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Cities and City-Regions, and Urbanisation, Municipal and Urban Development who contributed to this briefing.

Government

(in alphabetical order, with measures at city level listed first)

Global

- **Cities** worldwide have introduced [ambitious plans](#) to redistribute road space in response to the COVID-19 crisis: less space for cars, more for bicycles and pedestrians. The [open-access dataset](#) “Local Actions to Support Walking and Cycling During Social Distancing” tracks immediate community actions and can be used as a reference for communities looking for examples from other cities on ways to create safe spaces for moving and commuting while socially distancing. The “Slow Streets” movement can provide lessons learned to help cities rethink their transportation systems and build multi-modality and agility into post-pandemic solutions (see e.g. [WEF](#) and [OECD](#)).
- The **Cities Alliance**, in cooperation with **Slum Dwellers International (SDI)**, has launched a [new programme](#) to 1) strengthen the resilience of communities in informal settlements and support the sustainability of civil society organizations in 21 countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America; and 2) reinforce the capacities of informal communities to respond to the current outbreak and better prepare for future crises in Bangladesh, Guatemala, Liberia and Uganda.

Africa

- **Rwanda** will host the [African Green Revolution Forum \(AGRF\) Summit](#) virtually from 8-11 September. It is expected to bring together over 2,000 delegates from governments, civil society, private sector, research community and development partners, and will be held under the theme “Feed the Cities, Grow the Continent – Leveraging Urban Food Markets to Achieve Sustainable Food Systems in Africa”. The 2020 AGRF Summit comes at an unprecedented time when African major cities, especially those that mainly rely on imported food, face a looming hunger crisis following implementation of lockdowns in several countries to contain the spread of COVID-19.
- The European Investment Bank (EIB) and the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) are directing [€300 million of financing](#) to support the resilience and recovery of African nations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. A quarter of the capital targets businesses owned or managed by women and

another 25% of funds are earmarked for climate-related projects, such as renewable power, energy efficiency and climate change adaptation measures.

Asia & Oceania

- Afghanistan's government is employing 40,000 jobless workers to rehabilitate groundwater supplies for its capital, **Kabul**, with tree-planting planned for the second stage of the [project](#). The initiative aims to boost groundwater levels while increasing greenery to improve water and air quality.
- South Korea's capital **Seoul** will implement its own "[Green New Deal](#)" in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period to create jobs and reduce the city's CO₂ emissions. Almost half of the budget will be spent on promoting construction businesses that construct carbon-neutral buildings. Another big chunk of the budget is targeted at promoting vehicles running on electricity and hydrogen.
- The Climate Action Network Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (CAN EECCA) analysed the intentions and actions (or absence thereof) by the countries of this region to build forward better after the COVID-19 crisis. While none of the EECCA countries' recovery plans pays much attention to the principles of sustainable development and green economy, Moldova recently presented plans to create a National Commission on Climate Change and Uzbekistan intends to finance energy efficiency improvements through its [Anti-Crisis Fund](#). A [virtual event](#) by the European External Action Service (EEAS) scrutinised the relevance of Europe's Green Deal and Recovery Plan for Russia.
- In its latest move to generate jobs amid the COVID-19 pandemic while boosting conservation and curbing the impacts of climate change, **Pakistan** has announced the creation of the country's first [National Parks Service](#). Initially focusing on 15 national parks, the country aims to get local communities involved, create up to 5,000 jobs (mainly for young people who will work as park guards and custodians) and boost eco-tourism.
- COVID-19 has exposed the dependence on global supply chains. As Singapore currently imports over 90% of its food, it has developed a [strategy](#) to produce 30% of its nutritional needs by 2030.

Europe

- In April 2020, **Amsterdam** published the "[Amsterdam City Doughnut](#)" (see also this [video](#)), a vision and model for shaping a sustainable, inclusive and circular city. The doughnut principle proposed by British economist Kate Raworth is a "compass for 21st century thriving", meeting people's needs within planetary boundaries. Raworth's team has now published "[Creating City Portraits](#)", a methodological guide for downscaling the Doughnut to the city level.
- In the UK, a number of regions and cities have proposed strategies to build forward better, for instance [Edinburgh](#), [Liverpool](#) and [Manchester](#). Moreover, the UK government published the [plan](#) "Gear change: a bold vision for cycling and walking", setting out the actions required at all levels of government to achieve better streets for cycling and people, empower local decision-makers, enable people to cycle and protect them when they do. One example is giving city councils and mayors stronger powers to close side streets for cars and restrict traffic around schools.
- Also in the **UK**, Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced to support a [green and sustainable recovery](#) by investing £350 million in the decarbonisation of the country's heavy industry, construction, space and transport sectors.
- On 21 July the **European Council** [agreed on the budget](#) for the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021-2027 (€1.074 trillion) and the COVID-19 recovery instrument Next Generation EU (€750 billion). 30% of the MFF and NGEU budget are earmarked for climate-related projects, and the whole budget shall be spent in line with the Paris Agreement, the EU's objective to reach climate-neutrality by 2050, and the "do no harm" principle. A methodology for monitoring climate spending shall be established and an annual report issued by the European Commission. The **European Parliament** stated in a [resolution](#) that it will not approve the Council's proposal, criticising the cuts made at future-oriented programmes such as Horizon Europe and the Just Transition Fund, stating that this would endanger the EU's Green Agenda. According to the Parliament, there shall be binding spending targets for climate (30%) and biodiversity (10%), a commitment to applying the taxonomy regulation for "green" investments, and a mid-term review that assesses the implementation of

climate and biodiversity goals. Negotiations between Parliament and Council will start shortly. Several NGOs and media outlets have published critical analyses of the Council's conclusions, among them [Germanwatch](#), [WWF](#), [Greenpeace](#), [Deutsche Umwelthilfe](#), [Transport & Environment](#), [Climate Action Network \(CAN\) Europe](#), [Klimareporter](#) and [Climate Home News](#).

- As part of the **German** government's economic stimulus package, the Federal Environment Ministry (BMU) makes an additional €100 million available for [climate measures at the local level](#), e.g. the promotion of cycling and municipal climate protection pilot projects.
- Also, the **German** Federal Environment Ministry (BMU) has adopted a comprehensive [package of measures](#) to provide immediate support to developing and newly industrialising countries in overcoming the COVID-19 crisis. For this purpose, it is providing approximately €68 million in funds from the International Climate Initiative (IKI) to 29 projects in 25 countries. This supports relief for protected areas and biodiversity hotspots, promotes a climate-friendly economic recovery and increases resilience against future pandemics.
- The **Irish** Government announced the [July Jobs Stimulus](#), a €7.4 billion package of measures designed to stimulate a jobs-led, sustainable recovery from COVID-19. A substantial part of the budget is earmarked for investment in training, skills development, work placement schemes (especially for young people), as well as in schools, walking, cycling, public transport, home retrofitting, and town and village renewal.

Latin America & Caribbean

- The **Mexican** government, supported by GIZ, [provides technical support](#) for three Mexican and two other Latin American cities in implementing new cycle paths to reduce the risk of infection and promote micro-mobility vehicles, as well as in integrating these measures into local climate protection strategies.
- [UNCTAD's 15th quadrennial ministerial conference](#) (UNCTAD15) will be held in Bridgetown, **Barbados**, from 25 to 30 April 2021, presenting the world with the opportunity to align the sustainable development agenda with global efforts to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19's economic impact is particularly acute in small island developing states (SIDS) such as Barbados, where the tourism and hospitality industry have borne the brunt of the pandemic.
- The **Jamaican** Minister of Finance and the Public Service stressed that the country's ambition is to ["build back better"](#) after COVID-19. The SDGs and NDCs will therefore play a major role in shaping the country's recovery plans. Jamaica is a member of the Coalition of Finance Ministers for Climate Action, which currently includes 52 Finance Ministries worldwide and has recently published [three reports](#) on a green and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

North America

- In the **US**, time is running out for Congress to find common ground on what should be included in the [second stimulus package](#) before Congress is supposed to adjourn for a month-long recess. More than 30 major companies – including McDonald's, Pepsi, Cargill, Dell and Unilever – [called on U.S. Congress](#) to include support for renewable energy in the package, warning that without government investment in the renewable energy industry, they would be less able to support it themselves amid the economic crisis. The Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI) has drafted [recommendations](#) for a zero-carbon economic recovery, suggesting the nation's leaders consider providing financial assistance for industries, technologies and practices that are proven to improve public health, decrease costs, create enduring job opportunities and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The RMI has also published the [report](#) "US City Stimulus: Advancing Localized Green Recovery and Resilience".

International Organisations, Partnerships & Alliances

(in alphabetical order, with resources on cities listed first)

- The **Cities Climate Finance Leadership Alliance (CCFLA)** in a [statement](#) calls for investment in sustainable urban infrastructure projects in order to tackle the COVID-19 crisis and the climate emergency at the same time. Such action will “create jobs, drive economic growth, build city resilience, and allow the COVID-19 recovery to contribute significantly to abating a future climate crisis. Cities and subnational authorities must be at the forefront of this recovery planning and must be engaged and brought on as critical partners in this process.”
- **City Possible** is a [partnership and co-creation initiative](#) founded by Mastercard that has organised regular meetings of municipal decision-makers around the globe to exchange strategies on how to address the COVID-19 crisis in their communities.
- The **Global Resilient Cities Network (GRCN)** has launched “[Cities for a Resilient Recovery](#)” (C2R), a coalition of cities and resilience practitioners committed to taking leadership, to embedding resilience in recovery, and to supporting each other through the recovery planning process. The GRCN backs the initiative in the form of 1) the [weekly sessions](#) “Coronavirus Speaker Series: Sharing Knowledge to Respond with Resilience”, and 2) the [weekly briefings](#) “International Lessons on Recovery from COVID-19”, produced by the University of Manchester.
- An **OECD** [paper](#) on “Cities Policy Responses” was updated on 23 July; clustering and analysing examples from several OECD countries and summarising the lessons learned.
- The **UN** have launched a [policy brief](#) on “COVID-19 in an Urban World”. UN Secretary General António Guterres summarised its [key recommendations](#) as follows: 1) pandemic responses need to tackle inequalities, 2) capacities of local governments need to be strengthened, and 3) the economic recovery must be green, resilient and inclusive.
- **World Enabled** published an [outcome document](#) of the [Cities4All Learning Series](#) “Equity and Access in Times of Pandemic”, showcasing commitments and proposed actions to promote inclusive pandemic preparedness and a resilient recovery at the local level.
- A [new report](#) by the **Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)** and the **Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)** estimates that an extra 45 million people will fall into poverty as the region's economy shrinks by almost 10% as a result of the pandemic. The report proposes a three-phase approach to reactivate the region's economies, laying out how to 1) adopt health, economic, social and productive policies that aim to control and mitigate the effects of the pandemic, 2) reactivate with protection, and 3) rebuild in a sustainable and inclusive way.
- In a new [study](#), the **Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)** and the **International Labour Organization (ILO)** show that the transition to a net-zero emission economy could create 15 million net new jobs in Latin America and the Caribbean by 2030. The report also highlights how shifting to healthier and more sustainable diets, which reduce meat and dairy consumption while increasing plant-based foods, would create jobs and reduce pressure on the region's unique biodiversity.
- The **International Climate Initiative (IKI)** supports extensive green recovery measures worldwide. The [factsheet](#) “Corona Response Package – working together towards a sustainable recovery” provides an overview of the IKI Corona Response Package and its focus areas.
- A new **UN** [policy brief](#) warns the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to destroy the livelihoods of Southeast Asia's 218 million informal workers. “Without alternative income, formal social protection systems or savings to buffer these shocks, workers and their families will be pushed into poverty, reversing decades of poverty reduction.”
- The [COVID-19 Law Lab initiative](#) gathers and shares legal documents from over 190 countries across the world to help states establish and implement strong legal frameworks to manage the pandemic. The goal is to ensure that laws protect the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities and that they adhere to international human rights standards. The new Lab is a joint project of the **UNDP**, **WHO**, **UNAIDS** and the **O'Neill Institute for National & Global Health Law** at Georgetown University.
- The **WHO** published “[Actionables for a healthy, green recovery](#)”, practical steps for implementing the prescriptions of the organisation's [Manifesto](#) for a healthy recovery from COVID-19.

- Lia Sieghart and Martin Heger, on **World Bank Blogs**, have formulated a “[Blueprint for a 'green' recovery from COVID-19 for MENA countries](#)”.

Academia, Private Sector & Civil Society

(in alphabetical order, with resources on cities listed first)

- **Bloomberg Philanthropies** – through their local and global “[COVID-19 Response Initiatives](#)” – provide cities with information and tools to understand, respond to and manage COVID-19. They also support NACTO’s “[Transportation Response Program](#)” that delivers rapid-response tools for city officials and transit agencies, and pools resources around COVID-19 and transport.
- The **Emergency Governance Initiative (EGI)** led by LSE Cities, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), and the World Association of the Major Metropolises (Metropolis) launched a [Policy Brief](#) and [Analytics Note](#) on innovative institutional responses to the COVID-19 emergency in Barcelona, Bogotá, Gauteng and Seoul in terms of stakeholder engagement, inclusive communication, multi-level governance and effective use of data in managing the pandemic response. An earlier [Analytics Note](#) reviewed a list of 60 COVID-19 response monitors relevant to local and urban leaders managing the pandemic.
- Back in May, **the Green 10**, a coalition of ten of the largest environmental organisations and networks active on the European level, launched an [appeal](#) for a “green and just recovery” in the EU and beyond. The coalition has now called upon EU leaders for the adoption of an environmental and climate [exclusionary list](#) that defines what the EU Recovery Fund plans must not include.
- The current [issue](#) of the **Oxford Institute of Energy Studies** informs about topics regarding COVID-19 and the energy transition.
- The **German Science Platform Climate Protection** (Wissenschaftsplattform Klimaschutz, WPKS) published an [initial assessment](#) of the German government's economic stimulus package in response to COVID-19 and proposed a further in-depth examination and climate (policy) impact assessment.
- Canada’s **Task Force for a Resilient Recovery** is an independent group of Canadian finance, policy and sustainability leaders determined to make sure Canada builds forward better. The Task Force’s [preliminary report](#) identifies five “bold moves” for a resilient recovery (targeting buildings, zero-emission vehicles, energy, nature, and clean competitiveness), supported by 22 recommendations and the supporting investments.

Information Hubs

(in alphabetical order, with resources on cities listed first)

- **C40** launched the [new portal](#) “Cities, Coronavirus (COVID-19) and a Green Recovery”. It collects and updates information on local COVID-19 response and recovery measures from C40 networks and external resources. Moreover, C40 published the “[C40 Mayors’ Agenda for a green and just recovery](#)”, which contains best practice examples from all over the world, and released a corresponding [video](#) to get a quick overview of the recovery agenda.
- **Cities for Global Health**, an interactive online [platform](#), pools “revitalisation and reinvention initiatives” started by cities worldwide and provides decision-makers with access to first-
- The **Eurocities platform** displays live updates by European cities reacting to the COVID-19 crisis (response and recovery measures).
- The [playlist](#) “COVID-19 webinars by the ICLEI network” contains virtual events from **ICLEI** and its network that relate to the COVID-19 pandemic and how to respond to it. Another [series](#) focuses on best practices and tools in the realm of urban resilience. Upcoming webinars are listed on [ICLEI’s webpage](#).
- The [COVID-19 service point](#) by **Urban Sustainability Exchange (USE)** is a one-stop-shop for initiatives that offer learning and knowledge exchange opportunities in the fight against COVID-19.
- The **GIZ IDA Community** “Green Economy and Green Recovery” hosts a [page](#) dedicated to important documents and information related to a green COVID-19 recovery, including a “GIZ Understanding of Green Recovery” and an overview of GIZ service offers (“Leistungsangebote”, in German).

- The **OECD**, **WWF** and **Environmental Defense Fund (EDF)** organised a series of high-level [virtual dialogues](#) aiming to address specific bottlenecks, mechanisms and institutional arrangements that facilitate a green and healthy recovery while increasing decisive climate and nature action. All recordings, summaries and related resources are now available online.

Events

- A [virtual event](#) on 5 August at 3pm CEST by **FELICITY-GIZ** and the **Cities Climate Finance Leadership Alliance** will focus on enhancing the role that National Development Banks (NDBs) play in supporting the acceleration of climate-smart urban infrastructure investment.
- The **Technical University of Denmark (DTU)** will host a [global virtual innovation sprint](#) for students, PhD researchers, early-stage start-ups and young professionals at the end of August. The aim of the event is to support the transition to a sustainable circular society after COVID-19 with new agendas, projects and partnerships. Topics like green transition, new cities or future of work will be covered.